. . . AN . . .

Exposition of the Bible

A SERIES OF EXPOSITIONS COVERING ALL THE BOOKS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT . . . . . .

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Vol. VI.

EPHESIANS—REVELATION.

PRINTED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE ENGLISH EDITORS AND OF OTHER PUBLISHERS

BY AND FOR

THE S. S. SCRANTON CO.,

HARTFORD, CONN.

1907.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.*

BY THE REV. G. G. FINDLAY, B. A.

THE INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRITER AND READERS.

EPHESIANS i. 1, 2.

IN passing from the Galatian to the Ephesian epistle we are conscious of entering a different atmosphere. We leave the region of controversy for that of meditation. From the battle-field we step into the hush and stillness of the temple. Verses 3-14 of this chapter constitute the most sustained and perfect act of praise that is found in the apostle's letters. It is as though a door were suddenly opened in heaven; it shuts behind us, and earthly tumult dies away. The contrast between these two writings, following each other in the established order of the epistles, is singular and in some ways extreme. They are, respectively, the most combative and peaceful, the most impassioned and unimpassioned, the most concrete and abstract, the most human and divine amongst the great apostle's writings.

Yet there is a fundamental resemblance and identity of character. The two letters are not the expression of different minds, but of different phases of the same mind. In the Paul of Galatians the Paul of Ephesians is latent; the contemplative thinker, the devout mystic, behind the ardent missionary and the masterly debater. Those critics who recognise the genuine apostle only in the four previous epistles and reject whatever does not conform strictly to their type, do not perceive how much is needed to make up a man like the apostle Paul. Without the inwardness, the brooding faculty, the power of abstract and metaphysical thinking displayed in the epistles of this group, he could never have wrought out the system of doctrine contained in those earlier writings, nor grasped the principles which he there applies with such vigour and effect. That so many serious and able scholars doubt, or even deny, St. Paul's authorship of this epistle on internal grounds and because of the contrast to which we have referred, is one of those phenomena which in future histories of religious thought will be quoted as the curiosities of a hypercritical age.

Let us observe some of the Pauline qualities that are stamped upon the face of this document. There is, in the first place, the apostle's intellectual note, what has been well called his "passion for the absolute." St. Paul's was one of those minds, so discomposing to superficial and merely practical thinkers, which cannot be content with half-way conclusions. For every principle he seeks its ultimate basis; every line of thought he pushes to its furthest limits. His gospel, if he is to rest in it, must supply a principle of unity that will bind together all the elements of his mental world.

Hence, in contesting the Jewish claim to religious superiority on the ground of circumcision and the Abrahamic covenant, St. Paul developed in the epistle to the Galatians a religious philosophy of history; he arrived at a view of the function of the law in the education of mankind which disposed not only of the question at issue, but of all such questions. He established for ever the principle of salvation by faith and of spiritual sonship to God. What that former argument effects for the history of revelation, is done here for the gospel in its relations to society and universal life. The principle of Christ's headship is carried to its largest results. The centre of the Church becomes the centre of the universe. God's plan of the ages is disclosed, ranging through eternity and embracing every form of being, and "gathering into one all things in the Christ." In Galatians and Romans the thought of salvation by Christ breaks through Jewish limits and spreads itself over the field of history; in Colossians and Ephesians the idea of life in Christ overleaps the barriers of time and human existence, and brings "things in heaven and things in earth and things beneath the earth" under its sway.

The second, historical note of original Paulinism we recognise in the writer's "attitude towards Judaism." We should be prepared to stake the genuineness of the epistle on this consideration alone. The position and point of view of the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles are unique in history. It is difficult to conceive how any one but Paul himself, at any other juncture, could have represented the relation of Jew and Gentile to each other as it is put before us here. The writer is a Jew, a man nourished on the hope of Israel (i. 12), who had looked at his fellowmen across "the middle wall of partition" (ii. 14). In his view, the covenant and the Christ belong, in the first instance and as by birthright, to the men of Israel. They are "the near," who live hard by the city and house of God. The blessedness of the Gentile readers consists in the revelation that they are "fellow-heirs and of the same body and joint-partakers with us of the promise in Christ Jesus" (iii. 6). What is this but to say, as the apostle had done before, that the branches "of the naturally wild olive tree" were "against nature grafted into the good olive tree" and allowed to "partake of its root and fatness," along with "the natural branches," the children of the stock of Abraham who claimed it for "their own"; that "the men of faith are sons of Abraham" and "Abraham's blessing has come on the Gentiles through faith"? *

For our author this revelation has lost none of its novelty and surprise. He is in the midst of the excitement it has produced, and is himself its chief agent and mouthpiece (iii. 1-9). This disclosure of God's secret plans for the world overwhelms him by its magnitude, by the splendour with which it invests the Divine char-

* The translation given in this book is based upon the Revised Version, but deviates from it in some particulars. These deviations will be explained in the exposition.

* Rom. xi. 16–24, Acts xiii. 26; Gal. iii. 7, 14.

acter, and the sense of his personal unworthiness to be entrusted with it. We utterly disbelieve that any later Christian writer could or would have personated the apostle and mimicked his tone and sentiments in regard to his vocation, in the way that the "critical" hypothesis assumes. The criterion of Erasmus is decisive: *Nemo potest Paulinum pectus effingere.*

St. Paul's doctrine of "the cross" is admittedly his specific theological note. In the shameful sacrificial death of Jesus Christ he saw the instrument of man's release from the curse of the broken law;* and through this knowledge the cross, which was the "scandal" of Saul the Pharisee, had become Paul's glory and its proclamation the business of his life. It is this doctrine, in its original strength and fulness, which lies behind such sentences as those of chapter i. 7, ii. 13, and v. 2: "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses—brought nigh in the blood of Christ—an offering and sacrifice to God for an odour of sweet smell."

Another mark of the apostle's hand, his specific spiritual note, we find in the "mysticism" that pervades the epistle and forms, in fact, its substance. "I live no longer: Christ lives in me." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit."† In these sentences of the earlier letters we discover the spring of St. Paul's theology, lying in his own experience—"the sense of personal union through the Spirit with Christ Jesus." This was the deepest fact of Paul's consciousness. Here it meets us at every turn. More than twenty times the phrase "in Christ" or its equivalents recur, applied to Christian acts or states. It is enough to refer to chapter iii. 17, "that the Christ may make His dwelling in your hearts through faith," to show how profoundly this mysterious relationship is realised in this letter. No other New Testament writer conceived the idea in Paul's way, nor has any subsequent writer of whom we know made the like constant and original use of it. It was the habit of the apostle's mind, the index of his innermost life. Kindred to this, and hardly less conspicuous, is his conception of "God in Christ" (2 Cor. v. 19) saving and operating upon men, who, as we read here, "chose us in Christ before the world's foundation—forgave us in Him—made us in Him to sit together in the heavenly places—formed us in Christ Jesus for good works."

The ethical note of the true Paulinism is the conception of the "new man" in Christ Jesus, whose sins were slain by His death, and who shares His risen life unto God (Rom. vi.). From this idea, as from a fountainhead, the apostle in the parallel Colossian epistle (ch. iii.) deduces the new Christian morality. The temper and disposition of the believer, his conduct in all social duties and practical affairs are the expression of a "life hid with Christ in God." It is the identical "new man" of Romans and Colossians who presents himself as our ideal here, raised with Christ from the dead and "sitting with Him in the heavenly places." The newness of life in which he walks receives its impulse and direction from this exalted fellowship.

The characteristics of St. Paul's teaching which we have described—his logical thoroughness and finality, his peculiar historical, theological, spiritual, and ethical standpoint and manner of thought—are combined in the conception which is the specific note of this epistle, viz., its idea of "the Church" as the body of Christ,—or in other words, of "the new humanity" created in Him. This forms the centre of the circle of thought in which the writer's mind moves; it is the meeting-point of the various lines of thought that we have already traced. The doctrine of personal salvation wrought out in the great evangelical epistles terminates in that of social and collective salvation. A new and precious title is conferred on Christ: He is "Saviour of *the body*" (v. 23), *i. e.*, of the corporate Christian community. "The Son of God who loved *me* and gave up Himself for *me*," becomes "the Christ" who "loved *the Church* and gave up Himself for *her*." "The new man" is no longer the individual, a mere transformed *ego;* he is the type and beginning of a new mankind. A perfect society of men, all sons of God in Christ, is being constituted around the cross, in which the old antagonisms are reconciled, the ideal of creation is restored, and a body is provided to contain the fulness of Christ, a holy temple which God inhabits in the Spirit. Of this edifice, with the cross for its centre and Christ Jesus for its corner-stone, Jew and Gentile form the material—"the Jew first," lying nearest to the site.

The apostle Paul necessarily conceived the reconstruction of humanity under the form of a reconciliation of Israel and the Gentiles. The catholicism we have here is Paul's catholicism of "Gentile engrafting"—not Clement's, of "churchly order and uniformity"; nor Ignatius', of "monepiscopal rule." It is profoundly characteristic of this apostle, that in "the law" which had been to his own experience the barrier and ground of quarrel between the soul and God, "the strength of sin," he should come to see likewise the barrier between men and men, and the strength of the sinful enmity which distracted the Churches of his foundation (ii. 14-16).

The representation of the Church contained in this epistle is, therefore, by no means new in its elements. Such texts as 1 Corinthians iii. 16, 17 ("Ye are God's temple," etc.) and xii. 12-27 (concerning the "one body and many members") bring us near to its actual expression. But the figures of the "body" and "temple" in these passages, had they stood alone, might be read as mere passing illustrations of the nature of Christian fellowship. Now they become proper designations of the Church, and receive their full significance. While in 1 Corinthians, moreover, these phrases do not look beyond the particular community addressed, in Ephesians they embrace the entire Christian society. This epistle signalises a great step forwards in the development of the apostle's theology—perhaps we might say, the last step. The Pastoral epistles serve to put the final apostolic seal upon the theological edifice that is now complete. Their care is with the guarding and furnishing of the "great house" which our epistle is engaged in building.

The idea of the Church is not, however, independently developed. Ephesians and Colossians are companion letters,—the complement and explanation of each other. Both "speak with regard to Christ and the Church"; both reveal the Divine "glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus." The emphasis of Ephesians falls on the

* Gal. iii. 10-13; 2 Cor. v. 20, 21, etc.
† Gal. ii. 20: 1 Cor. vi. 17.

former, of Colossians on the latter of these objects. The doctrine of the Person of Christ and that of the nature of the Church proceed with equal step. The two epistles form one process of thought.

Criticism has attempted to derive first one and then the other of the two from its fellow,—thus, in effect, stultifying itself. Finally Dr. Holtzmann, in his "Kritik der Kolosser- und Epheserbriefe," undertook to show that each epistle was in turn dependent on the other. There is, Holtzmann says, a Pauline nucleus hidden in Colossians, which he has himself extracted. By its aid some ecclesiastic of genius in the second century composed the Ephesian epistle. He then returned to the brief Colossian writing of St. Paul, and worked it up, with his own Ephesian composition lying before him, into our existing epistle to the Colossians. This complicated and too ingenious hypothesis has not satisfied any one except its author, and need not detain us here. But Holtzmann has at any rate made good, against his predecessors on the negative sides, the unity of origin of the two canonical epistles, the fact that they proceed from one mint and coinage. They are *twin* epistles, the offspring of a single birth in the apostle's mind. Much of their subject-matter, especially in the ethical section, is common to both. The glory of the Christ and the greatness of the Church are truths inseparable in the nature of things, wedded to each other. To the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," His response ever is, "I will build my Church." The same correspondence exists between these two epistles in the dialectic movement of the apostle's thought.

At the same time, there is a considerable difference between the two writings in point of style. M. Renan, who accepts Colossians from Paul's hand, and who admits that "among all the epistles bearing the name of Paul the epistle to the Ephesians is perhaps that which has been most anciently cited as a composition of the apostle of the Gentiles," yet speaks of this epistle as a "verbose amplification" of the other, "a commonplace letter, diffuse and pointless, loaded with useless words and repetitions, entangled and overgrown with irrelevances, full of pleonasms and obscurities."

In this instance Renan's literary sense has deserted him. While Colossians is quick in movement, terse and pointed, in some places so sparing of words as to be almost hopelessly obscure, Ephesians from beginning to end is measured and deliberate, exuberant in language, and obscure, where it is so, not from the brevity, but from the length and involution of its periods. It is occupied with a few great ideas, which the author strives to set forth in all their amplitude and significance. Colossians is a letter of discussion; Ephesians of reflection. The whole difference of style lies in this. In the reflective passages of Colossians, as indeed in the earlier epistles, we find the stateliness of movement and rhythmical fulness of expression which in this epistle are sustained throughout. Both epistles are marked by those unfinished sentences and *anacolutha*, the grammatical inconsequence associated with close continuity of thought, which is a main characteristic of St. Paul's style. The epistle to the Colossians is like a mountain stream forcing its way through some rugged defile; that to the Ephesians is the smooth lake below, in which its chafed waters restfully expand. These sister epistles represent the moods of conflict and repose which alternated in St. Paul's mobile nature.

In general, the writings of this group, belonging to the time of the apostle's imprisonment and advancing age, display less passion and energy, but a more tranquil spirit than those of the Jewish controversy. They are prison letters, the fruit of a time when the author's mind had been much thrown in upon itself. They have been well styled "the afternoon epistles," being marked by the subdued and reflective temper natural to this period of life. Ephesians is, in truth, the typical representative of the third group of Paul's epistles, as Galatians is of the second. There is abundant reason to be satisfied that this letter came, as it purports to do, from "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through God's will."

But that it was addressed to "the saints which are *in Ephesus*" is more difficult to believe. The apostle has "heard of the faith which prevails amongst" his readers; he presumes that they "have heard of the Christ, and were taught in Him according as truth is in Jesus." He hopes that by "reading" this epistle they will "perceive his understanding in the mystery of Christ" (iii. 2-4). He writes somewhat thus to the Colossians and Romans, whom he had never seen; but can we imagine Paul addressing in this distant and uncertain fashion his children in the faith? In Ephesus he had laboured "for the space of three whole years" (Acts xx. 31), longer than in any other city of the Gentile mission, except Antioch. His speech to the Ephesian elders at Miletus, delivered four years ago, was surcharged with personal feeling, full of pathetic reminiscence and the signs of interested acquaintance with the individual membership of the Ephesian Church. In the epistle such signs are altogether wanting. The absence of greetings and messages we could understand, these Tychicus might convey by word of mouth. But how the man who wrote the epistles to the Philippians and Corinthians could have composed this long and careful letter to his own Ephesian people without a single word of endearment or familiarity, and without the least allusion to his past intercourse with them, we cannot understand. It is in the destination that the only serious difficulty lies touching the authorship. Nowhere do we see more of "the apostle" and less of "the man" in St. Paul; nowhere more of "the" Church, and less of "this or that" particular church.

It agrees with these internal indications that the local designation is wanting in the oldest Greek copies of the letter that are extant. The two great manuscripts of the fourth century, the Vatican and Sinaitic codices, omit the words "in Ephesus." Basil in the fourth century did not accept them, and says that "the old copies" were without them. Origen, in the beginning of the third century, seems to have known nothing of them. And Tertullian, at the end of the second century, while he condemns the heretic Marcion (who lived about fifty years earlier) for entitling the epistle "To the Laodiceans," quotes only the *title* against him, and not the text of the address, which he would presumably have done, had he read it in the form familiar to us. We are compelled to suppose, with Westcott

and Hort and the textual critics generally, that these words form no part of the original address.

Here the "circular hypothesis" of Beza and Ussher comes to our aid. It is supposed that the letter was destined for a number of Churches in Asia Minor, which Tychicus was directed to visit in the course of the journey which took him to Colossæ. Along with the letters for the Colossians and Philemon, he was entrusted with this more general epistle, intended for the Gentile Christian communities of the neighbouring region at large. During St. Paul's ministry at Ephesus, we are told that "all those that dwell in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts xix. 10). In so large and populous an area, amongst the Churches founded at this time there were doubtless others beside those of the Lycus valley "which had not seen Paul's face in the flesh," some about which the apostle had less precise knowledge than he had of these through Epaphras and Onesimus, but for whom he was no less desirous that their "hearts should be comforted, and brought into all the wealth of the full assurance of the understanding in the knowledge of the mystery of God" (Col. ii. 1, 2).

To which or how many of the Asian Churches Tychicus would be able to communicate the letter was, presumably, uncertain when it was written at Rome; and the designation was left open. Its conveyance by Tychicus (vi. 21, 22) supplied the only limit to its distribution. Proconsular Asia was the richest and most peaceful province of the Empire, so populous that it was called "the province of five hundred cities." Ephesus was only the largest of many flourishing commercial and manufacturing towns.

At the close of his epistle to the Colossians St. Paul directs this Church to procure "from Laodicea," in exchange for their own, a letter which he is sending there (iv. 16). Is it possible that we have the lost Laodicean document in the epistle before us? So Ussher suggested; and though the assumption is not essential to his theory, it falls in with it very aptly. Marcion may, after all, have preserved a reminiscence of the fact that Laodicea, as well as Ephesus, shared in this letter. The conjecture is endorsed by Lightfoot, who says, writing on Colossians iv. 16: "There are good reasons for the belief that St. Paul here alludes to the so-called epistle to the Ephesians, which was in fact a circular letter, addressed to the principal Churches of proconsular Asia. Tychicus was obliged to pass through Laodicea on his way to Colossæ, and would leave a copy there before the Colossian letter was delivered." The two epistles admirably supplement each other. The Apocalyptic letter "to the sêven Churches which are in Asia," ranging from Ephesus to Laodicea (Rev. ii., iii.), shows how much the Christian communities of this region had in common and how natural it would be to address them collectively. For the same region, with a yet wider scope, the "first catholic epistle of Peter" was destined, a writing that has many points of contact with this. Ephesus being the metropolis of the Asian Churches, and claiming a special interest in St. Paul, came to regard the epistle as specially her own. Through Ephesus, moreover, it was communicated to the Church in other provinces. Hence it came to pass that when Paul's epistles were gathered into a single volume and a title was needed for this along with the rest, "To the Ephesians" was written over it; and this reference, standing in the title, in course of time found its way into the text of the address. We propose to read this letter as "the general epistle of Paul to the Churches of Asia, *or* "to Ephesus and its daughter Churches."

But how are we to read the address, with the local definition wanting? There are two constructions open to us:—(1) We might suppose that a space was left blank in the original to be filled in afterwards by Tychicus with the names of the particular Churches to which he distributed copies, or to be supplied by the voice of the reader. But if that were so, we should have expected to find some trace of this variety of designation in the ancient witnesses. As it is, the documents either give Ephesus in the address, or supply no local name at all. Nor is there, so far as we are aware, any analogy in ancient usage for the proceeding suggested. Moreover, the order of the Greek words is against this supposition.—(2) We prefer, therefore, to follow Origen and Basil, with some modern exegetes, in reading the sentence straight on, as it stands in the Sinaitic and Vatican copies. It then becomes: "To the saints, who are indeed faithful in Christ Jesus."

"The saints" is the apostle's designation for Christian believers generally, as men consecrated to God in Christ (1 Cor. i. 2). The qualifying phrase "those who are indeed faithful in Christ Jesus," is admonitory. As Lightfoot says with reference to the parallel qualification in Colossians i. 2, "This unusual addition is full of meaning. Some members of the (Asian) Churches were shaken in their allegiance, even if they had not fallen from it. The apostle therefore wishes it to be understood that, when he speaks of the saints, he means those who are true and steadfast members of the brotherhood. In this way he obliquely hints at the defection." By this further definition "he does not directly exclude any, but he indirectly warns all." We are reminded that we are in the neighbourhood of the Colossian heresy. Beneath the calm tenor of this epistle, the ear catches an undertone of controversy. In chapter iv. 14 and vi. 10-20 this undertone becomes clearly audible. We shall find the epistle end with the note of warning with which it begins.

The Salutation is according to St. Paul's established form of greeting.

CHAPTER II.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE.

EPHESIANS i. 3-19.

WE enter this epistle through a magnificent gateway. The introductory Act of Praise, extending from verse 3 to 14, is one of the most sublime of inspired utterances, an overture worthy of the composition that it introduces. Its first sentence compels us to feel the insufficiency of our powers for its due rendering.

The apostle surveys in this thanksgiving the entire course of the revelation of grace. Standing with the men of his day, the new-born community of the Sons of God in Christ, midway

between the ages past and to come,* he looks backward to the course of man's salvation when it lay a silent thought in the mind of God, and forward to the hour when it shall have accomplished its promise and achieved our redemption. In this grand evolution of the Divine plan three stages are marked by the refrain, thrice repeated, "To the praise of His Glory, of the glory of His Grace" (vv. 6, 12, 14). St. Paul's psalm is thus divided into three strophes, or stanzas: he sings the glory of redeeming love in its past designs, its present bestowments, and its future fruition. The paragraph, forming but one sentence and spun upon a single golden thread, is a piece of thought-music,—a sort of *fugue*, in which from eternity to eternity the counsel of love is pursued by Paul's bold and exulting thought.

Despite the grammatical involution of the style here carried to an extreme, and underneath the apparatus of Greek pronouns and participles, there is a fine Hebraistic lilt pervading the doxology. The refrain is in the manner of Psalms xlii.-xliii., and xcix., where in the former instance "health of countenance," and in the latter "holy is He" gives the keynote of the poet's melody and parts his song into three balanced stanzas. In such poetry the strophes may be unequal in length, each developing its own thought freely, and yet there is harmony in their combination. Here the central idea, that of God's actual bounty to believers, fills a space equal to that of the other two. But there is a pause in it, at verse 10, which in effect resumes the idea of the first strophe and works it in as a *motif* to the second, carrying on both in a full stream till they lose themselves in the third and culminating movement. Throughout the piece there runs in varying expression the phrase "in Christ—in the Beloved—in Him—in whom," weaving the verses into subtle continuity. The theme of the entire composition is given in verse 3, which does not enter into the threefold division we have described, but forms a prelude to it.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: who hath blessed us,
In every blessing of the Spirit, in the heavenly places, in Christ."

Blessed be God!—It is the song of the universe, in which heaven and earth take responsive parts. "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," this concert began, and continues still through the travail of creation and the sorrow and sighing of men. The work praises the Master. All sinless creatures, by their order and harmony, by the variety of their powers and beauty of their forms and delight of their existence, declare their Creator's glory. That praise to the Most High God which the lower creatures act instrumentally, it is man's privilege to utter in discourse of reason and music of the heart. Man is Nature's high priest; and above other men, the poet. Time will be, as it has been, when it shall be accounted the poet's honour and the crown of his art, that he should take the high praises of God into his mouth, making hymns to the glory of the Supreme Maker, and giving voice to the dumb praise of inanimate nature and to the noblest thoughts of his fellows concerning the Blessed God.

Blessed be God!—It is the perpetual strain of the Old Testament, from Melchizedek down to Daniel,—of David in his triumph, and Job in his misery. But not hitherto could men say, Blessed be "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" He was "the Most High God, the God of heaven,"—"Jehovah, God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things,"—"the Shepherd" and "the Rock" of His people,—"the true God, the living God, and an everlasting King"; and these are glorious titles, which have raised men's thoughts to moods of highest reverence and trust. But the name of "Father," and "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," surpasses and outshines them all. With wondering love and joy unspeakable St. Paul pronounces this "Benedictus." God was not less to him the Almighty, the High and Holy One dwelling in eternity, than in the days of his youthful Jewish faith; but the Eternal and All-holy One was now his Father in Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory!

The apostle's psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving to God *blessing and blessed*. The second clause rhythmically answers to the first. True, our blessing of Him is far different from His blessing of us: ours in thought and words; His in mighty deeds of salvation. Yet in the fruit of lips giving thanks to His name there is a revenue of blessing paid to God which He delights in, and requires. "O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel," grant us to bless Thee while we live and to lift up our hands in Thy name!

By three qualifying adjuncts the blessings which the Father of Christ bestowed upon us is defined: in respect of its *nature*, its *sphere*, and its *personal ground*.

The blessings that prompt the apostle's praise are not such as those conspicuous in the Old Covenant: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and in the field; in the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and in the increase of thy kine; blessed shall be thy basket, and thy kneading-trough" (Deut. xxviii. 3-5). The gospel pronounces beatitudes of another style: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the persecuted." St. Paul had small share indeed in the former class of blessings,—a childless, landless, homeless man. Yet what happiness and wealth are his! Out of his poverty he is making all the ages rich! From the gloom of his prison he sheds a light that will guide and cheer the steps of multitudes of earth's sad wayfarers. Not certainly in the earthly places where he finds himself is Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus blessed; but "spiritual blessing" and "in heavenly places" how abundantly! His own blessedness he claims for all who are in Christ.

Blessing *spiritual* in its nature is, in St. Paul's conception of things, blessing in and of the Holy Spirit. In His quickening our spirit lives; through His indwelling health, blessedness, eternal life are ours. In this verse justly the theologians recognise the Trinity of the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.—Blessing *in the heavenly places* is not so much blessing coming from those places—from God the Father who sits there—as it is blessing which lifts us into that supernal region, giving to us a place and heritage in the world of God and of the angels. Two passages of the companion epistles interpret this phrase: "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3); and again, "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).—The decisive note of St. Paul's blessedness lies in the words "in Christ." For

* Ch. ii. 7, iii. 5, 21; Col. i. 26.

him all good is summed up there. Spiritual, heavenly, and Christian: these three are one. In Christ dying, risen, reigning, God the Father has raised believing men to a new heavenly life. From the first inception of the work of grace to its consummation, God thinks of men, speaks to them and deals with them *in Christ*. To Him, therefore, with the Father be eternal praise!

> "As He chose us in Him before the world's foundation,
> That we should be holy and unblemished before Him:
> When in love He foreordained us
> To filial adoption through Jesus Christ for Himself,
> According to the good pleasure of His will,—
> To the praise of the glory of His grace" (vv. 4–6*a*).

Here is St. Paul's first chapter of Genesis. "In the beginning was the election of grace." There is nothing unprepared, nothing unforeseen, in God's dealings with mankind. His wisdom and knowledge are as deep as His grace is wide (Rom. xi. 33). Speaking of his own vocation, the apostle said: "It pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb, to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. i. 15, 16). He does but generalise this conception and carry it two steps further back—from the origin of the individual to the origin of the race, and from the beginning of the race to the beginning of the world—when he asserts that the community of redeemed men was chosen in Christ before the world's foundation.

"The world" is a work of time, the slow structure of innumerable, yet finite, ages. Science affirms on its own grounds that the visible universe had a beginning, as it has its changes and its certain end. Its structural plan, its unity of aim and movement, show it to be the creation of a vast Intelligence. Harmony and law, all that make science possible, is the product of thought. Reason extracts from nature what Reason has first put there. The longer, the more intricate and grand the process, the farther science pushes back the beginning in our thoughts, the more sublime and certain the primitive truth becomes: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The world is a system; it has a method and a plan, therefore a foundation. But before the foundation there was *the Founder*. And man was in His thoughts, and the redeemed Church of Christ. While yet the world was not and the immensity of space stretched lampless and unpeopled, *we* were in the mind of God; His thought rested with complacency upon His human sons, whose "name was written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." This amazing statement is only the logical consequence of St. Paul's experience of Divine grace, joined to his conviction of the infinite wisdom and eternal being of God.

When he says that God "chose us in Christ *before the foundation of the world*"—or *before founding the world*—this is not a mere mark of time. It intimates that in laying His plans for the world the Creator had the purpose of redeeming grace in view. The kingdom which the "blessed children" of the Father of Christ "inherit," is the kingdom "*prepared* for them *from the foundation of the world*" (Matt. xxv. 34). Salvation lies as deep as creation. The provision for it is eternal. For the universe of being was conceived, fashioned, and built up "in Christ." The argument of Colossians i. 13-22 lies behind these words. The Son of God's love, in whom and for whom the worlds were made, always was potentially the Redeemer of men, as He was the image of God (Col. i. 14, 15). He looked forward to this mission from eternity, and was in spirit "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8). Creation and Redemption, Nature and the Church, are parts of one system; and in the reconciliation of the cross all orders of being are concerned, "whether the things upon the earth or the things in the heavens."

Evil existed before man appeared on the earth to be tempted and to fall. Through the geological record we hear the voice of creation groaning for long æons in its pain.

> "Dragons of the prime,
> That tare each other in their slime,"

grim prophets of man's brutal and murderous passions, bear witness to a war in nature that goes back far towards the foundation of the world. And this rent and discord in the frame of things it was His part to reconcile "in whom and for whom all things were created." This universal deliverance, it seems, is dependent upon ours. "The creation itself lifts up its head, and is looking out for the revelation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19). In founding the world, foreseeing its bondage to corruption, God prepared through His elect sons in Christ a deliverance the glory of which will make its sufferings to seem but a light thing. "In thee," said God to Abraham, "shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed": so in the final "adoption,—to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23), all creatures shall exult; and our mother earth, still travailing in pain with us, will remember her anguish no more.

The Divine election of men in Christ is further defined in the words of verse 5: "Having in love predestined us," and "according to the good pleasure of His will." *Election* is selection; it is the antecedent in the mind of God in Christ of the preference which Christ showed when He said to His disciples, "I have chosen you out of the world." It is, moreover, *a foreordination in love*: an expression which indicates on the one hand the disposition in God that prompted and sustains his choice, and on the other the determination of the almighty Will whereby the all-wise Choice is put into operation and takes effect. In this pre-ordaining control of human history God "determined the fore-appointed seasons and the bounds of human habitation" (Acts xvii. 26). The Divine prescience—that "depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God"—as well as His absolute righteousness, forbids the treasonable thought of anything arbitrary or unfair cleaving to this predetermination—anything that should override our free-will and make our responsibility an illusion. "Whom He did *foreknow*, He also did predestinate" (Rom. viii. 29). He foresees everything, and allows for everything.

The consistence of foreknowledge with free-will is an enigma which the apostle did not attempt to solve. His reply to all questions touching the justice of God's administration in the elections of grace—questions painfully felt and keenly agitated then as they are now, and that pressed upon himself in the case of his Jewish kindred with a cruel force (Rom. ix. 3)—his answer to his own heart, and to us, lies in the last words of verse 5: "according to the good pleasure of His will." It is what Jesus said concerning

the strange preferences of Divine grace: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." What pleases Him can only be wise and right. What pleases Him must content us. Impatience is unbelief. Let us wait to see the end of the Lord. In numberless instances—such as that of the choice between Jacob and Esau, and that of Paul and the believing remnant of Israel as against their nation—God's ways have justified themselves to after-times; so they will universally. Our little spark of intelligence glances upon one spot in a boundless ocean, on the surface of immeasurable depths.

The purpose of this loving fore-ordination of believing men in Christ is two-fold; it concerns at once their "character" and their "state": He chose us out—that we should be holy and without blemish in His sight," and "unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ for Himself." These two purposes are one. God's sons must be holy; and holy men are His sons. For this end "we" were elected of God in the beginning. Nay, with this end in view the world was founded and the human race came into being, to provide God with such sons and that Christ might be "the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 28-30).

"That we should be holy"—should be *saints*. This the readers are already: "To the saints" the apostle writes (ver. 1). They are men devoted to God by their own choice and will, meeting God's choice and will for them. Imperfect saints they may be, by no means as yet "without blemish"; but they are already, and abidingly, "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. i. 2) and "sealed" for God's possession "by the Holy Spirit" (vv. 13, 14). In this fact lies their hope of moral perfection and the impulse and power to attain it. Their task is to "perfect" their existing "holiness" (2 Cor. vii. 1), "cleansing themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit." Let no Christian say, "I do not pretend to be a saint." This is to renounce your calling. You *are* a saint if you are a true believer in Christ; and you are to be an unblemished saint.

Thus the Church is at last to be presented, and every man in his own order, "faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy." God could not invite us in His grace to anything inferior. A blemished saint—a smeared picture, a flawed marble—this is not like His work; it is not like Himself. Such saintship cannot approve itself "before Him." He must carry out His ideal, must fashion the new man as he was created in Christ after His own faultless image, and make human holiness a transcript of the Divine (1 Peter i. 16).

Now this Divine character is native to the sons of God. The ideal which God had for men was always the same. The father of the race was made in His image. In the Old Testament Israel receives the command: "You shall be holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy." But it was in Jesus Christ that the breadth of this command was disclosed, and the possibility of our personal obedience to it. The law of Christian sonship, manifest only in shadow in the Levitical sanctity, is now pronounced by Jesus: "You shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Verses 4 and 5 are therefore strictly parallel: God elected us in Christ to be perfect saints; for He predestined us through Jesus Christ to be His sons.

Sonship to Himself is the Christian status, the rank and standing which God confers on those who believe in His Son; it accrues to them by the fact that they are in Christ. It is defined by the term "adoption," which St. Paul employs in this sense in Romans viii. 15, 23, as well as in Galatians iv. 5. Adoption was a peculiar institution of Roman law, familiar to Paul as a citizen of Rome; and it aptly describes to Gentile believers their relation to the family of God. "By adoption under the Roman law an entire stranger in blood became a member of the family into which he was adopted, exactly as if he had been born in it. He assumed the family name, partook in its system of sacrificial rites, and became, not on sufferance or at will, but to all intents and purposes, a member of the house of his adopter. . . . This metaphor was St. Paul's translation into the language of Gentile thought of Christ's great doctrine of the New Birth. He exchanges the physical metaphor of regeneration for the legal metaphor of adoption. The adopted becomes in the eye of the law a new creature. He was born again into a new family. By the aid of this figure the Gentile convert was enabled to realise in a vivid manner the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of the faithful, the obliteration of past penalties, the right to the mystic inheritance. He was enabled to realise that upon this spiritual act 'Old things passed away and all things became new.'"

This exalted status belonged to men in the purpose of God from eternity; but as a matter of fact it was instituted "through Jesus Christ," the historical Redeemer. Whether previously (Jewish) servants in God's house or (Gentile) aliens excluded from it (ii. 12), those who believed in Jesus as the Christ received a spirit of adoption and dared to call God "Father"! This unspeakable privilege had been preparing for them through the ages past in God's hidden wisdom. Throughout the wild course of human apostasy the Father looked forward to the time when He might again through Jesus Christ make men His sons; and His promises and preparations were directed to this one end. The predestination having such an end, how fitly it is said: "*in love* having foreordained us."

Four times, in these three verses, with exulting emphasis, the apostle claims this distinction for "us." *Who*, then, are the objects of the primordial election of grace? Does St. Paul use the pronoun distributively, thinking of individuals—you and me and so many others, the personal recipients of saving grace? or does he mean the Church, as that is collectively the family of God and the object of His loving ordination? In this epistle, the latter is surely the thought in the apostle's mind. As Hofmann says: "The body of Christians is the object of this choice, not as composed of a certain number of individuals—a sum of 'the elect' opposed to a sum of the non-elect—but as the Church taken out of and separated from the world."

On the other hand, we may not widen the pronoun further; we cannot allow that the sonship here signified is man's natural relation to God, that to which he was born by creation. This robs the word "adoption" of its distinctive force. The sonship in question, while grounded "in Christ" from eternity, is conferred "through" the incarnate and crucified "Jesus Christ"; it redounds "to the praise of the glory

of His *grace*." Now, grace is God's redeeming love towards sinners. God's purpose of grace toward mankind, embedded, as one may say, in creation, is realised in the body of redeemed men. But this community, we rejoice to believe, is vastly larger than the visible aggregate of Churches; for how many who knew not His name, have yet walked in the true light which lighteth every man.

There lies in the words "in Christ" a principle of exclusion, as well as of wide inclusion. Men cannot be in Christ against their will, who persistently put Him, His gospel and His laws, away from them. When we close with Christ by faith, we begin to enter into the purpose of our being. We find the place prepared for us before the foundation of the world in the kingdom of Divine love. We live henceforth "to the praise of the glory of His grace!"

CHAPTER III.

THE BESTOWMENT OF GRACE.

EPHESIANS i. 6*b*-12*a*.

THE blessedness of men in Christ is not matter of purpose only, but of reality and experience. With the word *grace* in the middle of the sixth verse the apostle's thought begins a new movement. We have seen Grace hidden in the depths of eternity in the form of sovereign and fatherly election, lodging its purpose in the foundation of the world. From those mysterious depths we turn to the living world in our own breast. There, too, Grace dwells and reigns: "which grace He imparted to us, in the Beloved, —in whom we have redemption through His blood."

The leading word of this clause we can only paraphrase; it has no English equivalent. St. Paul perforce turns *grace* into a verb; this verb occurs in the New Testament but once besides, —in Luke i. 28, the angel's salutation to Mary: "Hail thou that art highly favoured (made-an-object-of-grace)." If we could employ our verb *to grace* in a sense corresponding to that of the noun *grace* in the apostle's dialect and nearly the opposite of *to disgrace*, then *graced* would signify what he means here, viz., *treated with grace*, made its recipients.

God "showed us grace *in the Beloved*"—or, to render the phrase with full emphasis, "in that Beloved One"—even as He "chose us in Him before the world's foundation" and "in love predestined us for adoption." The grace is conveyed upon the basis of our relationship to Christ: on that ground it was conceived in the counsels of eternity. The Voice from heaven which said at the baptism of Jesus and again at the transfiguration, "This is My Son, the Beloved," uttered God's eternal thought regarding Christ. And that regard of God toward the Son of His love is the fountain of His love and grace to men.

Christ is the Beloved not of the Father alone, but of the created universe. All that know the Lord Jesus must needs love and adore Him—unless their hearts are eaten out by sin. Not to love Him is to be anathema. "If any man love Me," said Jesus, "My Father will love him." Nothing so much pleases God and brings us into fellowship with God so direct and joyous, as our love to Jesus Christ. About this at least heaven and earth may agree, that He is the altogether lovely and love-worthy. Agreement in this will bring about agreement in everything. The love of Christ will tune the jarring universe into harmony.

I. Of grace bestowed, the first manifestation, in the experience of Paul and his readers, was "the forgiveness of their trespasses" (comp. ii. 13-18). This is "the redemption" that "we *have*." And it comes "through His *blood*." The epistles to the Galatians and Romans expound at length the apostle's doctrine touching the remission of sin and the relation of Christ's death to human transgression. To "redemption" we shall return in considering verse 14, where the word is used, as again in chapter iv. 30, in its further application.

In Romans iii. 22-26 "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" is declared to be the means by which we are acquitted in the judgment of God from the guilt of past transgressions. And this redemption consists in the "propitiatory sacrifice" which Christ offered in shedding His blood—a sacrifice wherein we participate "through faith." The language of this verse contains by implication all that is affirmed there. In this connection, and according to the full intent of the word, redemption is "release by ransom." The life-blood of Jesus Christ was the "price" that He paid in order to secure our lawful release from the penalties entailed by our trespasses. This Jesus Christ implied beforehand, when He spoke of "giving His life a ransom for many"; and when He said, in handing to His disciples the cup of the Last Supper: "This is My blood, the blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Using another synonymous term, St. Paul tells us that "Christ *bought us out of* the curse of the law"; and he bases on this expression a strong practical appeal: "You are not your own, for ye were bought with a price." These sayings, and others like them, point unmistakably to the fact that our trespasses as men against God's inflexible law, apart from Christ's intervention, must have issued in our eternal ruin. By His death on the cross Christ has made such amends to the law, that the awful sentence is averted, and our complete release from the power of sin is rendered possible.

On rising from the dead our Saviour commissioned the apostles to "proclaim in His name repentance and remission of sins to all nations" (Luke xxiv. 47). It was thus He proposed to save the world. This proclamation is the "good news" of the gospel. The announcement meets the first need of the serious and awakened human spirit. It answers the question which arises in the breast of every man who thinks earnestly about his personal relations to God and to the laws of his being. We cannot wonder that St. Paul sets the remission of sins first amongst the bestowments of God's grace, and makes it the foundation of all the rest.

Does it occupy the like position in modern Christian teaching? Do we realise the criminality of sin, the fearfulness of God's displeasure, the infinite worth of His forgiveness, and the obligations under which it places us, as St. Paul and his converts did? or even as our fathers did a few generations ago? "It is my impression," writes Dr. R. W. Dale, "that both religious people and those who do not profess to

be religious must be conscious that God's Forgiveness, if they ever think of it at all, does not create any deep and strong emotion. . . . The difference between the way in which we think of the Divine Forgiveness and the way in which it was thought of by David and Isaiah, by Christ Himself, by Peter, Paul, and John; by the saints of all Christian Churches in past times, both in the East and in the West; . . . by the leaders of the Evangelical Revival in the last century—the difference, I say, between the way in which the Forgiveness of sins was thought of by them, and the way in which we think of it, is very startling. The difference is so great, it affects so seriously the whole system of the religious thought and life, that we may be said to have invented a new religion. . . . The difference between our religion and the religion of other times is this—that we do not believe that God has any strong resentment against sin or against those who are guilty of sin. And since His resentment has gone, His mercy has gone with it. We have not a God who is more merciful than the God of our fathers, but a God who is less righteous; and a God who is not righteous, a God who does not glow with fiery indignation against sin, is no God at all."

These are solemn words, to be deeply pondered. They come from one of the most sagacious observers and justly revered teachers of our time. We have made a real advance in breadth and human sympathy; and there has been throughout our Churches a genuine and much-needed awakening of philanthropic activity. But if we are "departing from the living God," what will this avail us? If "the redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses," is no longer to us the momentous and glorious fact that it was to the apostles, then it is time to ask whether our God is in truth the same as theirs, whether He is still the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ —whether we are not, haply, fabricating for ourselves another gospel. Without a piercing sense of the shame and ruin involved in human sin, we shall not put its remission where St. Paul does, at the foundation of God's benefits to men. Without this sentiment, we can only wonder at the passionate gratitude with which he receives the atonement and measures by its completeness the riches of God's grace.

II. Along with this chief blessing of forgiveness, there came another to the apostolic Church. With the heart the mind, with the conscience the intellect, was quickened and endowed: "which (grace) He shed abundantly upon us *in all wisdom and intelligence*."

This sequel to verse 7 is somewhat of a surprise. The reader is apt to slur over verse 8, half sensible of some jar and incongruity between it and the context. It scarcely occurs to us to associate wisdom and good sense with the pardon of sin, as kindred bestowments of the gospel. Minds of the evangelical order are often supposed, indeed, to be wanting in intellectual excellences and indifferent to their value. Is it not true that "not many wise after the flesh were called"? Do we not glory above everything in preaching a "simple gospel"?

But there is another side to all this. "Christ was made of God unto us *wisdom*." This attribute the apostle even sets first when he writes to the wisdom-seeking Greeks, mocked by their worn-out and confused philosophies (1 Cor. i. 30). To a close observer of the primitive Christian societies few things must have been more noticeable than the powerful mental stimulus imparted by the new faith. These epistles are a witness to the fact. That such letters could be addressed to communities gathered mainly from the lower ranks of society—consisting of slaves, common artisans, poor women—shows that the moral regeneration effected in St. Paul's converts was accompanied by an extraordinary excitement and activity of thought. In this the apostle recognised the work of the Holy Spirit, a mark of God's special favour and blessing. "I give thanks always for you," he writes to the Corinthians, "for the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched by Him, in all word and all knowledge." The leaders of the apostolic Church were the profoundest thinkers of their day; though at the time the world held them for babblers, because their dialect was not in its schools. They drew from stores of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ, which none of the princes of this world knew.

Of such wisdom our epistle is full, and God "has made it to abound" to the readers in these inspired pages. Paul's "understanding in the mystery of Christ" was always deepening. In his lonely prison musings the length and breadth of the Divine counsels are disclosed to him as never before. He sees the course of the ages and of the universe being illuminated by the light of the knowledge of Christ. And what he sees, all men are to see through him (iii. 9). Blessed be God who has given to His Church through His apostles, and through the great Christian teachers of every age, His precious gifts of wisdom and prudence, and made His grace richly to overflow from the heart into the mind and understanding of men!

This intellectual gift is twofold: *phronesis* as well as *sophia*,—the bestowment not only of deep spiritual thought, but of moral sagacity, good sense, and thoughtfulness. This is a choice *charism*—a mercy of the Lord. For want of it how sadly is the fruit of other graces spoilt and wasted. How brightly it shines in St. Paul himself! What luminous and wholesome views of life, what a fund of practical sense there is in the teaching of this letter.

St. Paul rejoices in these gifts of the understanding and claims them for the Church, having in his view the false knowledge, the "philosophy and vain deceit" that was making its appearance in the Asian Churches (Col. ii. 4, 8, etc.). Our safeguard against intellectual perils lies not in ignorance, but in deeper heart-knowledge. When the grace that bestows redemption through Christ's blood adds its concomitant blessing of enlightenment, when it elevates the mind as it cleanses the heart, and abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence, the winds of doctrine and the waves of speculation blow and beat in vain; they can but bring health to a Church thus established in its faith.

Verses 9 and 10 describe the object of this new knowledge. They state the doctrine which gave this powerful mental impulse to the apostolic Church, disclosing to it a vast field of view, and supplying the most fertile and vigorous principles of moral wisdom. This impulse lay in the revelation of God's purpose to reconstitute the universe in Christ. The declaration

of "the mystery of His will" comes in at this point episodically, and by the way; and we reserve it for consideration to the end of the present chapter.

But let us observe here that our wisdom and prudence lie in the knowledge of God's will. Truth is not to be found in any system of logical notions, in schemes and syntheses of the laws of nature or of thought. The human mind can never rest for long in abstractions. It will not accept for its basis of thought that which is less real and positive than itself. By its rational instincts it is compelled to seek a Reason and a Conscience at the centre of things,—a living God. It craves to know "the mystery of His will."

III. Verse 11 fills up the measure of the bestowment of grace on sinful men. The present anticipates the future; faith and love are lifted to a glorious hope. "In whom also (*i. e.*, in Christ) *we received our heritage*, predestinated to it), according to His purpose who works all things according to the counsel of His will."

Following Meyer and other great interpreters, we prefer in this passage the rendering of the English Authorised Version ("we obtained an inheritance") to that of the Revised ("we were made a heritage"). "Fore-ordained" carries us back to verse 5—to the phrase "foreordained to sonship." The believer cannot be predestinated to sonship without being predestinated to an inheritance. "If children, then heirs" (Rom. viii. 17). But while in the parallel passage we are designated heirs "with" Christ, we appear in this place, according to the tenor of the context, as heirs "in" Him. Christ is Himself the believer's wealth, both in possession and hope: all his desire is to gain Christ (Phil. iii. 8). The apostle gives thanks here in the same strain as in Colossians i. 12-14, "to the Father who qualified us (by making us His sons) to partake of the inheritance of the saints in the light." In that thanksgiving we observe the same connection as in this between our "forgiveness" (ver. 7) and our "enfeoffment," or investment with the forfeited rights of sons of God (vv. 5, 11).

The heritage of the saints in Christ is theirs already, by actual investiture. The liberty of sons of God, access to the Father, the treasures of Christ's wisdom and knowledge, the sanctifying Spirit and the moral strength and joy that He imparts, these form a rich estate of which ancient saints had but foretastes and promises. In the all-controlling "counsel of His will," God wrought throughout the course of history to convey this heritage to us. We are children of "the fulness of the times," heirs of all the past. For us God has been working from eternity. On us the ends of the world have come. Thus from the summit of our exaltation in Christ the apostle looks backward to the beginning of Divine history.

From the same point his gaze sweeps onward to the end. God's purpose embraces the ages to come with those of the past. His working will not cease till the whole counsel is fulfilled. What we have of our inheritance, though rich and real, holds in it the promise of infinitely more; and the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance" (ver. 14). God intends "that we should be to the praise of His glory." As things are, His glory is but obscurely visible in His saints. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be,"—and will not appear until the unveiling of the sons of God (Rom. viii. 18-25). One day God's glory in us will burst forth in its splendour. All beholders in heaven and earth will then sing "to the praise of His glory," when it is seen in His redeemed and godlike sons.

Verses 9 and 10 ("which He purposed . . . upon the earth") are, as we have said, a parenthesis or episode in the passage just reviewed. Neither in structure nor in sense would the paragraph be defective, had this clause been wanting. With the "in Him" repeated at the end of verse 10, St. Paul resumes the main current of his thanksgiving, arrested for a moment while he dwells on "the mystery of God's will."

This last expression (ver. 9), notwithstanding what he has said in verses 4 and 5, still needs elucidation. He will pause for an instant to set forth once more the eternal purpose, to the knowledge of which the Church is now admitted. The communication of this mystery is, he says, "according to God's good pleasure which he purposed in Christ (comp. ver. 4), for a dispensation of the fulness of the times, intending to gather up again all things in the Christ—the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth."

God formed in Christ the purpose, by the dispensation of His grace, in due time to re-unite the universe under the headship of Christ. This mysterious design, hitherto kept secret, He has "made known unto us." Its manifestation imparts a wisdom that surpasses all the wisdom of former ages. Such is the drift of this profound deliverance.

The first clause of verse 10 supplies a datum for its interpretation. "The fulness of the times," in St. Paul's dialect, can only be the time of Christ. The dispensation which God designed of old is that in which the apostle himself is now engaged; it is the dispensation, or administration ("economy"), of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, whether God be conceived as Himself the Dispenser, or through the stewards of His mysteries. The Messianic end was to Paul's Jewish thought the dénouement of antecedent history. How long this age would continue, into what epochs it might unfold itself, he knew not; but for him the fulness of the times had arrived. The Son of God was come; the kingdom of God was amongst men. It was the beginning of the end. It is a mistake to relegate this text to the dim and distant future, to some far-off consummation. We are in the midst of the Christian reconstruction of things, and are taking part in it. The decisive epoch fell when "God sent forth His Son." All that has followed, and will follow, is the result of this mission. Christ is all things, and in all; and we are already complete in Him.

What, then, signifies this "gathering-into-one" or "summing-up" of all things in Christ? Our "recapitulate" is the nearest equivalent of the Greek verb, in its etymological sense. In Romans xiii. 8, 9 the same word is used, where the several commands of the second table of the Decalogue are said to be "comprehended in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This summing up is not a generalisation or compendious statement of the com-

mands of God; it signifies their reduction to a fundamental principle. They are unified by the discovery of a law that underlies them all. And while thus theoretically explained, they are made practically effective: "For love is the fulfilling of the law."

Similarly, St. Paul finds in Christ the fundamental principle of the creation. For those who think with him, God has by the Christian revelation already brought all things to their unity. This summing up—the Christian inventory and recapitulation of the universe—the apostle has formally stated in Colossians i. 15-20: "Christ is God's image and creation's firstborn. In Him, through Him, for Him all things were made. He is before them all; and in Him they have their basis and uniting bond. He is equally the Head of the Church and the new creation, the firstborn out of the dead, that He might hold a universal presidence—charged with all the fulness, so that in Him is the ground of the reconciliation no less than of the creation of all things in heaven and earth." What can we desire more comprehensive than this? It is the theory and programme of the world revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The "gathering into one" of this text includes the "reconciliation" of Colossians i. 20, and more. It signifies, beside the removal of the enmities which are the effect of sin (ii. 14-16), the subjection of all powers in heaven and earth to the rule of Christ (vv. 21, 22), the enlightenment of the angelic magnates as to God's dealings with men (iii. 9, 10),—in fine, the rectification and adjustment of the several parts of the great whole of things, bringing them into full accord with each other and with their Creator's will. What St. Paul looks forward to is, in a word, the organisation of the universe upon a Christian basis. This reconstitution of things is provided for and is being effected "in the Christ." He is the rallying point of the forces of peace and blessing. The organic principle, the organising Head, the creative nucleus of the new creation is there. The potent germ of life eternal has been introduced into the world's chaos; and its victory over the elements of disorder and death is assured.

Observe that the apostle says "in *the Christ*." He is not speaking of Christ in the abstract, considered in His own Person or as He dwells in heaven, but in His relations to men and to time. The Christ manifest in Jesus (iv. 20, 21), the Christ of prophets and apostles, the Messiah of the ages, the Husband of the Church (v. 23), is the author and finisher of this grand restoration.

Christ's work is essentially a work of "restoration." We must insist, with Meyer, upon the significance of the Greek preposition in Paul's compound verb (*ana-*, equal to *re-* in "restore" or "resume"). The Christ is not simply the climax of the past—the Son of man and the recapitulation of humanity, as man is of the creatures below him, summing up human development and lifting it to a higher stage—though He is all that. Christ "rehabilitates" man and the world. He re-asserts the original ground of our being, as that exists in God. He carries us and the world forward out of sin and death, by carrying us back to God's ideal. The new world is the old world repaired, and in its reparation infinitely enhanced—rich in the memories of redemption, in the fruit of penitence and the discipline of suffering, in the lessons of the cross.

"All things" in heaven and earth it was God's good pleasure in the Christ to gather again into one. Is this a general assertion concerning the universe as a whole, or may we apply it with distributive exactness to each particular thing? Is there to be, as we fain would hope, no single exception to the "all things"—no wanderer lost, no exile finally shut out from the Holy City and tree of life? Are all evil men and demons, willing or against their will, to be embraced somehow and at last—at last—in the universal peace of God?

It is impossible that the first readers should have so construed Paul's words (comp. v. 5). He has not forgotten the "unquenchable fire," the "eternal punishment," nor dare we. "If anything is certain about the teaching of Christ and His apostles, it is that they warned men not to reject the Divine mercy, and so to incur irrevocable exile from God's presence and joy. They assumed that some men would be guilty of this supreme crime, and would be doomed to this supreme woe" (Dale). There is nothing in this text to warrant any man in presuming on the mercy or the sovereignty of God, nothing to justify us in supposing that, deliberately refusing to be reconciled to God in Christ, we shall yet be reconciled in the end despite ourselves.

St. Paul assures us that God and the world will be reunited, and that peace will reign through all realms and orders of existence. He does not, and he could not, say that none will exclude themselves from the eternal kingdom. Making men free, God has made it possible for them to contradict Him, so long as they have any being. The apostle's words have their note of warning, along with their boundless promise. There is no place in the future order of things for aught that is out of Christ. There is no standing-ground anywhere for the unclean and the unjust, for the irreconcilable rebel against God. "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity."

CHAPTER IV.

THE FINAL REDEMPTION.

Ephesians i. 12-14.

When the apostle reaches the "heritage" conferred upon us in Christ (ver. 11), he is on the boundary between the present and the future. Into that future he now presses forward, gathering from it his crowning tribute "to the praise of God's glory." We shall find, however, that this heritage assumes a twofold character, as did the conception of the inheritance of the Lord in the Old Testament. If the saints have their heritage in Christ, partly possessed and partly to be possessed, God has likewise, and antecedently, His inheritance in them, of which He too has still to take full possession.

Opening upon this final prospect, St. Paul touches on a subject of supreme interest to himself and that could not fail to find a place in his great Act of Praise—viz., *the admission of the Gentiles* to the spiritual property of Israel. The thought of the heirship of believers and of God's

previous counsel respecting it (ver. 11), brought before his mind the distinction between Jew and Gentile and the part assigned to each in the Divine plan. Hence he varies the general refrain in verse 12 by saying significantly, "that *we* might be to the praise of His glory." This emphatic *we* is explained in the opening phrase of the last strophe: "that have beforehand fixed our hope on the Christ,"—the heirs of Israel's hope in "Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." With this "we" of Paul's Jewish consciousness the "ye also" of verse 13 is set in contrast by his vocation as Gentile apostle. This second pronoun, by one of Paul's abrupt turns of thought, is deprived of its predicating verb; but that is given already by the "hoped" of the last clause. "The Messianic hope, Israel's ancient heirloom, in its fulfilment is *yours* as much as ours."

This hope of Israel pointed Israelite and Gentile believer alike to the completion of the Messianic era, when the mystery of God should be finished and His universe redeemed from the bondage of corruption (vv. 10, 14). By the "one hope" of the Christian calling the Church is now made one. From this point of view the apostle in chapter ii. 12 describes the condition in which the gospel found his Gentile readers as that of men cut off from Christ, strangers to the covenant of promise,—in a word, "having no hope"; while he and his Jewish fellow believers held the priority that belonged to those whose are the promises. The apostle stands precisely at the juncture where the wild shoot of nature is grafted into the good olive tree. A generation later no one would have thought of writing of "the Christ in whom *you* (Gentiles) *also* have found hope"; for then Christ was the established possession of the Gentile Church.

To these Christless heathen Christ and His hope came, when they "heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation." A great light had sprung up for them that sat in darkness; the good tidings of salvation came to the lost and despairing. To the Gentiles St. Paul declared, addressing the obstinate Jews of Rome, "this salvation of God was sent: they indeed will hear it" (Acts xxviii. 28). Such was his experience in Ephesus and all the Gentile cities. There were hearing ears and open hearts, souls longing for the word of truth and the message of hope. The trespass of Israel had become the riches of the world. For this on his readers' behalf he gives joyful thanks,—that his message proved to be "the gospel of *your* salvation."

Salvation, as St. Paul understands it, includes our uttermost deliverance, the end of death itself (1 Cor. xv. 26). He renders praise to God for that he has sealed Gentile equally with Jewish believers with the stamp of His Spirit, which makes them His property and gives assurance of absolute redemption.

There are three things to be considered in this statement: the *seal* itself, the *conditions* upon which, and the *purpose* for which it is affixed.

I. A seal is a token of proprietorship put by the owner upon his property; or it is the authentication of some statement or engagement, the official stamp that gives it validity; or it is the pledge of inviolability guarding a treasure from profane or injurious hands. There are the protecting seal, the ratifying seal, and the proprietary seal. The same seal may serve each or all of these purposes. Here the thought of possession predominates (comp. ver. 4); but it can scarcely be separated from the other two. The witness of the Holy Spirit marks men out as God's *purchased right* in Christ (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20). In that very fact it guards them from evil and wrong (iv. 30), while it ratifies their Divine sonship (Gal. iv. 6) and guarantees their personal share in the promises of God (2 Cor. i. 20-22). It is a bond between God and men; a sign at once of what we are and shall be to God, and of what He is and will be to us. It secures, and it assures. It stamps us for God's possession, and His kingdom and glory as our possession.

This seal is constituted by *the Holy Spirit of the promise*,—in contrast with the material seal, "in the flesh wrought by hand," which marked the children of the Old Covenant from Abraham downwards, previously to the fulfilment of the promise (Gal. iii. 14). We bear it in the inmost part of our nature, where we are nearest to God: "The Spirit witnesseth to our spirit." "The Israelites also were sealed, but by circumcision, like cattle and irrational animals. We were sealed by the Spirit as sons" (Chrysostom). The stamp of God is on the consciousness of His children. "We know that Christ abides in us," writes St. John, "from the Spirit which He gave us" (1 John iii. 24). Under this seal is conveyed the sum of blessing comprised in our salvation. Jesus promised your "heavenly Father will give His Spirit to them that ask" (Luke xi. 13), as if there were nothing else to ask. Giving us this, God gives everything, gives us Himself! In substance or anticipation, this one bestowment contains all good things of God.

The apostle writes "the Spirit of the promise, *the Holy* [Spirit]," with emphasis on the word of quality; for the testifying power of the seal lies in its character. "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they are of God" (1 John iv. 1). There are false prophets, deceiving and deceived; there are promptings from "the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience," diabolical inspirations, so plausible and astonishing that they may deceive the very elect. It is a most perilous error to identify the supernatural with the Divine, to suppose mere miracles and communications from the invisible sphere a sign of the working of God. Antichrist can mimic Christ by his "lying wonders and deceit of unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 8-12). Jesus never appealed to the power of His works in proof of His mission, apart from their ethical quality. God's Spirit works after His kind, and makes ours a holy spirit. There is an objective and subjective witness—the obverse and reverse of the medal (2 Tim. ii. 19). To be sealed by the Holy Spirit is, in St. Paul's dialect, the same thing as to be *sanctified*; only, the phrase of this text brings out graphically the promissory aspect of sanctification, its bearing on our final redemption.

When the sealing Spirit is called the Spirit *of promise*, does the expression look backward or forward? Is the apostle thinking of the past promise now fulfilled, or of some promise still to be fulfilled? The former, undoubtedly, is true. *The* promise (the article is significant) is, in the words of Christ, "the promise of the Father." On the day of Pentecost St. Peter pointed to the descent of the Holy Spirit as God's seal upon the Messiahship of Jesus, ful-

filling what was promised to Israel for the last days. When this miraculous effusion was repeated in the household of Cornelius, the Jewish apostle saw its immense significance. He asked, "Can any one forbid water that these should be baptised, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" (Acts x. 47). This was the predicted criterion of the Messianic times. Now it was *given*, and with an abundance beyond hope,—*poured out*, in the full sense of Joel's words, *upon all flesh*.

Now, if God has done so much—for this is the implied argument of verses 13, 14—He will surely accomplish the rest. The attainment of past hope is the warrant of present hope. He who gives us his own Spirit, will give us the fulness of eternal life. The earnest implies the sum. In the witness of the Holy Spirit there is for the Christian man the power of an endless life, a spring of courage and patience that can never fail.

II. But there are very definite conditions, upon which this assurance depends. "When you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation"—there is the outward condition: "when you believed"—there is the inward and subjective qualification for the affixing of the seal of God to the heart.

How characteristic is this antithesis of *hearing* and *faith!* St. Paul delights to ring the changes upon these terms. The gospel he carried about with him was a message from God to men, the good news about Jesus Christ. It needs, on the one hand, to be effectively uttered, proclaimed so as to be heard with the understanding; and, on the other hand, it must be trustfully received and obeyed. Then the due result follows. There is salvation—conscious, full.

If they are to believe unto salvation, men must be made to *hear* the word of truth. Unless the good news reaches their ears and their heart, it is no good news to them. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14). The light may be true, and the eyes clear and open; but there is no vision till both meet, till the illuminating ray falls on the sensitive spot and touches the responsive nerve. How many sit in darkness, groping and wearying for the light, ready for the message if there were any to speak it to them! Great would Paul's guilt have been, if when Christ called him to preach to the heathen, he had refused to go, if he had withheld the gospel of salvation from the multitudes waiting to receive it at his lips. Great also are our fault and blame, and heavy the reproach against the Church to-day, when with means in her hand to make Christ known to almost the whole world, she leaves vast numbers of men within her reach in ignorance of His message. She is not the proprietor of the Christian truth: it is God's Gospel; and she holds it as God's trustee for mankind,—that through her "the message might be fully preached, and that all the nations might hear" (2 Tim. iv. 17). She has St. Paul's programme in hand still to complete, and loiters over it.

The nature of the message constitutes our duty to proclaim it. It is "the word of *truth*." If there be any doubt upon this, if our certainty of the Christian truth is shaken and we can no longer announce it with full conviction, our zeal for its propagation naturally declines. Scepticism chills and kills missionary fervour, as the breath of the frost the young growth of spring. At home and amongst our own people evangelistic agencies are supported by many who have no very decided personal faith, from secondary motives,—with a view to their social and reformatory benefits, out of philanthropic feeling and love to "the brother whom we have seen." The foreign missions of the Church, like the work of the Gentile apostle, gauge her real estimate of the gospel she believes and the Master she serves.

But if we have no sure word of prophecy to speak, we had better be silent. Men are not saved by illusion or speculation. Christianity did not begin by offering to mankind a legend for a gospel, or win the ear of the world for a beautiful romance. When the apostles preached Jesus and the resurrection, they declared what they knew. To have spoken otherwise, to have uttered cunningly devised fables, or pious fantasies or conjectures of their own, would have been, in their view, to bear false witness against God. Before the hostile scrutiny of their fellowmen, and in prospect of the awful judgment of God, they testified the facts about Jesus Christ, the things that they had "heard, and seen with their eyes, and which their hands had handled concerning the word of life." They were as sure of these things as of their own being. Standing upon this ground and with this weapon of truth alone in their hands, they denounced "the wiles of error" and the "craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive" (iv. 14).

And they could always speak of this word of truth, addressing whatsoever circle of hearers or of readers, as "the good news of *your salvation*." The pronoun, as we have seen, is emphatic. The glory of Paul's apostolic mission was its universalism. His message was to every man he met. His latest writings glow with delight in the world-wide destination of his gospel. It was his consolation that the Gentiles in multitudes received the Divine message to which his countrymen closed their ears. And he rejoiced in this the more, because he foresaw that ultimately the gospel would return to its native home, and at last amid "the fulness of the Gentiles all Israel would be saved" (Rom. xi. 13-32). At present Israel was not prepared to seek, while the Gentiles were seeking righteousness by the way of faith (Rom. ix. 30-33).

For it is upon this question of "faith" that the whole issue turns. Hearing is much, when one hears the word of truth and news of salvation. But faith is the point at which salvation becomes ours—no longer a possibility, an opportunity, but a fact: "in whom indeed, *when you believed*, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit." So characteristic is this act of the new life to which it admits, that St. Paul is in the habit of calling Christians, without further qualification, simply "believers" ("those who believe," or "who believed"). Faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit are associated in his thoughts, as closely as Faith and Justification. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" was the question he put to the Baptist's disciples whom he found at Ephesus on first arriving there (Acts xix. 2). This was the test of the adequacy of their faith. He reminds the Galatians that they "received the Spirit from the hearing of faith," and tells them that in this way the blessing and the promise of Abraham were theirs already (Gal. iii. 2, 7, 14). Faith in the word of Christ admits the Spirit of

Christ, who is in the word waiting to enter. Faith is the trustful surrender and expectancy of the soul towards God; it sets the heart's door open for Christ's incoming through the Spirit. This was the order of things from the beginning of the new dispensation. "God gave to them," says St. Peter of the first baptised Gentiles, "the like gift as he did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning" (Acts xi. 15-18). Upon our faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit enters the soul and announces Himself by His message of adoption, crying in us to God, "Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6, 7).

In the chamber of our spirit, while we abide in faith, the Spirit of the Father and the Son dwells with us, witnessing to us of the love of God and leading us into all truth and duty and divine joy, instilling a deep and restful peace, breathing an energy that is fire and fountain of life within the breast, which pours out itself in prayer and labour for the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is no mere gift to receive, or comfort to enjoy; He is an almighty Force in the believing soul and the faithful Church.

III. The end for which the seal of God was affixed to Paul's Gentile readers, along with their Jewish brethren in Christ, appears in the last verse, with which the Act of praise terminates: "sealed," he says, "with the Holy Spirit, which is the earnest of our inheritance, *until the redemption of the possession.*"

The last of these words is the equivalent of the Old Testament phrase rendered in Exodus xix. 5, and elsewhere, "a *peculiar treasure* unto me"; in Deuteronomy vii. 6, etc., "a *peculiar* people" (*i. e.*, people *of possession*). The same Greek term is employed by the Septuagint translators in Malachi iii. 17, where our Revisers have substituted "a peculiar treasure" for the familiar, but misleading "jewels" of the older Version. St. Peter in his first epistle (ii. 9, 10) transfers the title from the Jewish people to the new Israel of God, who are "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people *for God's own possession.*" In that passage, as in this, the Revisers have inserted the word *God's* in order to signify whose possession the term signifies in Biblical use. In the other places in the New Testament where the same Greek noun occurs,* it retains its primary active force, and denotes "*obtaining* of the glory," etc., "*saving* of the soul." The word signifies not the possessing so much as the "acquiring" or "securing" of its object. The Latin Vulgate suitably renders this phrase, *in redemptionem acquisitionis*,—"till the redemption of the acquisition."

God has "redeemed unto Himself a people"; He has "bought us with a price." His rights in us are both natural and "acquired"; they are redemptional rights, the recovered rights of the infinite love which in Jesus Christ saved mankind by extreme sacrifice from the doom of death eternal. This redemption "we have, in the remission of our trespasses" (ver. 7). But this is only the beginning. Those whose sin is cancelled and on whom God now looks with favour in Christ, are thereby redeemed and saved (ii. 5, 8). They are within the kingdom of grace; they have passed out of death into life. They have but to persist in the grace into which they have entered, and all will be well. "Now," says the apostle to the Romans, "you are made free from sin and made servants to God; you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life."

Our salvation is come; but, after all, it is still to come. We find the apostle using the words "save" and "redeem" in this twofold sense, applying them both to the commencement and the consummation of the new life. The last act, in Romans viii. 23, he calls "the redemption of the body." This will reinstate the man in the integrity of his twofold being as a son of God. Hence our bodily redemption is there called an "adoption." For as Jesus Christ by His resurrection was marked out (*or* instated) as Son of God in power" (Rom. i. 4), not otherwise will it be with His many brethren. Their reappearance in the new "body of glory" will be a "revelation" to the universe "of the sons of God."

But this last redemption—or rather this last act of the one redemption—like the first, is through the blood of the cross. Christ has borne for us in His death the entire penalty of sin; the remission of that penalty comes to us in two distinct stages. The shadow of death is lifted off from our spirits now, in the moment of forgiveness. But for reasons of discipline it remains resting upon our bodily frame. Death is a usurper and trespasser in the bounds of God's heritage. Virtually and in principle, he is abolished; but not in effect. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave," the Lord said of His Israel, with a meaning deeper than His prophet knew. When that is done, then God will have redeemed, in point of fact, those possessions in humanity which He so much prizes, that for their recovery He spared not His Son.

So long as mortality afflicts us, God cannot be satisfied on our account. His children are suffering and tortured; His people mourn under the oppression of the enemy. They sigh, and creation with them, under the burdensome and infirm tabernacle of the flesh, this body of our humiliation for which the hungry grave clamours. God's new estate in us is still encumbered with the liabilities in which the sin of the race involved us, with the "ills that flesh is heir to." But this mortgage—that we call, with a touching euphemism, "the debt of nature"—will at last be discharged. Soon shall we be free for ever from the law of sin and death. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

To God, as He looks down upon men, the seal of His Spirit upon their hearts anticipates this full emancipation. He sees already in the redeemed spirit of His children what will be manifest in their glorious heavenly form. The same token is to ourselves as believing men the "earnest of our inheritance." Note that at this point the apostle drops the "you" by which he has for several sentences distinguished between Jewish and Gentile brethren. He identifies them with himself and speaks of "*our* inheritance." This sudden resumption of the first person, the self-assertion of the filial consciousness in the writer breaking through the grammatical order, is a fine trait of the Pauline manner.

Arrhabon, the "earnest," ("fastening-penny"), is a Phœnician word of the market, which passed into Greek and Latin,—a monument of the dar-

* 1 Thess. v. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 14; Heb. x. 39.

ing pioneers of Mediterranean commerce. It denotes the part of the price given by a purchaser in making a bargain, or of the wages given by the hirer concluding a contract of service, by way of assurance that the stipulated sum will be forthcoming. Such pledge of future payment is at the same time a bond between those concerned, engaging each to his part in the transaction.

The earnest is the seal, and something more. It is an instalment, a "token in kind," a foretaste of the feast to come. In the parallel passage, Romans viii. 23, the same earnest is called "the firstfruit of the Spirit." What the earliest sheaf is to the harvest, that the entrance of the Spirit of God into a human soul is to the glory of its ultimate salvation. The sanctity, the joy, the sense of recovered life is the same in kind then and now, differing only in degree and expression.

Of the "earnest of the Spirit" St. Paul has spoken twice already, in 2 Corinthians i. 22 and v. 5, where he cites this inner witness to assure us, in the first instance, that God will fulfil to us His promises, "how many soever they be"; and in the second, that our mortal nature shall be "swallowed up of life"—assimilated to the living spirit to which it belongs—and that "God has wrought us for this very thing." These earlier sayings explain the apostle's meaning here. God has made us His sons, in accordance with His purpose formed in the depths of eternity (ver. 5). As sons, we are His heirs in fellowship with Christ, and already have received rich blessings out of this heritage (ver. 11). But the richest part of it, including that which concerns the bodily form of our life, is still unredeemed, notwithstanding that the price of its redemption is paid.

For this we wait till the time appointed of the Father,—the time when He will reclaim His heritage in us, and give us full possession of our heritage in Christ. We do not wait, as did the saints of former ages, ignorant of the Father's purpose for our future lot. "Life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel." We see beyond the chasm of death. We enjoy in the testimony of the Holy Spirit the foretaste of an eternal and glorious life for all the children of God—nay, the pledge that the reign of evil and death shall end througout the universe.

With this hope swelling their hearts, the apostle's readers once more triumphantly join in the refrain: "To the praise of His glory."

CHAPTER V.

FOR THE EYES OF THE HEART.

Ephesians i. 15-20.

"Because of this": because you have heard the glad tidings, and believing it have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (vv. 13, 14). "I too": I your apostle, with so great an interest in your salvation, in return give thanks for you. Thus St. Paul, having extolled to the uttermost God's counsel of redemption unfolded through the ages, claims to offer special thanksgiving for the faith of those who belong to his Gentile province and are, directly or indirectly, the fruit of his own ministry (iii. 1-13).

The intermediate clause of verse 15, describing the readers' faith, is obscure. This form of expression occurs nowhere else in St. Paul; but the construction is used by St. Luke,—*e. g.*, in Acts xxi. 21: "All the Jews *which are among* the Gentiles," where it implies diffusion over a wide area. This being a circular letter, addressed to a number of Churches scattered through the province of Asia, of whose faith in many cases St. Paul knew only by report, we can understand how he writes: "having heard of the faith that is (spread) amongst you."—"The love," completing "faith" in the ordinary text (as in Col. i. 4), is relegated by the Revisers to the margin, upon evidence that seems conclusive. The commentators, however, feel so strongly the harshness of this ellipsis that, in spite of the ancient witnesses, they read, almost with one consent, "*your love* toward all the saints." The variation of the former clause prepares us, however, for something peculiar in this. In verse 13 we found St. Paul's thought fixed on the decisive fact of his readers' "faith." On this he still dwells lingeringly. The grammatical link needed between "faith" and "unto all the saints" is supplied in the Revised Version by "ye show," after the analogy of Philemon 5. Perhaps it might be supplied as grammatically, and in a sense better suiting the situation, by "is come." Then the co-ordinate prepositional phrases qualifying "faith" have both alike a local reference, and we paraphrase the clause thus: "since I heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is spread amongst you, and whose report has reached all the saints."

We are reminded of the thanksgiving for the Roman Church, "that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world." The success of the gospel in Asia gave encouragement to believers in Christ everywhere. St. Paul loves in this way to link Church to Church, to knit the bonds of faith between land and land: in this letter most of all; for it is his catholic epistle, the epistle of the Church œcumenical.

In verse 16 we pass from praise to prayer. God is invoked by a double title peculiar to this passage, as "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." The former expression is in no way difficult. The apostle often speaks, as in verse 3, of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ": intending to qualify the Divine Fatherhood by another epithet, he writes for once simply of "*the God* of our Lord Jesus Christ." This reminds us of the dependence of the Lord Jesus upon the Eternal Father, and accentuates the Divine sovereignty so conspicuous in the foregoing Act of Praise. Christ's constant attitude towards the Father was that of His cry of anguish on the cross, "My God, My God!" Yet He never speaks to men of *our* God. To us God is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," as He was to the men of old time "the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob."

The key to the designation "Father of glory" is in Romans vi. 4: "Christ was raised from the dead through *the glory of the Father.*" In the light of this august manifestation of God's power to save His lost sons in Christ, we are called to see light (vv. 19, 20). Its glory shines already about God's blessed name of Father, thrice glorified in the apostle's praise (vv. 3-14). The title is the counterpart of "the Father of compassions" in 2 Corinthians i. 3.

And now, what has the apostle to ask of the

Father of men under these glorious appellations? He asks "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full-knowledge of Him,—the eyes of your heart enlightened, in order that you may know," etc. This recalls the emphasis with which in verses 8 and 9 he set "wisdom and intelligence" amongst the first blessings bestowed by Divine grace upon the Church. It was the gift which the Asian Churches at the present juncture most needed; this is just now the burden of the apostle's prayers for his people.

The "spirit of wisdom and revelation" desired will proceed from the Holy Spirit dwelling in these Gentile believers (ver. 13). But it must belong to their own spirit and direct their personal mental activity, the spirit of revelation becoming "the spirit of their mind" (iv. 23). When St. Paul asks for "a spirit of wisdom and *revelation*," he desires that his readers may have amongst themselves a fountain of inspiration and share in the prophetic gifts diffused through the Church. And "the knowledge—the full, deep knowledge of God" is the sphere "in" which this richer inspiration and spiritual wisdom are exercised and nourished. "Philosophy, taking man for its centre, says, *Know thyself:* only the inspired word, which proceeds from God, has been able to say, *Know God.*"

The connection of the first clause of verse 18 with the last of verse 17 is not very clear in St. Paul's Greek; there is a characteristic incoherence of structure. The continuity of thought is unmistakable. He prays that through this inspired wisdom his readers may have their reason enlightened to see the grandeur and wealth of their religion. This is a vision for "the eyes of the heart." It is disclosed to the eye behind the eye, to the heart which is the true discerner.

> "The seeing eyes
> See best by the light in the heart that lies."

Yonder is an ox grazing in the meadow on a bright summer's day. Round him is spread the fairest landscape,—a broad stretch of herbage embroidered with flowers, the river gleaming in and out amongst the distant trees, the hills on both sides bounding the quiet valley, sunshine and shadows chasing each other as they leap from height to height. But of all this what sees the grazing ox? So much lush pasture and cool shade and clear water where his feet may plash when he is done feeding. In the same meadow there stands a poet musing, or a painter busy at his easel; and on the soul of that gifted man there descends, through eyes outwardly discerning no more than those of the beast at his side, a vision of wonder and beauty which will make all time richer. The eyes of the man's heart are opened, and the spirit of wisdom and revelation is given him in the knowledge of God's work in nature.

Like differences exist amongst men in regard to the things of religion. "So foolish was I and ignorant," says the Psalmist, speaking of his former dejection and unbelief, "I was as a beast before Thee!" There shall be two men sitting side by side in the same house of prayer, at the same gate of heaven. The one sees heaven opened; he hears the eternal song; his spirit is a temple filled with the glory of God. The other sees the place and aspect of his fellow-worshippers; he hears the music of organ and choir, and the sound of some preacher's voice. But as for anything besides, any influence from another world, it is no more to him at that moment than is the music in the poet's soul or the colours on the painter's canvas to the ox that eateth grass.

It is not the strangeness and distance of Divine things alone that cause insensibility; their familiarity has the same effect. We know all this gospel so well. We have read it, listened to it, gone over its points of doctrine a hundred times. It is trite and easy to us as a worn glove. We discuss without a tremor of emotion truths the first whisper and dim promise of which once lifted men's souls into ecstasy, or cast them down into depths of shame and bewilderment so that they forgot to eat their bread. The awe of things eternal, the mystery of our faith, the Spirit of glory and of God rest on us no longer. So there come to be, as one hears it said, "gospel-hardened" hearers—and gospel-hardened preachers! The eyes see—and see not; the ears hear—and hear not; the lips speak without feeling; "the heart is waxen fat." This is the nemesis of grace abused. It is the result that follows by an inevitable psychological law, where outward contact with spiritual truth is not attended with an inward apprehension and response. How do we need to pray, in handling these dread themes, for a true sense and savour of Divine things,—that there may be given, and ever given afresh to us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God."

Three things the apostle desires that his readers may see with the heart's enlightened eyes: the "hope to which God calls them, the wealth that He possesses in them, and the power which He is prepared to exert upon them as believing men."

I. What, then, is our "hope" in God? What is the ideal of our faith? For what purpose has God called us into the fellowship of His Son? What is our religion going to do for us and to make of us?

It will bring us safe home to heaven. It will deliver us from the present evil world, and preserve us unto Christ's heavenly kingdom. God forbid that we should make light of "the hope laid up for us in the heavens," or cast it aside. It is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. But is it *the* hope of our calling? Is this what St. Paul here chiefly signifies? We are very sure that it is not. But it is the one thing which stands for the hope of the gospel in many minds. "We trust that our sins are forgiven: we hope that we shall get to heaven!" The experience of how many Christian believers begins and ends there. We make of our religion a harbour of refuge, a soothing anodyne, an escape from the anguish of guilt and the fear of death; not a life-vocation, a grand pursuit. The definition we have quoted may suffice for the beginning and the end; but we need something to fill out that formula, to give body and substance, meaning and movement to the life of faith.

Let the apostle tell us what he regarded, for himself, as the end of religion, what was the object of his ambition and pursuit. "One thing I do," he writes to the Philippians, opening to them all his heart,—"One thing I do. I press towards the mark for the prize of my high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And what, pray, was that mark?—"that I may gain Christ and

be found in Him!—that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain unto the final resurrection from the dead." Yes, Paul hopes for heaven; but he hopes for something else first, and most. It is through Christ that he sees heaven. To know Christ, to love Christ, to serve Christ, to follow Christ, to be like Christ, to be with Christ for ever!—that is what St. Paul lived for. Whatever aim he pursues or affection he cherishes, Christ lies in it and reaches beyond it. In doing or in suffering, in his intellect and his heart, in his thoughts for himself or for others, Christ is all things to him and in all. When life is thus filled with Christ, heaven becomes, as one may say, a mere circumstance, and death but an incident upon the way,—in the soul's everlasting pursuit of Christ.

Behold, then, brethren, the hope of our calling. God could not call us to any destiny less or lower than this. It would have been unworthy of Him—and may we not say, unworthy of ourselves, if we are in truth His sons? From eternity the Father of spirits has predestined you and me to be holy and without blemish before Him,—in a word, to be conformed to the image of His Son. Every other hope is dross compared to this.

II. Another vision for the heart's eyes, still more amazing than that we have seen: "what is," St. Paul writes, "the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints."

We saw, in considering the eleventh and fourteenth verses, how the apostle, in characteristic fashion, plays upon the double aspect of the "inheritance," regarding it now as the heritage of the saints in God and again as His heritage in them. The former side of this relationship was indicated in the "hope of the Divine calling,"—which we live and strive for as it is promised us by God; and the latter comes out, by way of contrast, in this second clause. Verse 18 repeats in another way the antithesis of verse 14 between our inheritance and God's acquisition. We must understand that God sets great store by us His human children, and counts Himself rich in our affection and our service. How deeply it must affect us to know this, and to see the glory that in God's eyes belongs to His possession in believing men.

What presumption is all this, some one says. How preposterous to imagine that the Maker of the worlds interests Himself in atoms like ourselves,—in the ephemera of this insignificant planet! But moral magnitudes are not to be measured by a foot-rule. The mind which can traverse the immensities of space and hold them in its grasp, transcends the things it counts and weighs. As it is amongst earthly powers, so the law may hold betwixt sphere and sphere in the system of worlds, in the relations of bodies terrestial and celestial to each other, that "God has chosen the weak things to put to shame the mighty, and the things that are not to bring to nought the things that are." Through the Church He is "making known to the potentates in the heavenly places His manifold wisdom" (iii. 10). The lowly can sing evermore with Mary in the Magnificat: "He that is mighty hath magnified me." If it be true that God spared not His Son for our salvation and has sealed us with the seal of His Spirit, if He chose us before the world's foundation to be His saints, He must set upon those saints an infinite value. We may despise ourselves; but He thinks great things of us.

And is this, after all, so hard to understand? If the alternative were put to some owner of wide lands and houses full of treasure: "Now you must lose that fine estate, or see your own son lost and ruined! You must part with a hundred thousand pounds—or with your best friend!" there could be no doubt in such a case what the choice would be of a man of sense and worth, one who sees with the eyes of the heart. Shall we think less nobly of God than of a right-minded man amongst ourselves?—Suppose, again, that one of our great cities were so full of wealth that the poorest were housed in palaces and fared sumptuously every day, though its citizens were profligates and thieves and cowards! What would its opulence and luxury be worth? Is it not evident that "character" is the only possession of intrinsic value, and that this alone gives worth and weight to other properties? "The saints that are in the earth and the excellent" are earth's riches.

So far as we can judge of His ways, the great God who made us cares comparatively little about the upholstery and machinery of the universe; but He cares immensely about men, about the character and destiny of men. There is nothing in all that physical science discloses for God to *love*, nothing kindred to Himself. "Hast thou considered My servant Job?" the Hebrew poet pictnres Him saying before heaven and hell!—"Hast thou considered My servant Job?—a perfect man and upright: there is none like him in the earth." How proud God is of a man like that, in a world like this. Who can tell the value that the Father of glory sets upon the tried fidelity of His humblest servant here on earth; the intensity with which He reciprocates the confidence of one timid, trembling human heart, or the simple reverence of one little child that lisps His awful name? "He *taketh pleasure* in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy!" Beneath His feet all the worlds lie spread in their starry splendour, our sun with its train of planets no more than one glimmering spot of light amongst ten thousand. But amidst this magnificence, what is the sight that wins His tender fatherly regard? "To that man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at My word." Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. The Creator rejoices in His works as at the beginning, the Lord of heaven and earth in His dominion. But these are not His "inheritance." That is in the love of His children, in the character and number of His saints. *We* are to be the praise of His glory.

Let us learn, then, to respect ourselves. Let us not take the world's tinsel for wealth, and spend our time, like the man in Bunyan's dream, scraping with "the muck-rake" while the crown of life shines above our head. The riches of a Church—nay, of any human community—lie not in its moneyed resources, but in the men and women that compose it, in their godlike attributes of mind and heart, in their knowledge, their zeal, their love to God and man, in the purity, the gentleness, the truthfulness and courage and fidelity that are found amongst them. These are the qualities that give distinction to human life, and are beautiful in the eyes of God and holy angels. "Man that is in honour, and

understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

III. One thing more we need to understand, or what we have seen already will be of little practical avail. We may see glorious visions, we may cherish high aspirations; and they may prove to be but the dreams of vanity. Nay, it is conceivable that God Himself might have wealth invested in our nature, a treasure beyond price, shipwrecked and sunk irrecoverably through our sin. What means exist for realising this inheritance? what power is there at work to recover these forfeited hopes, and that glory of God of which we have come so miserably short?

The answer lies in the apostle's words: "That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us that believe,"—a power measured by "the energy of the might of His strength which He wrought in the Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly places." This is the power that we have to count upon, the force that is yoked to the world's salvation and is at the service of our faith. Its energy has turned the tide and reversed the stream of nature—in the person of Jesus Christ and in the course of human history. It has changed death to life. Above all, it certifies the forgiveness of sin and releases us from its liabilities; it transforms the law of sin and death into the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

We preachers hear it said sometimes: "You live in a speculative world. Your doctrines are ideal and visionary,—altogether too high for men as they are and the world as we find it. Human nature and experience, the coarse realities of life, are all against you."

What would our objectors have said at the grave-side of Jesus? "The beautiful dreamer, the sublime idealist! He was too good for a world such as ours. It was sure to end like this. His ideas of life were utterly impracticable." So they would have moralised. "And the good prophet talked—strangest fanaticism of all—of rising again on the third day! One thing at least we know, that the dead are dead and gone from us. No, we shall never see Jesus or His like again. Purity cannot live in this infected air. The grave ends all hope for men." But, despite human nature and human experience, He has risen again, He lives for ever! That is the apostle's message and testimony to the world. For those "who believe" it, all things are possible. A life is within our reach that seemed far off as earth from heaven. *You* may become a perfect saint.

From His open grave Christ breathed on His disciples, and through them on all mankind, the Holy Spirit. This is the efficient cause of Christianity,—the Spirit that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. The limit to its efficacy lies in the defects of our faith, in our failure to comprehend what God gave us in His Son. Is anything now too hard for the Lord? Shall anything be called impossible, in the line of God's promise and man's spiritual need? Can we put an arrest upon the working of this mysterious force, upon the Spirit of the new life, and say to it: Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther?

Look at Jesus where He was—the poor, tortured, wounded body, slain by our sins, lying cold and still in Joseph's grave: then lift up your eyes and see Him where He is,—enthroned in the worship and wonder of heaven! Measure by that distance, by the sweep and lift of that almighty Arm, the strength of the forces engaged to your salvation, the might of the powers at work through the ages for the redemption of humanity.

THE DOCTRINE.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT GOD WROUGHT IN THE CHRIST.

EPHESIANS i. 20-23.

THE division that we make at verse 20, marking off at this point the commencement of the Doctrine of the epistle, may appear somewhat forced. The great doxology of the first half of the chapter is intensely theological; and the prayer which follows it, like that of the letter to the Colossians, melts into doctrine imperceptibly. The apostle teaches upon his knees. The things he has to tell his readers, and the things he has asked on their behalf from God, are to a great extent the same. Still the writer's attitude in the second chapter is manifestly that of teaching; and his doctrine there is so directly based upon the concluding sentences of his prayer that it is necessary, for logical arrangement, to place these verses within the doctrinal section of the epistle.

The resurrection of Christ made men sensible that a new force of life had come into the world, of incalculable potency. This power was in existence before. In prelusive ways, it has wrought in the world from its foundation, and since the fall of man. By the incarnation of the Son of God it took possession of human flesh; by His sacrificial death is won its decisive triumph. But the virtue of these acts of Divine grace lay in their hiding of power, in the self-abnegation of the Son of God who emptied Himself and took a servant's form, and became obedient unto death.

With what a rebound did the "energy of the might of God's strength" put forth itself in Him, when once this sacrifice was accomplished! Even His disciples who had seen Jesus still the tempest and feed the multitude from a handful of bread and call back the spirit to its mortal frame, had not dreamed of the might of Godhead latent in Him, until they beheld Him risen from the dead. He had promised this in words; but they understood His words only when they saw the fact, when He actually stood before them "alive after His passion." The scene of Calvary—the cruel sufferings of their Master, His helpless ignominy and abandonment by God, the malignant triumph of His enemies—gave to this revelation an effect beyond measure astonishing and profound in its impression. From the stupor of grief and despair they were raised to a boundless hope, as Jesus rose from the death of the cross to glorious life and Godhead.

Of the same nature was the effect produced by His manifestation to Paul himself. The Nazarene prophet known to Saul by report as an attractive teacher and worker of miracles, had made enormous pretensions, blasphemous if they were not true. He put Himself forward as the

Messiah and the very Son of God! But when brought to the test, His power utterly failed. God disowned and forsook Him; and He "was crucified of weakness." His followers declared, indeed, that He had returned from the grave. But who could believe them, a handful of Galilean enthusiasts, desperately clinging to the name of their disgraced leader! If He has risen, why does He not show Himself to others? Who can accept a crucified Messiah? The new faith is a madness, and an insult to our common Judaism! Such were Saul's former thoughts of the Christ. But when his challenge was met and the Risen One confronted him in the way to Damascus, when from that Form of insufferable glory there came a voice saying, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!" it was enough. Instantly the conviction penetrated his soul, "He liveth by the power of God." Saul's previous reasonings against the Messiahship of Jesus by the same rigorous logic were now turned into arguments for Him.

It is "*the* Christ," let us observe, in whom God "wrought raising Him from the dead": the Christ of Jewish hope (verse 12), the centre and sum of the Divine counsel for the world (verse 10), the Christ whom in that moment never to be forgotten the humbled Saul recognised in the crucified Nazarene.

The demonstration of the power of Christianity Paul had found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The power which raised Him from the dead is the working energy of our faith. Let us see what this mysterious power wrought in the Redeemer Himself; and then we will consider how it bears upon us. There are two steps indicated in Christ's exaltation: He was raised *from the death of the cross to new life amongst men;* and again from the world of men He was raised *to the throne of God in heaven.* In the enthronement of Jesus Christ at the Father's right hand, verses 22, 23 further distinguish two separate acts: there was conferred on Him *a universal Lordship;* and He was made specifically *Head of the Church,* being given to her for her Lord and Life, and he who contains the fulness of the Godhead. Such is the line of thought marked out for us.

I. God raised the Christ from the dead.

This assertion is the corner-stone of St. Paul's life and doctrine, and of the existence of Christendom. Did the event really take place? There were Christians at Corinth who affirmed, "There is no resurrection of the dead." And there are followers of Jesus now who with deep sadness confess, like the author of "Obermann Once more":

> "Now He is dead! Far hence He lies
> In the lorn Syrian town;
> And on His grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down."

If we are driven to this surrender, compelled to think that it was an apparition, a creation of their own passionate longing and heated fancy that the disciples saw and conversed with during those forty days, an apparition sprung from his fevered remorse that arrested Saul on the Damascus road—if we no longer believe in Jesus and the resurrection, it is in vain that we still call ourselves Christians. The foundation of the Christian creed is struck away from under our feet. Its spell is broken; its energy is gone.

Individual men may and do continue to believe in Christ, with no faith in the supernatural, men who are sceptics in regard to His resurrection and miracles. They believe in Himself, they say, not in His legendary wonders; in His character and teaching, in His beneficent influence—in the *spiritual* Christ, whom no physical marvel can exalt above His intrinsic greatness. And such trust in Him, where it is sincere, He accepts for all that it is worth, from the believer's heart. But this is not the faith that saved Paul, and built the Church. It is not the faith which will save the world. It is the faith of compromise and transition, the faith of those whose conscience and heart cling to Christ while their reason gives its verdict against Him. Such belief may hold good for the individuals who profess it; but it must die with them. No skill of reasoning or grace of sentiment will for long conceal its inconsistency. The plain blunt sense of mankind will decide again, as it has done already, that Jesus Christ was either a blasphemer, or He was the Son of the Eternal God; either He rose from the dead in very truth, or His religion is a fable. Christianity is not bound up with the infallibility of the Church, whether in Pope or Councils, nor with the inerrancy of the letter of Scripture: it stands or falls with the reality of the facts of the gospel, with the risen life of Christ and His presence in the Spirit amongst men.

The fact of Christ's resurrection is one upon which modern science has nothing new to say. The law of death is not a recent discovery. Men were as well aware of its universality in the first century as they are in the nineteenth, and as little disposed as we are ourselves to believe in the return of the dead to bodily life. The stark reality of death makes us all sceptics. Nothing is clearer from the narratives than the utter surprise of the friends of Jesus at His reappearance, and their complete unpreparedness for the event. They were not eager, but "*slow* of heart to believe." Their very love to the Master, as in the case of Thomas, made them fearful of self-deception. It is a shallow and an unjust criticism that dismisses the disciples as interested witnesses and predisposed to faith in the resurrection of their dead Master. Should we be thus credulous in the case of our best-beloved dead? The instinctive feeling that meets any thought of the kind, after the fact of death is once certain, is rather that of deprecation and aversion, such as Martha expressed when Jesus went to call her brother from his grave. In all the long record of human imposture and illusion, no resurrection story has ever found general credence outside of the Biblical revelation. No system of faith except our own has ever been built on the allegation that a dead man rose from the grave.

Christ's was not the only resurrection; but it is the only *final* resurrection. Lazarus of Bethany left his tomb at the word of Jesus, a living man; but he was still a mortal man, doomed to see corruption. He returned from the grave on this side, as he had entered it, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." Not so with the Christ, He passed through the region of death and issued on the immortal side, escaped from the bondage of corruption. Therefore He is called the "firstfruits" and "the firstborn *out of* the dead." Hence the alteration manifest in the risen form of Jesus. He was "changed," as St. Paul conceives those will be who await on earth their Lord's return (1 Cor. xv. 51). The mortal

in Him was swallowed up of life. The corpse that was laid in Joseph's tomb was there no longer. From it another body has issued, recognised for the same person by look and voice and movement, but indescribably transfigured. Visible and tangible as the body of the Risen One was—"Handle Me, and see," He said—it was superior to material limitations; it belonged to a state whose laws transcend the range of our experience, in which the body is the pliant instrument of the animating spirit. From the Person of the risen Saviour the apostle formed his conception of the "spiritual body," the "house from heaven" with which, as he teaches, each of the saints will be clothed—the wasted form that we lay down in the grave being transformed into the semblance of His "body of glory, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself" (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

The resurrection of the Christ inaugurated a new order of things. It was like the appearance of the first living organism amidst dead matter, or of the first rational consciousness in the unconscious world. He "is," says the apostle, the "beginning, first-begotten out of the dead" (Col. i. 18). With the harvest filling our granaries, we cease to wonder at the firstfruits; and in the new heavens and earth Christ's resurrection will seem an entirely natural thing. Immortality will then be the normal condition of human existence.

That resurrection, nevertheless, did homage to the fundamental law of science and of reason, that every occurrence, ordinary or extraordinary, shall have an adequate cause. The event was not more singular and unique than the nature of Him whom it befell. Looking back over the Divine life and deeds of Jesus, St. Peter said: "It was not possible that He should be holden of death." How unfitting and repugnant to thought, that the common death of all men should come upon Jesus Christ! There was that in His Person, in its absolute purity and godlikeness, which repelled the touch of corruption. He was "marked out," writes our apostle, "as Son of God, *according to His spirit of holiness*, by His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). These two signs of Godhead agree in Jesus; and the second is no more superhuman than the first. For Him the supernatural was natural. There was a mighty working of the being of God latent in Him, which transcended and subdued to itself the laws of our physical frame, even more completely than they do the laws and conditions of the lower realms of nature.

II. The power which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead could not leave Him in the world of sin and death. Lifting Him from hades to earth, by another step it exalted the risen Saviour above the clouds, and *seated Him at God's right hand in the heavens.*

The forty days were a halt by the way, a condescending pause in the operation of the almighty power that raised Him. "I ascend," He said to the first that saw Him,—"I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He must see His own in the world again; He must "show Himself alive after His passion by infallible proofs," that their hearts may be comforted and knit together in the assurance of faith, that they may be prepared to receive His Spirit and to bear their witness to the world. Then He will ascend up where He was before, returning to the Father's bosom. It was impossible that a spiritual body should tarry in a mortal dwelling; impossible that the familiar relations of discipleship should be resumed. No new follower can now ask of Him, "Rabbi, where dwellest Thou," under what roof amid the homes of men? For He dwells with those that love Him always and everywhere, like the Father (John xiv. 23). From this time Christ will not be known after the flesh, but as the "Lord of the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

"In the heavenlies" now abides the Risen One. This expression, so frequent in the epistle as to be characteristic of it, denotes not locality so much as condition and sphere. It speaks of the bright and deathless world of God and the angels, of which the sky has always been to men the symbol. Thither Christ ascended in the eyes of His apostles on the fortieth day from His rising. Once before His death its brightness for a moment had irradiated His form upon the Mount of Transfiguration. Clad in the like celestial splendour He showed Himself to His future apostle Paul, as to one born out of due time, to make him His minister and witness. Since then, of all the multitudes that have loved His appearing, no other has looked upon Him with bodily eyes. He dwells with the Father in light unapproachable.

But rest and felicity are not enough for Him. Christ sits at the right hand of power, that He may *rule*. In those heavenly places, it seems, there are thrones higher and lower, names more or less eminent, but His stands clear above them all. In the realms of space, in the epochs of eternity there is none to rival our Lord Jesus, no power that does not owe Him tribute. God "hath put all things under His feet." *The Christ*, who died on the cross, who rose in human form from the grave, is exalted to share the Father's glory and dominion, is filled with God's own fulness, and made without limitation or exception "Head over all things."

In his enumeration of the angelic orders in verse 21, the apostle follows the phraseology current at the time, without giving any precise dogmatic sanction to it. The epistle to the Colossians furnishes a somewhat different list (chap. i. 16); and in 1 Corinthians xv. 24 we find the "principality, dominion, and power" without the "lordship." As Lightfoot says, St. Paul "brushes away all these speculations" about the ranks and titles of the angels, "without inquiring how much or how little truth there may be in them. . . . His language shows a spirit of impatience with this elaborate angelology." There is, perhaps, a passing reproof conveyed by this sentence to the "worshipping of the angels" inculcated at the present time in Colossæ, to which other Asian Churches may have been drawn. "Paul's faith saw the Risen and Rising One passing through and beyond and above successive ranks of angelic powers, until there was in heaven no grandeur which he had not left behind. Then, after naming heavenly powers known to him, he uses a universal phrase covering 'not only' those known by men living on earth 'in the' present 'age, but also' those names which will be needed and used to describe men and angels throughout the eternal future" (Beet).

The apostle appropriates here two sentences of Messianic prophecy, from Psalms cx. and viii. The former was addressed to the Lord's

Anointed, the King-Priest enthroned in Zion: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool!" The latter text describes man in his pristine glory, as God formed him after His likeness and set him in command over His creation. This saying St. Paul applies with an unbounded scope, to the God-man raised from the dead, Founder of the new creation: "Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under His feet." To the former of these passages St. Paul repeatedly alludes; indeed, since our Lord quoted it in this sense, it became the standing designation of His heavenly dignity. The words of Psalm viii. are brought in evidence again in Hebrews ii. 5-10, and expounded from a somewhat different standpoint. As the writer of the other epistle shows, this coronation belongs to the human race, and it falls to the Son of man to win it. St. Paul in quoting the same Psalm is not insensible of its human reference. It was a prophecy for Jesus and His brethren, for Christ and the Church. So it forms a natural transition from the thought of Christ's dominion over the universe (ver. 21) to that of His union with the Church (ver. 22*b*).

III. The second clause of verse 22 begins with an emphasis upon the *object* which the English Version fails to recognise: "and *Him* He gave"—the Christ exalted to universal authority—"*Him* God gave, Head over all things [as He is], to the Church which is His body,—the fulness of Him who fills all things in all."

At the topmost height of His glory, with thrones and princedoms beneath His feet, *Christ is given to the Church!* The Head over all things, the Lord of the created universe, He—and none less or lower—is the Head of redeemed humanity. For the Church "is His body" (this clause is interjected by way of explanation): she is the vessel of His Spirit, the organic instrument of His Divine-human life. As the spirit belongs to its body, by the like fitness the Christ in His surpassing glory is the possession of believing men. The body claims its head, the wife her husband. No matter where Christ is, however high in heaven, He belongs to us. Though the Bride is lowly and of poor estate, He is hers! and she knows it, and holds fast His heart. She recks little of the people's ignorance and scorn, if their Master is her affianced Lord, and she the best-beloved in His eyes.

How rich is this gift of the Father to the Church in the Son of His love, the concluding words of the paragraph declare: "Him He gave . . . to the Church . . . [gave] the fulness of Him that fills all in all." In the risen and enthroned Christ God bestowed on man a gift in which the Divine plenitude that fills creation is embraced. For this last clause, it is clear to us, does not qualify "the Church which is His body," and expositors have needlessly taxed their ingenuity with the incongruous apposition of "body" and "fulness"; it belongs to the grand Object of the foregoing description, to "the Christ" whom God raised from the dead and invested with His own prerogatives. The two separate designations, "Head over all things" and "Fulness of the All-filler," are parallel, and alike point back to *Him* who stands with a weight of gathered emphasis—heaped up from verse 19 onwards—at the front of this last sentence (ver. 22*b*). There has been nothing to prepare the reader to ascribe the august title of the *pleroma*, the Divine fulness, to the Church—enough for her, surely, if she is His body and He God's gift to her—but there has been everything to prepare us to crown the Lord Jesus with this glory. To that which God had wrought in Him and bestowed on Him, as previously related, verse 23 adds something more and greater still; for it shows what God makes the Christ to be, not to the creatures, to the angels, to the Church, but *to God Himself!*

Our text is in strict agreement with the sayings about "the fulness" in Colossians i. 15-20 and ii. 9, 10; as well as with the later references of this epistle, in chapter iii. 19, iv. 13; and with John i. 16. This title belongs to Christ as God is in Him and communicates to Him all Divine powers. It was, in the apostle's view, a new and distinct act by which the father bestowed on the incarnate Son, raised by His power from the dead, the functions of Deity. Of this glory Christ had of His own accord "emptied Himself" in becoming man for our salvation (Phil. ii. 6, 7). Therefore when the sacrifice was effected and the time of humiliation passed, it "was the Father's pleasure that all the fulness should make its dwelling in Him" (Col. i. 19). At no point did Christ exalt Himself, or arrogate the glory once renounced. He prayed, when the hour was come: "Now, Father, *glorify Thou me* with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." It was for the Father to say, as He raised and enthroned Him: "Thou art my Son; I to-day have begotten Thee!" (Acts xiii. 33).

Again there was poured into the empty, humbled, and impoverished form of the Son of God the brightness of the Father's glory and the infinitude of the Father's authority and power. The majesty that He had foregone was restored to Him in undiminished measure. But how great a change meanwhile in Him who received it! This plenitude devolves not now on the eternal Son in His pure Godhead, but on the Christ, the Head and Redeemer of mankind. God who fills the universe with His presence, with His cherishing love and sustaining power, has conferred the fulness of all that He is upon our Christ. He has given Him, so replenished and perfected, to the body of His saints, that He may dwell and work in them for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

Ephesians ii. 1-6.

We pass by a sudden transition, just as in Colossians i. 21, 22, from the thought of that which God wrought in Christ Himself to that which He works through Christ in believing men. So God raised, exalted, and glorified His Son Jesus Christ (i. 19-23)—*and you!* The finely woven threads of the apostle's thought are frequently severed, and awkward chasms made in the highway of his argument, by our chapter and verse divisions. The words inserted in our Version (*did He quicken*) are borrowed by anticipation from verse 5; but they are more than supplied already in the foregoing context. "The same almighty hand that was laid upon the body of the dead Christ and lifted Him from Joseph's grave to the highest seat in heaven, is now laid

upon your soul. It has raised *you* from the grave of death and sin to share by faith His celestial life."

The apostle, in verse 3, pointedly includes amongst the "dead in trespasses and sins" himself and his Jewish fellow-believers as they "once lived," when they obeyed the motions and "volitions of the flesh," and so were "by birth" not children of favour, as Jews presumed, but "children of anger, even as the rest."

This passage gives us a sublime view of the event of our conversion. It associates that change in us with the stupendous miracle which took place in our Redeemer. The one act is a continuation of the other. There is an acting over again in us of Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, when we realise through faith that which was done for mankind in Him. At the same time, the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is no mere legacy, to be received or declined; it is not something done once for all, and left to be appropriated passively by our individual will. It is a "*power* of God unto salvation," unceasingly operative and effective, that works "of faith and *unto faith*," that summons men to faith, challenging human confidence wherever its message travels and awakening the spiritual possibilities dormant in our nature.

It is a supernatural force, then, which is at work upon us in the word of Christ. It is a resurrection-power, that turns death into life. And it is a power instinct with love. The love which went out towards the slain and buried Jesus when the Father stooped to raise Him from the dead, bends over us as we lie in the grave of our sins, and exerts itself with a might no less transcendent, that it may raise us from the dust of death to sit with Him in the heavenly places (vv. 4-6).

Let us look at the two sides of the change effected in men by the gospel—at the death they leave, and the life into which they enter. Let us contemplate the task to which this unmatched power has set itself.

I. *You that were dead,* the apostle says.

Jesus Christ came into a dead world—He the one living man, alive in body, soul, and spirit—alive to God in the world. He was, like none besides, aware of God and of God's love breathing in His Spirit, "living not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded from His mouth." "This," He said, "is life eternal." If His definition was correct, if it be life to know God, then the world into which Christ entered by His human birth, the world of heathendom and Judaism, was veritably dying or dead—"dead indeed unto God."

Its condition was visible to discerning eyes. It was a world rotting in its corruption, mouldering in its decay, and which to His pure sense had the moral aspect and odour of a charnel-house. We realise very imperfectly the distress, the inward nausea, the conflict of disgust and pity which the fact of being in such a world as this and belonging to it caused in the nature of Jesus Christ, in a soul that was in perfect sympathy with God. Never was there loneliness such as His, the solitude of life in a region peopled with the dead. The joy which Christ had in his little flock, in those whom the Father had given Him out of the world, was proportionately great. In them He found companionship, teachableness, signs of a heart awakening towards God—men to whom life was in some degree what it was to Him. He had come, as the prophet in his vision, into "the valley full of dry bones," and He "prophesied to these slain that they might live." What a comfort to see, at His first words, a shaking in the valley,—to see some who stirred at His voice, who stood upon their feet and gathered round Him—not yet a great army, but a band of living men! In their breasts, inspired from His, was the life of the future. "I am come," He said, "that they might have life." It was the work of Jesus Christ to breathe His vital spirit into the corpse of humanity, to reanimate the world.

When St. Paul speaks of his readers in their heathen condition as "dead," it is not a figure of speech. He does not mean that they were like dead men, that their state resembled death; "nor only that they were in peril of death; but he signifies a real and present death" (Calvin). They were, in the inmost sense and truth of things, *dead men.* We are twofold creatures, two-lived,—spirits cased in flesh. Our human nature is capable, therefore, of strange duplicities. It is possible for us to be alive and flourishing upon one side of our being, while we are paralysed or lifeless upon the other. As our bodies live in commerce with the light and air, in the environment of house and food and daily exercise of the limbs and senses under the economy of material nature, so our spirits live by the breath of prayer, by faith and love towards God, by reverence and filial submission, by communion with things unseen and eternal. "With Thee," says the Psalmist to his God, "is the fountain of life: in Thy light we see light." We must daily resort to that fountain and drink of its pure stream, we must faithfully walk in that light, or there is no such life for us. The soul that wants a true faith in God, wants the proper spring and principle of its being. It sees not the light, it hears not the voices, it breathes not the air of that higher world where its origin and its destiny lie.

The man who walks the earth a sinner against God becomes by the act and fact of his transgression a dead man. He has imbibed the fatal poison; it runs in his veins. The doom of sin lies on his unforgiven spirit. He carries death and judgment about with him. They lie down with him at night and wake with him in the morning; they take part in his transactions; they sit by his side in the feast of life. His works are "dead works"; his joys and hopes are all shadowed and tainted. Within his living frame he bears a coffined soul. With the machinery of life, with the faculties and possibilities of a spiritual being, the man lies crushed under the activity of the senses, wasted and decaying for want of the breath of the Spirit of God. In its coldness and powerlessness—too often in its visible corruption—his nature shows the symptoms of advancing death. It is dead as the tree is dead, cut off from its root; as the fire is dead when the spark is gone out; dead as a man is dead, when the heart stops.

As it is with the departed saints sleeping in Christ,—"put to death, indeed, in the flesh, but living in the spirit,"—so by a terrible inversion with the wicked in this life. They are put to death, indeed, in the spirit, while they live in the flesh. They may be and often are powerfully alive and active in their relations to the world of sense, while on the unseen and Godward side

utterly paralysed. Ask such a man about his business or family concerns; touch on affairs of politics or trade,—and you deal with a living mind, its powers and susceptibilities awake and alert. But let the conversation pass to other themes; sound him on questions of the inner life; ask him what he thinks of Christ, how he stands towards God, how he fares in the spiritual conflict,—and you strike a note to which there is no response. You have taken him out of his element. He is a practical man, he tells you; he does not live in the clouds, or hunt after shadows; he believes in hard facts, in things that he can grasp and handle. "The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him." They are pictures to the eye of the blind, heavenly music to the stone-deaf.

And yet that hardened man of the world—starve and ignore his own spirit and shut up its mystic chambers as he will—cannot easily destroy himself. He has not extirpated his religious nature, nor crushed out, though he has suppressed, the craving for God in his breast. And when the callous surface of his life is broken through, under some unusual stress, some heavy loss or the shock of a great bereavement, one may catch a glimpse of the deeper world within of which the man himself was so little conscious. And what is to be seen there? Haunting memories of past sin, fears of a conscience fretted already by the undying worm, forms of weird and ghostly dread flitting amid the gloom and dust of death through that closed house of the spirit,—

> "The bat and owl inhabit here:
> The snake nests on the altar stone:
> The sacred vessels moulder near;
> The image of the God is gone!"

In this condition of death the word of life comes to men. It is the state not of heathendom alone; but of those also, favoured with the light of revelation, who have not opened to it the eyes of the heart, of all who are "doing the desires of the flesh and the thoughts"—who are governed by their own impulses and ideas and serve no will above the world of sense. Without distinction of birth or formal religious standing, "all" who thus live and walk are dead while they live. Their *trespasses and sins* have killed them. From first to last Scripture testifies: "Your sins have separated between you and your God." We find a hundred excuses for our irreligion: there is the cause. There is nothing in the universe to separate any one of us from the love and fellowship of his Maker but his own unforsaken sin.

It is true there are other hindrances to faith, intellectual difficulties of great weight and seriousness, that press upon many minds. For such men Christ has all possible sympathy and patience. There is a real, though hidden faith that "lives in honest doubt." Some men have more faith than they suppose, while others certainly have much less. One has a name to live, and yet is dead; another, perchance, has a name to die, and yet is alive to God through Jesus Christ. There are endless complications, self-contradictions, and misunderstandings in human nature. "Many are first" in the ranks of religious profession and notoriety, "which shall be last, and the last first." We make the largest allowance for this element of uncertainty in the line that bounds faith from unfaith; "The Lord knoweth them that are His." No intellectual difficulty, no mere misunderstanding, will ultimately or for long separate between God and the soul that He has made.

It is *antipathy* that separates. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge": that is Paul's explanation of the ungodliness and vice of the ancient world. And it holds good still in countless instances. "Numbers in this bad world talk loudly against religion in order to encourage each other in sin, because they need encouragement. They know that they ought to be other than they are; but are glad to avail themselves of anything that looks like argument, to overcome their consciences withal" (Newman). The fashionable scepticism of the day too often conceals an inner revolt against the moral demands of the Christian life; it is the pretext of a carnal mind, which is "enmity against God, because it is not subject to His law." Christ's sentence upon unbelief as He knew it was this: "Light is come into the world; and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." So said the keenest and the kindest judge of men. If we are refusing Him our faith, let us be very sure that this condemnation does not touch ourselves. Is there no passion that bribes and suborns the intellect? no desire in the soul that dreads his entrance? no evil deeds that shelter themselves from His accusing light?

When the apostle says of his Gentile readers that they "once walked in the way of the age, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air," the former part of his statement is clear enough. The age in which he lived was godless to the last degree; the stream of the world's life ran in turbid course toward moral ruin. But the second clause is obscure. The "prince" (or "ruler") who guides the world along its career of rebellion is manifestly Satan, the spirit of darkness and hate whom St. Paul entitles "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4), and in whom Jesus recognised, under the name of "the prince of the world," His great antagonist (John xiv. 30).

But what has this spirit of evil to do with "the air"? The Jewish rabbis supposed that the terrestrial atmosphere was Satan's abode, that it was peopled by demons flitting about invisibly in the encompassing element. But this is a notion foreign to Scripture—certainly not contained in chapter vi. 12—and, in its bare physical sense, without point or relevance to this passage. There follows an immediate apposition to "the domain of the air, *the spirit* that now works in the sons of disobedience." Surely, *the air* here partakes (if it be only here) of the figurative significance of *spirit* (i. e., *breath*). St. Paul refines the Jewish idea of evil spirits dwelling in the surrounding atmosphere into an ethical conception of *the atmosphere of the world*, as that from which the sons of disobedience draw their breath and receive the spirit that inspires them. Here lies, in truth, the dominion of Satan. In other words Satan constituted the *Zeitgeist*.

As Beck profoundly remarks upon this text: "The Power of the air is a fitting designation for the prevailing spirit of the times, whose influence spreads itself like a miasma through the whole atmosphere of the world. It manifests itself as a contagious nature-power; and a *spiritus rector* works within it, which takes possession

of the world of men, alike in individuals and in society, and assumes the direction of it. The form of expression here employed is based on the conception of evil peculiar to Scripture. In Scripture, evil and the principle of evil are not conceived in a purely spiritual way; nor could this be the case in a world of fleshly constitution, where the spiritual has the sensuous for its basis and its vehicle. Spiritual evil exists as a power immanent in cosmical nature." Concerning great tracts of the earth, and large sections even of Christianised communities, we must still confess with St. John: "The world lieth in the Evil One." The air is impregnated with the infection of sin; its germs float about us constantly, and wherever they find lodgment they set up their deadly fever. Sin is the malarial poison native to our soil; it is an epidemic that runs its course through the entire "age of this world."

Above this feverous, sin-laden atmosphere the apostle sees God's anger brooding in threatening clouds. For our trespasses and sins are, after all, not forced on us by our environment. Those offences by which we provoke God lie in our nature; they are no mere casual acts, they belong to our bias and disposition. Sin is a constitutional malady. There exists a bad element in our human nature, which corresponds but too truly to the course and current of the world around us. This the apostle acknowledges for himself and his law-honouring Jewish kindred: "We were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." So he wrote in the sad confession of Romans vii. 14-23: "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

It is upon this "other law," the contradiction of His own, upon the sinfulness beneath the sin, that God's displeasure rests. Human law notes the overt act: "the Lord looketh upon the heart." There is nothing more bitter and humiliating to a conscientious man than the conviction of this penetrating Divine insight, this detection in himself of this incurable sin and the hollowness of his righteousness before God. How it confounds the proud Pharisee to learn that he *is* as other men are,—and even as this publican!

"The sons of disobedience" must needs be "children of wrath." All sin, whether in nature or practice, is the object of God's fixed displeasure. It cannot be matter of indifference to our Father in heaven that His human children are disobedient toward Himself. Children of His favour or anger we are each one of us, and at every moment. We "keep His commandments, and abide in His love"; or we do not keep them, and are excluded. It is His smile or frown that makes the sunshine or the gloom of our inner life. How strange that men should argue that God's love forbids His wrath! It is, in truth, the cause of it. I could neither love nor fear a God who did not care enough about me to be angry with me when I sin. If my child does wilful wrong, if by some act of greed or passion he imperils his moral future and destroys the peace and well-being of the house, shall I not be grieved with him, with an anger proportioned to the love I bear him? How much more shall your heavenly Father—how much more justly and wisely and mercifully!

St. Paul feels no contradiction between the words of verse 3 and those that follow. The same God whose wrath burns against the sons of disobedience while they so continue, is "rich in mercy" and "loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses!" He pities evil men, and to save them spared not His Son from death; but Almighty God, the Father of glory, hates and loathes the evil that is in them, and has determined that if they will not let it go they shall perish with it.

II. Such was the death in which Paul and his readers once had lain. But God in His "great love" has "*made them to live* along with the Christ."

How wonderful to have witnessed a resurrection: to see the pale cheek of the little maid, Jairus' daughter, flush again with the tints of life, and the still frame begin to stir, and the eyes softly open—and she looks upon the face of Jesus! or to watch Lazarus, four days dead, coming out of his tomb, slowly, and as one dreaming, with hands and feet bound in the grave-clothes. Still more marvellous to have beheld the Prince of Life at the dawn of the third day issue from Joseph's grave, bursting His prison-gates and stepping forth in new-risen glory as one refreshed from slumber.

But there are things no less divine, had we eyes for their marvel, that take place upon this earth day by day. When a human soul awakes from its trespasses and sins, when the love of God is poured into a heart that was cold and empty, when the Spirit of God breathes into a spirit lying powerless and buried in the flesh, there is as true a rising from the dead as when Jesus our Lord came out from His sepulchre. It was of this spiritual resurrection that He said: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Having said that, He added, concerning the bodily resurrection of mankind, "Marvel not at this; for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth!" The second wonder only matches and consummates the first (John v. 24-28).

"This is life eternal, to know God the Father,"—the life, as the apostle elsewhere calls it, that is "life indeed." It came to St. Paul by a new creation, when, as he describes it, "God who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." We are born again—the God-consciousness is born within us: an hour mysterious and decisive as that in which our personal consciousness first emerged and the soul knew itself. Now it knows God. Like Jacob at Peniel it says: "I have seen God face to face; and my life is preserved." God and the soul have met in Christ—and are reconciled.

The words the apostle uses—"gave us life"—"raised us up"—"seated us in the heavenly places"—embrace the whole range of salvation. "Those united with Christ are through grace delivered from their state of death, not only in the sense that the resurrection and exaltation of Christ redound to their benefit as Divinely imputed to them; but by the life-giving energy of God they are brought out of their condition of death into a new and actual state of life. The act of grace is an act of the Divine power and might, not a mere judicial declaration" (Beck).

This comprehensive action of the Divine grace upon believing men takes place by a constant and constantly deepening union of the soul with Christ. This is well expressed by A. Monod: "The entire history of the Son of man is reproduced in the man who believes in Him, not by a simple moral analogy, but by a spiritual communication which is the true secret of our justification as well as of our sanctification, and indeed of our whole salvation."

There is no repetition in the three verbs employed, which are alike extended by the Greek preposition "with" (*syn*). The first sentence (raised us up "with the Christ") virtually includes everything; it shows us one with Christ who lives evermore to God. The second sentence gathers into its scope all believers—the "you" of verse 1 and the "we" of verse 3: "He raised us up together, and together made us sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Nothing is more characteristic of our epistle than this turn of thought. To the conception of our "union with Christ" in His celestial life, it adds that of our "union with each other in Christ" as sharers in common of that life. Christ "reconciles us in one body unto God" (ver. 16). We sit not alone, but together in the heavenly places. This is the fulness of life; this completes our salvation.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAVED FOR AN END.

Ephesians ii. 7-10.

The plan which God has formed for men in Christ is of great dimensions every way,—in its length no less than in its breadth and height. He "raised us up and seated us together (Gentiles with Jews) in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that *in the ages which are coming on* He might show the surpassing riches of His grace." All the races of mankind and all future ages are embraced in the redeeming purpose and are to share in its boundless wealth. Nor are the ages past excluded from its operations. God "afore prepared the good works in which" He summons us to walk. The highway of the new life has been in building since time began.

Thus large and limitless is the range of "the purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal" (2 Tim. i. 9). But what strikes us most in this passage is the exuberance of the grace itself. Twice over the apostle exclaims, "By grace you are saved": once in verse 5, in an eager, almost jealous parenthesis, where he hastens to assure the readers of their deliverance from the fearful condition just described (vv. 1-3, 5). Again, deliberately and with full definition he states the same fact, in verse 8: "For by grace you are saved, through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. It does not come of works, to the end that none may boast."

These words place us on familiar ground. We recognise the Paul of Galatians and Romans, the dialect and accent of the apostle of salvation by faith. But scarcely anywhere do we find this wonder-working grace so affluently described. "God being rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved us—the exceeding riches of His grace, shown in kindness toward us—the gift of God." "Mercy, love, kindness, grace, gift": what a constellation is here! These terms present the character of God in the gospel under the most delightful aspects, and in vivid contrast to the picture of our human state outlined in the beginning of the chapter.

"Mercy" denotes the Divine pitifulness towards feeble, suffering men, akin to those "compassions of God" to which the apostle repeatedly appeals. It is a constant attribute of God in the Old Testament, and fills much the same place there that grace does in the New. "Of mercy and judgment" do the Psalmists sing—of mercy most. Out of the thunder and smoke of Sinai He declared His name: "Jehovah, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands." The dread of God's justice, the sense of His dazzling holiness and almightiness threw His mercy into bright relief and gave to it an infinite preciousness. It is the contrast which brings in "mercy" here, in verse 4, by antithesis to "wrath" (ver. 3). These qualities are complementary. The sternest and strongest natures are the most compassionate. God is "*rich* in mercy." The wealth of His Being pours itself out in the exquisite tendernesses, the unwearied forbearance and forgiveness of His compassion towards men. The Judge of all the earth, whose hate of evil is the fire of hell, is gentler than the softest-hearted mother,—rich in mercy as He is grand and terrible in wrath.

God's mercy regards us as we are weak and miserable: His love regards us as we are, in spite of trespass and offence, His offspring, —objects of "much love" amid much displeasure, "even when we were dead through our trespasses." What does the story of the prodigal son mean but this? and what Christ's great word to Nicodemus (John iii. 16)?—Grace and kindness are love's executive. Grace is love in administration, love counteracting sin and seeking our salvation. Christ is the embodiment of grace; the cross its supreme expression; the gospel its message to mankind; and Paul himself its trophy and witness. The "overpassing riches" of grace is that affluence of wealth in which through Christ it "superabounded" to the apostolic age and has outdone the magnitude of sin (Rom. v. 20), in such measure that St. Paul sees future ages gazing with wonder at its benefactions to himself and his fellow-believers. Shown "in *kindness* toward us," he says,—in a condescending fatherliness, that forgets its anger and softens its old severity into comfort and endearment. God's kindness is the touch of His hand, the accent of His voice, the cherishing breath of His Spirit. Finally, this generosity of the Divine grace, this infinite goodwill of God toward men, takes expression in the gift —the gift of Christ, the gift of righteousness (Rom. v. 15-18), the gift of eternal life (Rom. vi. 23); or—regarded, as it is here, in the light of experience and possession—the gift of salvation.

The opposition of "gift" and "debt," of gratuitous salvation through faith to salvation earned by works of law, belongs to the marrow of St. Paul's divinity. The teaching of the great evangelical epistles is condensed into the brief words of verses 8 and 9. The reason here assigned for God's dealing with men by way of gift and making them absolutely debtors—"lest any one should boast"—was forced upon the

apostle's mind by the stubborn pride of legalism; it is stated in terms identical with those of the earlier letters. Men will glory in their virtues before God; they flaunt the rags of their own righteousness, if any such pretext, even the slightest, remains to them. We sinners are a proud race, and our pride is oftentimes the worst of our sins. Therefore God humbles us by His compassion. He makes to us a free gift of His righteousness, and excludes every contribution from our store of merit; for if we could supply anything, we should inevitably boast as though all were our own. We must be content to receive mercy, love, grace, kindness—everything, without deserving the least fraction of the immense sum. How it strips our vanity; how it crushes us to the dust—"the weight of pardoning love!"

Concerning the office of faith in salvation we have already spoken in chapter iv. It is on the objective fact rather than the subjective means of salvation that the apostle lays stress in this passage. His readers do not seem to have realised sufficiently what God has given them and the greatness of the salvation already accomplished. They measured inadequately the power which had touched and changed their lives (i. 19). St. Paul has shown them the depth to which they were formerly sunk, and the height to which they have been raised (vv. 1-6). He can therefore assure them, and he does it with redoubled emphasis: "You *are saved;* By grace you are saved men!" Not "You will be saved"; nor, "You were saved"; nor, "You are in course of salvation,"—for salvation has many moods and tenses,—but, in the perfect passive tense, he asserts the glorious accomplished fact. With the same reassuring emphasis in chapter i. 7 he declared, "We have redemption in His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

Here is St. Paul's doctrine of Assurance. It was laid down by Christ Himself when He said: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." This sublime confidence is the ruling note of St. John's great epistle: "We know that we are in Him. . . . We know that we have passed out of death into life. . . . This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It was this confidence of present salvation that made the Church irresistible. With its foundation secure, the house of life can be steadily and calmly built up. Under the shelter of the full assurance of faith, in the sunshine of God's love felt in the heart, all spiritual virtues bloom and flourish. But with a faith hesitant, distracted, that is sure of no doctrine in the creed and cannot plant a firm foot anywhere, nothing prospers in the soul or in the Church. Oh, for the clear accent, the ringing, joyous note of apostolic assurance! We want a faith not loud, but deep; a faith not born of sentiment and human sympathy, but that comes from the vision of the living God; a faith whose rock and corner-stone is neither the Church nor the Bible, but Christ Jesus Himself.

Greatly do we need, like the Asian disciples of Paul and John, to "assure our hearts" before God. With death confronting us, with the hideous evil of the world oppressing us; when the air is laden with the contagion of sin; when the faith of the strongest wears the cast of doubt; when the word of promise shines dimly through the haze of an all-encompassing scepticism and a hundred voices say, in mockery or grief, Where is now thy God? when the world proclaims us lost, our faith refuted, our gospel obsolete and useless,—then is the time for the Christian assurance to recover its first energy and to rise again in radiant strength from the heart of the Church, from the depths of its mystic life where it is hid with Christ in God.

"You are saved!" cries the apostle; not forgetting that his readers have their battle to fight, and many hazards yet to run (vi. 10-13). But they hold the earnest of victory, the foretaste of life eternal. In spirit they sit with Christ in the heavenly places. Pain and death, temptation, persecution, the vicissitudes of earthly history, by these God means to perfect that which He has begun in His saints—"if you continue in the faith, grounded and firm" (Col. i. 23). That condition is expressed, or implied, in all assurance of final salvation. It is a condition which excites to watchfulness, but can never cause misgiving to a loyal heart. God is for us! He justifies us, and counts us His elect. Christ Jesus who died is risen and seated at the right hand of God, and there intercedes for us. *Quis separabit?*

This is the epistle of the Church and of humanity. It dwells on the grand, objective aspects of the truth, rather than upon its subjective experiences. It does not invite us to rest in the comforts and delights of grace, but to lift up our eyes and see whither Christ has translated us and what is the kingdom that we possess in Him. God "quickened us together with the Christ": He "raised us up, He made us to sit *in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*" Henceforth "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).

This is the inspiring thought of the third group of St. Paul's epistles; we heard it in the first note of his song of praise (i. 3). It supplies the principle from which St. Paul unfolds the beautiful conception of the Christian life contained in the third chapter of the companion letter to the Colossians: "Your life is hid with the Christ in God"; therefore "seek the things that are above, where He is." We live in two worlds at once. Heaven lies about us in this new mystic childhood of our spirit. There our names are written; thither our thoughts and hopes resort. Our treasure is there; our heart we have lodged there, with Christ in God. *He* is there, the Lord of the Spirit, from whom we draw each moment the life that flows into His members. In the greatness of His love conquering sin and death, time and space, He is with us to the world's end. May we not say that we, too, are with Him and shall be with Him always? So we reckon in the logic of our faith and at the height of our high calling, though the soul creeps and drudges upon the lower levels.

> "With Him we are gone up on high,
> Since He is ours and we are His;
> With Him we reign above the sky,
> We walk upon our subject seas!"

In his lofty flights of thought the apostle always has some practical and homely end in view. The earthly and heavenly, the mystical and the matter-of-fact were not distant and repugnant, but interfused in his mind. From the celestial heights of the life hidden with Christ in God (ver. 6), he brings us down in a moment and

without any sense of discrepancy to the prosaic level of "good works" (ver. 10). The love which viewed us from eternity, the counsels of Him who works all things in all, enter into the humblest daily duties.

Grace, moreover, sets us great tasks. There should be something to show in deed and life for the wealth of kindness spent upon us, some visible and commensurate result of the vast preparations of the gospel plan. Of this result the apostle saw the earnest in the work of faith wrought by his Gentile Churches.

St. Paul was the last man in the world to undervalue human effort, or disparage good work of any sort. It is, in his view, the end aimed at in all that God bestows on His people, in all that He Himself works in them. Only let this end be sought in God's way and order. Man's doings must be the fruit and not the root of his salvation. "Not *of* works," but "*for* good works" were believers chosen. "This little word *for*," says Monod, "reconciles St. Paul and St. James better than all the commentators." God has not raised us up to sit idly in the heavenly places lost in contemplation, or to be the useless pensioners of grace. He sends us forth to "walk in the works, prepared for us" —equipped to fight Christ's battles, to fill His fields, to labour in the service of building His Church.

The "workmanship" of our Version suggests an idea foreign to the passage. The apostle is not thinking of the Divine art or skill displayed in man's creation; but of the simple fact that "God made man" (Gen. i. 27). "We are His *making*, created in Christ Jesus." The "preparation" to which he refers in verse 10 leads us back to that primeval election of God's sons in Christ for which we gave thanks at the outset (i. 3). There are not two creations, the second formed upon the ruin and failure of the first; but one grand design throughout. Redemption is creation re-affirmed. The new creation, as we call it, restores and consummates the old. When God raised His Son from the dead, He vindicated His original purpose in raising man from the dust a living soul. He has not forsaken the work of His hands nor forgone His original plan, which took account of all our wilfulness and sin. God in making us meant us to do good work in His world. From the world's foundation down to the present moment He who worketh all in all has been working for this end—most of all in the revelation of His grace in Jesus Christ.

Far backward in the past, amid the secrets of creation, lay the beginnings of God's grace to mankind. Far onward in the future shines its lustre revealed in the first Christian age. The apostle has gained some insight into those "times and seasons" which formerly were veiled from him. In his earliest letters, to the Thessalonians and Corinthians, St. Paul echoes our Lord's warning, never out of season, that we should "watch, for the hour is at hand." *Maran atha* is his watchword: "Our Lord cometh; the time is short." Nor does that note cease to the end. But when in this epistle he writes of "the ages that are coming on," and of "all the generations of the age of the ages" (iii. 21), there is manifestly some considerable period of duration before his eyes. He sees something of the extent of the world's coming history, something of the magnitude of the field that the future will afford for the unfolding of God's designs.

In those approaching æons he foresees that the apostolic dispensation will play a conspicuous part. Unborn ages will be blessed in the blessing now descending upon Jews and Gentiles through Christ Jesus. So marvellous is the display of God's kindness toward them, that all the future will pay homage to it. The overflowing wealth of blessing poured upon St. Paul and the first Churches had an end in view that reached beyond themselves, an end worthy of the Giver, worthy of the magnitude of His plans and of His measureless love. If all this was theirs—this fulness of God exceeding the utmost they had asked or thought—it is because God means to convey it through them to multitudes besides! There is no limit to the grace that God will impart to men and to Churches who thus reason, who receive His gifts in this generous and communicative spirit. The apostolic Church chants with Mary at the Annunciation: "For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed!"

Never was any prediction better fulfilled. This spot of history shines with a light before which every other shows pale and commonplace. The companions of Jesus, the humble fraternities of the first Christian century, have been the object of reverent interest and intent research on the part of all centuries since. Their history is scrutinised from all sides with a zeal and industry which the most pressing subjects of the day hardly command. For we feel that these men hold the secret of the world's life. The key to the treasures we all long for is in their hands. As time goes on and the stress of life deepens, men will turn with yet fonder hope to the age of Jesus Christ. "And many nations will say: Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach us of His ways; and we will walks in His paths."

The stream will remember its fountain; the children of God will gather to their childhood's home. The world will hear the gospel in the recovered accents of its prophets and apostles.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAR AND NEAR.

EPHESIANS ii. 11-13.

THE apostle's "Wherefore" sums up for his readers the record of their salvation rehearsed in the previous verses. "You were buried in your sins, sunk in their corruption, ruined by their guilt, living under God's displeasure and in the power of Satan. All this has passed away. The almighty Hand has raised you with Christ into a heavenly life. God has become your Father; His love is in your heart; by the strength of His grace you are enabled to walk in the way marked out for you from your creation. Wherefore remember: think of what you were, and of what you are!"

To such recollections we do well to summon ourselves. The children of grace love to recall, and on fit occasions recount for God's glory and the help of their fellows, the way in which God led them to the knowledge of Himself. In some the great change came suddenly. He

"made speed" to save us. It was a veritable resurrection, as signal and unlooked for as the rising of Christ from the dead. By a swift passage we were "translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Once living without God in the world, we were arrested by a strange providence—through some overthrow of fortune or shock of bereavement, or by a trivial incident touching unaccountably a hidden spring in the mind—and the whole aspect of life was altered in a moment. We saw revealed, as by a lightning flash at night, the emptiness of our own life, the misery of our nature, the folly of our unbelief, the awful presence of *God*—God whom we had forgotten and despised! We sought, and found His mercy. From that hour the old things passed away: we lived who had been dead,—made alive to God through Jesus Christ.

This instant conversion, such as Paul experienced, this sharp and abrupt transition from darkness to light, was common in the first generation of Christians, as it is wherever religious awakening takes place in a society that has been largely dead to God. The advent of Christianity in the Gentile world was much after this fashion, like a tropical sunrise, in which day leaps on the earth full-born. This experience gives a stamp of peculiar decision to the convictions and character of its subjects. The change is patent and palpable; no observer can fail to mark it. And it burns itself into the memory with an ineffaceable impression. The violent throes of such a spiritual birth cannot be forgotten.

But if our entrance into the life of God was gradual, like the dawn of our own milder clime, where the light steals by imperceptible advances upon the darkness—if the glory of the Lord has thus risen upon us, our certainty of its presence may be no less complete, and our remembrance of its coming no less grateful and joyous. One leaps into the new life by a single eager bound; another reaches it by measured, thoughtful steps: but both are *there*, standing side by side on the common ground of salvation in Christ. Both walk in the same light of the Lord, that floods the sky from east to west. The recollections which the latter has to cherish of the leading of God's kindly light—how He touched our childish thought, and checked gently our boyish waywardness, and mingled reproof with the first stirrings of passion and self-will, and wakened the alarms of conscience and the fears of another world, and the sense of the beauty of holiness and the shame of sin,—

> "Shaping to truth the froward will
> Along His narrow way,"

such remembrances are a priceless treasure, that grows richer as we grow wiser. It awakens a joy not so thrilling nor so prompt in utterance as that of the soul snatched like a brand from the burning, but which passes understanding. Blessed are the children of the kingdom, those who have never roamed far from the fold of Christ and the commonwealth of Israel, whom the cross has beckoned onwards from their childhood. But however it was—by whatever means, at whatever time it pleased God to call you from darkness to His marvellous light, *remember*.

But we must return to Paul and his Gentile readers. The old death in life was to them a sombre reality, keenly and painfully remembered. In that condition of moral night out of which Christ had rescued them, Gentile society around them still remained. Let us observe its features as they are delineated in contrast with the privileges long bestowed on Israel. The Gentile world was *Christless, hopeless, godless*. It had no share in the Divine polity framed for the chosen people; the outward mark of its uncircumcision was a true symbol of its irreligion and debasement.

Israel had a *God*. Besides, there were only "those who are called gods." This was the first and cardinal distinction. Not their race, not their secular calling, their political or intellectual gifts, but their faith, formed the Jews into a nation. They were "the people of God," as no other people has been—of *the* God, for theirs was "the true and living God"—Jehovah, the I Am, the One, the Alone. The monotheistic belief was, no doubt, wavering and imperfect in the mass of the nation in early times; but it was held by the ruling minds amongst them, by the men who have shaped the destiny of Israel and created its Bible, with increasing clearness and intensity of passion. "All the gods of the nations are idols—vapours, phantoms, nothings!—but Jehovah made the heavens." It was the ancestral faith that glowed in the breast of Paul at Athens, amidst the fairest shrines of Greece, when he "saw the city wholly given to idolatry"—man's highest art and the toil and piety of ages lavished on things that were no gods; and in the midst of the splendour of a hollow and decaying Paganism he read the confession that God was "unknown."

Ephesus had her famous goddess, worshipped in the most sumptuous pile of architecture that the ancient world contained. Behold the proud city, "temple-keeper of the great goddess Artemis," filled with wrath! Infuriate Demos flashes fire from his thousand eyes, and his brazen throat roars hoarse vengeance against the insulters of "her magnificence, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth"! Without God—*atheists*, in fact, the apostle calls this devout Asian population; and Artemis of Ephesus, and Athené, and Cybelé of Smyrna, and Zeus and Asclepius of Pergamum, though all the world worship them, are but "creatures of art and man's device."

The Pagans retorted this reproach. "Away with *the atheists!*" they cried, when Christians were led to execution. Ninety years after this time the martyr Polycarp was brought into the arena before the magistrates of Asia and the populace gathered in Smyrna at the great Ionic festival. The Proconsul, wishing to spare the venerable man, said to him: "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar; and say, Away with the Atheists!" But Polycarp, as the story continues, "with a grave look gazing on the crowd of lawless Gentiles in the stadium and shaking his hand against them, then groaning and looking up to heaven, said, *Away with the atheists!*" Pagan and Christian were each godless in the eyes of the other. If visible temples and images, and the local worship of each tribe or city made a god, then Jews and Christians had none: if God was a Spirit—One, Holy, Almighty, Omnipresent—then polytheists were in truth atheists; their many gods, being many, were no gods; they were idols,—*eidola*, illusive shows of the Godhead.

The more thoughtful and pious among the heathen felt this already. When the apostle de-

nounced the idols and their pompous worship as "these vanities," his words found an echo in the Gentile conscience. The classical Paganism held the multitude by the force of habit and local pride, and by its sensuous and artistic charms; but such religious power as it once had was gone. In all directions it was undermined by mystic Oriental and Egyptian rites, to which men resorted in search of a religion and sick of the old fables, ever growing more debased, that had pleased their fathers. The majesty of Rome in the person of the Emperor, the one visible supreme power, was seized upon by the popular instinct, even more than it was imposed by state policy, and made to fill the vacuum; and temples to Augustus had already risen in Asia, side by side with those of the ancient gods.

In this despair of their ancestral religions many piously disposed Gentiles turned to Judaism for spiritual help; and the synagogue was surrounded in the Greek cities by a circle of earnest proselytes. From their ranks St. Paul drew a large proportion of his hearers and converts. When he writes "Remember that you were at that time *without God*," he is within the recollection of his readers; and they will bear him out in testifying that their heathen creed was dead and empty to the soul. Nor did philosophy construct a creed more satisfying. Its gods were the Epicurean deities who dwell aloof and careless of men; or the supreme Reason and Necessity of the Stoics, the *anima mundi*, of which human souls are fleeting and fragmentary images. "Deism finds God only in heaven; Pantheism only on earth; Christianity alone finds Him both in heaven and on earth" (Harless). The Word made flesh reveals *God in the world.*

When the apostle says "without *God in the world*," this qualification is both reproachful and sorrowful. To be without God in the world that He has made, where His "eternal power and Godhead" have been visible from creation, argues a darkened and perverted heart. To be without God in the world is to be in the wilderness, without a guide; on a stormy ocean, without harbour or pilot; in sickness of spirit, without medicine or physician; to be hungry without bread, and weary without rest, and dying with no light of life. It is to be an orphaned child, wandering in an empty, ruined house.

In these words we have an echo of Paul's preaching to the Gentiles, and an indication of the line of his appeals to the conscience of the enlightened pagans of his time. The despair of the age was darker than the human mind has known before or since. Matthew Arnold has painted it all in one verse of those lines, entitled "Obermann Once More," in which he so perfectly expresses the better spirit of modern scepticism.

> "On that hard Pagan world disgust
> And secret loathing fell;
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell."

The saying by which St. Paul reproved the Corinthians, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," is the common sentiment of pagan epitaphs of the time. Here is an extant specimen of the kind: "Let us drink and be merry; for we shall have no more kissing and dancing in the kingdom of Proserpine. Soon shall we fall asleep to wake no more." Such were the thoughts with which men came back from the grave-side. It is needless to say how depraving was the effect of this hopelessness. At Athens, in the more religious times of Socrates, it was even considered a decent and kindly thing to allow a criminal condemned to death to spend his last hours in gross sensual indulgence. There is no reason to suppose that the extinction of the Christian hope of immortality would prove less demoralising. We are "saved by hope," said St. Paul: we are ruined by despair. Pessimism of creed for most men means pessimism of conduct.

Our modern speech and literature and our habits of feeling have been for so many generations steeped in the influence of Christ's teaching, and it has thrown so many tender and hallowed thoughts around the state of our beloved dead, that it is impossible even for those who are personally without hope in Christ to realise what its general decay and disappearance would mean. To have possessed such a treasure, and then to lose it! to have cherished anticipations so exalted and so dear,—and to find them turn out a mockery! The age upon which this calamity fell would be of all ages the most miserable.

The hope of Israel which Paul preached to the Gentiles was a hope for the world and for the nations, as well as for the individual soul. "The commonwealth [or *polity*] of Israel" and "the covenants of promise" guaranteed the establishment of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. This expectation took amongst the mass of the Jews a materialistic and even a revengeful shape; but in one form or other it belonged, and still belongs, to every man of Israel. Those noble lines of Virgil in his fourth Eclogue—like the words of Caiaphas, an unintended Christian prophecy—which predicted the return of justice and the spread of a golden age through the whole world under the rule of the coming heir of Cæsar, had been signally belied by the imperial house in the century that had elapsed. Never were human prospects darker than when the apostle wrote as Nero's prisoner in Rome. It was an age of crime and horror. The political world and the system of pagan society seemed to be in the throes of dissolution. Only in "the commonwealth of Israel" was there a light of hope and a foundation for the future of mankind; and of this in its wisdom the world knew nothing.

The Gentiles were "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,"—that is to say, treated as aliens and made such by their exclusion. By the very fact of Israel's election, the rest of mankind were shut out of the visible kingdom of God. They became mere *Gentiles*, or *nations*,—a herd of men bound together only by natural affinity, with no "covenant of promise," no religious constitution or destiny, no definite relationship to God, Israel being alone the acknowledged and organised "*people* of Jehovah."

These distinctions were summed up in one word, expressing all the pride of the Jewish nature, when the Israelites styled themselves "the Circumcision." The rest of the world—Philistines or Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, or Barbarians, it mattered not—were "the Uncircumcision." How superficial this distinction was in point of fact, and how false the assumption of moral superiority it implied in the existing condition of Judaism, St. Paul indicates by saying, "those who are *called* Uncircumcision by that

which is *called* Circumcision, in flesh, wrought by human hands." In the second and third chapters of his epistle to the Romans he exposed the hollowness of Jewish sanctity, and brought his fellow-countrymen down to the level of those "sinners of the Gentiles" whom they so bitterly despised.

The destitution of the Gentile world is put into a single word, when the apostle says: "You were at that time *separate from Christ*"—without a Christ, either come or coming. They were deprived of the world's one treasure,—shut out, as it appeared, for ever from any part in Him who is to mankind all things and in all.—*Once far off!*

"But now in Christ Jesus ye were *made nigh.*" What is it that has bridged the distance, that has transported these Gentiles from the wilderness of heathenism into the midst of the city of God? It is "the blood of Christ." The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ transformed the relations of God to mankind, and of Israel to the Gentiles. In Him God reconciled not a nation, but "a world" to Himself (2 Cor. v. 19). The death of the Son of man could not have reference to the sons of Abraham alone. If sin is universal and death is not a Jewish but a human experience, and if one blood flows in the veins of all our race, then the death of Jesus Christ was a universal sacrifice; it appeals to every man's conscience and heart, and puts away for each the guilt which comes between his soul and God.

When the Greeks in Passion week desired to see Him, He exclaimed: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* unto me." The cross of Jesus was to draw humanity around it, by its infinite love and sorrow, by the perfect apprehension there was in it of the world's guilt and need, and the perfect submission to the sentence of God's law against man's sin. So wherever the gospel was preached by St. Paul, it won Gentile hearts for Christ. Greek and Jew found themselves weeping together at the foot of the cross, sharing one forgiveness and baptised into one Spirit.

The union of Caiaphas and Pilate in the condemnation of Jesus and the mingling of the Jewish crowd with the Roman soldiers at His execution were a tragic symbol of the new age that was coming. Israel and the Gentiles were accomplices in the death of the Messiah—the former of the two the more guilty partner in the counsel and deed. If this Jesus whom they slew and hanged on a tree was indeed the Christ, God's chosen, then what availed their Abrahamic sonship, their covenants and law-keeping, their proud religious eminence? They had killed their Christ; they had forfeited their calling. His blood was on them and on their children.

Those who seemed nigh to God, at the cross of Christ were found far off,—that both together, the far and the near, might be reconciled and brought back to God. "He shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all."

CHAPTER X.

THE DOUBLE RECONCILIATION.

EPHESIANS ii. 14-18.

"PEACE, peace—to the far off, and to the near!" Such was God's promise to His scattered people in the times of the exile (Isa. lvii. 19). St. Paul sees that peace of God extending over a yet wider field, and terminating a longer and sadder banishment than the prophet had foreseen. Christ is "our peace"—not for the divided members of Israel alone, but for all the tribes of men. He brings about a universal pacification.

There were two distinct, but kindred enmities to be overcome by Christ, in preaching to the world His good tidings of peace (ver. 17). There was the hostility of Jew and Gentile, which was removed in its cause and principle when Christ "in His flesh" (by His incarnate life and death) "abolished the law of commandments in decrees"—*i. e.*, the law of Moses as it constituted a body of external precepts determining the way of righteousness and life. This abolition of the law by the evangelical principle "dissolved the middle wall of partition." The occasion of quarrel between Israel and the world was destroyed; the barrier disappeared that had for so long fenced off the privileged ground of the sons of Abraham (vv. 14, 15). But behind this human enmity, underneath the feud and rancour existing between the Jews and the nations, there lay the deeper quarrel of mankind with God. Both enmities centred in the law; both were slain by one stroke, in the reconciliation of the cross (ver. 16).

The Jewish and Gentile peoples formed two distinct types of humanity. Politically, the Jews were insignificant and had scarcely counted amongst the great powers of the world. Their religion alone gave them influence and importance. Bearing his inspired Scriptures and his Messianic hope, the wandering Israelite confronted the vast masses of heathenism and the splendid and fascinating classical civilisation with the proudest sense of his superiority. To his God he knew well that one day every knee would bow and every tongue confess. The circumstances of the time deepened his isolation and aggravated to internecine hate his spite against his fellow-men, the *adversus omnes alios hostile odium* stigmatised by the incisive pen of Tacitus. Within three years of the writing of this letter the Jewish war against Rome broke out, when the enmity culminated in the most appalling and fateful overthrow recorded in the pages of history. Now, it is this enmity at its height—the most inveterate and desperate one can conceive—that the apostle proposes to reconcile; nay, that he sees already slain by the sacrifice of the cross, and within the brotherhood of the Christian Church. It was slain in the heart of Saul of Tarsus, the proudest that beat in Jewish breast.

In his earlier writings the apostle has been concerned chiefly to guard the position and rights of the two parties within the Church. He has abundantly maintained, especially in the epistle to the Galatians, the claims of Gentile believers in Christ against Judaic assumptions and impositions. He has defended the just prerogative of the Jew and his hereditary sentiments from the contempt to which they were sometimes exposed on the part of the Gentile majority. But now that this has been done, and that Gentile liberties and Jewish dignity have been vindicated and safeguarded on both sides, St. Paul advances a step further: he seeks to amalgamate the Jewish and Gentile section of the Church, and to "make of the twain one new man, so making peace." This, he declares, was the end of Christ's

mission; this a chief purpose of His atoning death. Only by such union, only through the burying of the old enmity slain on the cross, could His Church be built up to its completeness. St. Paul would have Gentile and Jewish believers everywhere forget their differences, efface their party lines, and merge their independence in the oneness of the all-embracing and all-perfecting Church of Jesus Christ, God's habitation in the Spirit. Instead of saying that a catholic ideal like this belongs to a later and post-apostolic age, we maintain, on the contrary, that a catholic mind like St. Paul's, under the conditions of his time, could not fail to arrive at this conception.

It was his confidence in the victory of the cross over all strife and sin that sustained St. Paul through these years of captivity. As he looks out from his Roman prison, under the shadow of Nero's palace, the future is invested with a radiance of hope that makes the heart of the chained apostle exult within him. The world is lost, to all outward seeming: he knows it is saved! Jew and Gentile are about to close in mortal conflict: he proclaims peace between them, assured of their reconcilement, and knowing that in their reunion the salvation of human society is assured.

The enmity of Jew and Gentile was representative of all that divides mankind. In it were concentrated most of the causes by which society is rent asunder. Along with religion, race, habits, taste and culture, moral tendencies, political aspirations, interests of trade, all helped to widen the breach. The cleavage ran deep into the foundations of life; the enmity was the growth of two thousand years. It was not a case of local friction, nor a quarrel arising from temporary causes. The Jew was ubiquitous, and everywhere was an alien and an irritant to Gentile society. No antipathy was so hard to subdue. The grace that conquers it can and will conquer all enmities. . . .

St. Paul's view embraced, in fact, a world-wide reconcilement. He contemplates, as the Hebrew prophets themselves did, the fraternisation of mankind under the rule of the Christ. After this scale he laid down the foundation of the Church, "wise masterbuilder" that he was. It was destined to bear the weight of an edifice in which all the races of men should dwell together, and every order of human faculty should find its place. His thoughts were not confined within the Judaic antithesis. "There is no Jew and Greek," he says in another place; yes, and "no barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman, male or female. Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Birth, rank, office in the Church, culture, even sex are minor and subordinate distinctions, merged in the unity of redeemed souls in Christ. That which He "creates in Himself of the twain" is *one new man*—one incorporate humanity, neither Jew nor Gentile, Englishman nor Hindu, priest nor layman, male nor female; but simply *man*, and *Christian*.

At the present time we are better able to enter into these views of the apostle than at any intervening period of history. In his day almost the whole visible world, lying around the Mediterranean shores, was brought under the government and laws of Rome. This fact made the establishment of one religious polity a thing quite conceivable. The Roman empire did not, as it proved, allow Christianity to conquer it soon enough and to leaven it sufficiently to save it. That huge construction, the mightiest fabric of human polity, fell and covered the earth with its ruins. In its fall it reacted disastrously upon the Church, and has bequeathed to it the corrupt and despotic unity of Papal Rome. Now, in these last days, the whole world is opened to the Church, a world stretching far beyond the horizon of the first century. Science and Commerce, those two strong-winged angels and giant ministers of God, are swiftly binding the continents together in material ties. The peoples are beginning to realise their brotherhood, and are feeling their way in many directions towards international union; while in the Churches a new, federal catholicity is taking shape, that must displace the false catholicism of external uniformity and the disastrous absolutism inherited from Rome. The spread of European empire and the marvellous expansion of our English race are carrying forward the world's unification with enormous strides,—towards some end or other. What end is this to be? Is the kingdom of the world about to become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ? and are the nations preparing to be "reconciled in one body unto God"?

If Christendom were worthy of her Master and her name, this answer would be answered with no doubtful affirmative. The Church is well able, if she were prepared, to go up and possess the whole earth for her Lord. The way is open; the means are in her hand. Nor is she ignorant, nor wholly negligent of her opportunity and of the claims that the times impose upon her. She is putting forth new strength and striving to overtake her work, notwithstanding the weight of ignorance and sloth that burdens her. Soon the reconciling cross will be planted on every shore, and the praises of the Crucified be sung in every human language.

But there are dark as well as bright auguries for the future. The advance of commerce and emigration has been a curse and not a blessing to many heathen peoples. Who can read without shame and horror the story of European conquest in America? And it is a chapter not yet closed. Greed and injustice still mark the dealings of the powerful and civilised with the weaker races. England set a noble example in the abolition of negro slavery; but she has since inflicted, for purposes of gain, the opium curse on China, putting poison to the lips of its vast population. Under our Christian flags fire-arms are imported, and alcohol, amongst tribes of men less able than children to resist their evils. Is this "preaching peace to those far off"? It is likely that the commercial profits made in the destruction of savage races as yet exceed all that our missionary societies have spent in saving them. One of these days Almighty God may have a stern reckoning with modern Europe about these things. "When He maketh inquisition for blood, He will remember."

And what shall we say of ourselves at home, in our relation to this great principle of the apostle? The old "middle wall of partition," the temple-barrier that sundered Jew and Gentile, is "broken down,"—visibly levelled by the hand of God when Jerusalem fell, as it had been virtually and in its principle destroyed by the work of Christ. But are there no other middle walls, no barriers raised within the fold of Christ? The rich man's purse, and the poor

man's penury; aristocratic pride, democratic bitterness and jealousy; knowledge and refinement on the one hand, ignorance and rudeness on the other—how thick the veil of estrangement which these influences weave, how high the party walls which they build in our various Church communions!

It is the duty of the Church, as she values her existence, with gentle but firm hands to pull down and to keep down all such partitions. She cannot abolish the natural distinctions of life. She cannot turn the Jew into a Gentile, nor the Gentile into a Jew. She will never make the poor man rich in this world, nor the rich man altogether poor. Like her Master, she declines to be "judge or divider" of our secular inheritance. But she can see to it that these outward distinctions make no difference in her treatment of the men as men. She can combine in her fellowship all grades and orders, and teach them to understand and respect each other. She can soften the asperities and relieve many of the hardships which social differences create. She can diffuse a healing and purifying influence upon the contentions of society around her.

Let us labour unweariedly for this, and let our meeting at the Lord's table be a symbol of the unreserved communion of men of all classes and conditions in the brotherhood of the redeemed sons of God. "*He* is our peace"; and if He is in our hearts, we must needs be sons of peace. "Behold the secret of all true union! It is not by others coming to us, nor by our going over to them; but it is by both them and ourselves coming to Christ" that peace is made (Monod).

Thus within and without the Church the work of atonement will advance, with Christ ever for its preacher (ver. 17). He speaks through the words and the lives of His ten thousand messengers,—men of every order, in every age and country of the earth. The leaven of Christ's peace will spread till the lump is leavened. God will accomplish His purpose of the ages, whether in our time, or in another worthier of His calling. His Church is destined to be the home of the human family, the universal liberator and instructor and reconciler of the nations. And Christ shall sit enthroned in the loyal worship of the federated peoples of the earth.

But the question remains: What is the foundation, what the warrant of this grand idealism of the apostle Paul? Many a great thinker, many an ardent reformer before and since has dreamed of some such millennium as this. And their enthusiastic plans have ended too often in conflict and destruction. What surer ground of confidence have we in Paul's undertaking than in those of so many gifted visionaries and philosophers? The difference lies here: his expectation rests on the word and character of God; his instrument of reform is the cross of Jesus Christ.

God is the centre of His own universe. Any reconciliation that is to stand must include Him first of all. Christ reconciled Jew and Gentile "both in one body *to God*." There is the meeting point, the true focus of the orbit of human life, that can alone control its movements and correct its wild aberrations. Under the shadow of His throne of justice, in the arms of His fatherly love, the kindreds of the earth will at last find reconciliation and peace. Humanitarian and secularist systems make the simple mistake of ignoring the supreme Factor in the scheme of things; they leave out the All in all.

"Be ye *reconciled to God*," cries the apostle. For Almighty God has had a great quarrel with this world of ours. The hatred of men towards each other is rooted in the "carnal mind which is enmity against God." The "law of commandments contained in ordinances," in whose possession the Jew boasted over the lawless and profane Gentile, in reality branded both as culprits.

The secret disquiet and dread lurking in man's conscience, the pangs endured in his body of humiliation, the groaning frame of nature declare the world unhinged and out of course. Things have gone amiss, somehow, between man and his Creator. The face of the earth and the field of human history are scarred with the thunderbolts of His displeasure. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the King of the ages, is not the amiable, almighty Sentimentalist that some pious people would make Him out to be. The men of the Bible felt and realised, if we do not, the grave and tremendous import of the Lord's controversy with all flesh. He is unceasingly at war with the sins of men. "God is *love*"—oh, yes! but then He is also "a consuming fire"! There is no anger so crushing as the anger of love, for there is none so just; no wrath to be feared like "the wrath of the Lamb." God is not a man, weak and passionate, whom a spark of anger might set all on fire, burning out His justice and compassion. "In His wrath He remembers mercy." Within that infinite nature there is room for an absolute loathing and resentment towards sin, in consistence with an immeasurable pity and yearning towards His sinful children. Hence the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at it from what side you will (and it has many sides), propound it in what terms you may (and it translates itself anew into the dialect of every age), you must not explain the cross of Christ away nor cause its offence to cease. "The atonement has always been a scandal and a folly to those who did not receive it; it has always contained something which to formal logic is false and to individualistic ethics immoral; yet in that very element which has been branded as immoral and false, has always lain the seal of its power and the secret of its truth." The Holy One of God, the Lamb without spot and blemish, He died by His own consent a sinner's death. That sacrifice, undergone by the Son of God and Son of man dying as man for men, in love to His race and in obedience to the Divine will and law, gave an infinite satisfaction to God in His relation to the world, and there went up to the Divine throne from the anguish of Calvary a "savour of sweet smell." The moral glory of the act of Jesus Christ in dying for His guilty brethren outshone its horror and disgrace; and it redeemed man's lost condition, and clothed human nature with a new character and aspect in the eyes of God Himself. "Now therefore there is no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The mercy of God, if we may so say, is set free to act in forgiveness and restoration, without any compromise of justice and inflexible law. No peace without this: no peace that did not *satisfy God*, and satisfy that law, deep as the deepest in God, that binds suffering to wrong-doing and death to sin.

Perhaps you say: This is immoral, surely, that the just should suffer for the unjust; that one commits the offence, and another bears the penalty.—Stay a moment: that is only half the truth. We are more than individuals; we are members of a race; and vicarious suffering runs through life. Our sufferings and wrong-doings bind the human family together in an inextricable web. We are *communists in sin and death.* It is the law and lot of our existence. And Christ, the Lord and centre of the race, has come within its scope. He bound Himself to our sinking fortunes. He became co-partner in our lost estate, and has redeemed it to God by His blood. If He was true and perfect man, if He was the creative Head and Mediator of the race, the eternal Firstborn of many brethren, He could do no other. He who alone had the right and the power,—"*One* died for all." He took upon His Divine heart the sin and curse of the world, He fastened it to His shoulders with the cross; and He bore it away from Caiaphas' hall and Pilate's judgment-seat, away from guilty Jerusalem; He took away the sin of the world, and expiated it once for all. He quenched in His blood the fires of wrath and hate it kindled. He *slew the enmity* thereby.

Still, we are individuals, as you said, not lost after all in the world's solidarity. Here your personal right and will must come in. What Christ has done for you is yours, so far as you accept it. He has died your death beforehand, trusting that you would not repudiate His act, that you would not let His blood be spilt in vain. But He will never force His mediation upon you. He respects your freedom and your manhood. Do you now endorse what Jesus Christ did on your behalf? Do you renounce the sin, and accept the sacrifice? Then it is yours, from this moment, before the tribunal of God and of conscience. By the witness of His Spirit you are proclaimed a forgiven and reconciled man. Christ crucified is yours—if you will have Him, if you will identify your sinful self with the sinless Mediator, if as you see Him lifted up on the cross you will let your heart cry out, "Oh my God, He dies for *me!*"

Coming "in one Spirit to the Father," the reconciled children join hands again with each other. Social barriers, caste feelings, family feuds, personal quarrels, national antipathies, alike go down before the virtue of the blood of Jesus.

"Neither passion nor pride
His cross can abide,
But melt in the fountain that streams from His side!"

"Beloved," you will say to the man that hates or has wronged you most,—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." In these simple words of the apostle John lies the secret of universal peace, the hope of the fraternisation of mankind. Nations will have to say this one day, as well as men.

CHAPTER XI.

GOD'S TEMPLE IN HUMANITY.

EPHESIANS ii. 19-22.

NOT unfrequently it is the last word or phrase of the paragraph that gives us the clue to St. Paul's meaning and discloses the point at which he has aimed all along. So in this instance. "For a habitation of God in the Spirit": behold the goal of God's ways with mankind! For this end the Divine grace has wrought through countless ages and has made its great sacrifice. For this end Jew and Gentile are being gathered into one and compacted into a new humanity.

I. The Church is a house built for an *Occupant.* Its quality and size, and the mode of its construction are determined by its destination. It is built to suit the great Inhabitant, who says concerning the new Zion as He said of the old in figure: "This is My rest for ever! Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." God, who is spirit, cannot be satisfied with the fabric of material nature for His temple, nor does "the Most High dwell in houses made by men's hands." He seeks our spirit for His abode, and

"Doth prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure."

In the collective life and spirit of humanity God claims to reside, that He may fill it with His glory and His love. "Know you not," cries the apostle to the once debased Corinthians, "that you are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

Nothing that is bestowed upon man terminates in himself. The deliverance of Jewish and Gentile believers from their personal sins, their reinstatement into the broken unity of mankind and the destruction in them of their old enmities, of the antipathies generated by their common rebellion against God—these great results of Christ's sacrifice were means to a further end. "Hallowed be Thy name" is our first petition to the Father in heaven; "Glory to God in the highest" is the key-note of the angels' song, that runs through all the harmonies of "peace on earth," through every strain of the melody of life. Religion is the mistress, not the handmaid, in human affairs. She will never consent to become a mere ethical discipline, an instrument and subordinate stage in social evolution, a ladder held for men to climb up into their self-sufficiency.

The old temptation of the Garden, "Ye shall be as gods," has come upon our age in a new and fascinating form. "You shall be as gods," it is whispered: "nay, you *are* God, and there is no other. The supernatural is a dream. The Christian story is a fable. There is none to fear or adore above yourselves!" Man is to worship his collective self, his own humanity. "I am the Lord thy God," the great idol says, "that brought thee up out of animalism and savagery, and me only shalt thou serve!—Love and faithful service to one's kind, a holy passion for the welfare of the race, for the relief of human ignorance and poverty and pain, this is the true religion; and you need no other. Its obligation is instinctive, its benefits immediate and palpable; and it gives a consecration to individual life that dignifies and chastens, while it calls into exercise all our faculties."

Yes, we willingly admit, such human service is "religion pure and undefiled, *before our God and Father.*" If service is rendered to our kind as worship to the Father of men; if we reverence in each man the image of God and the shrine of His Spirit; if we are seeking to cleanse and adorn in men the temple where the Most High shall dwell, the humblest work done for

our fellows' good is done for Him. The best human charity is rendered for the love of God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength. This," said Jesus, "is the first and great commandment. And the second is *like unto it:* Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." On these two hangs the welfare of men and nations.

But the first commandment must come first. The second law of Jesus never has been or will be kept to purpose without the first. Humanitarian sentiments, dreams of universal brotherhood, projects of social reform, may seem for the moment to gain by their independence of religion a certain zest and emphasis; but they are without root and vitality. Their energy fails, or spends itself in revolt; their glow declines, their purity is stained. The leaders and first enthusiasts trained in the school of Christ, whose spirit, in vain repudiated, lives on in them, find themselves betrayed and alone. The coarse selfishness and materialism of the human heart win an easy triumph over a visionary altruism. "Without Me," says Jesus Christ, "ye can do nothing."

In the light of God's glory man learns to reverence his nature and understand the vocation of his race. The love of God touches the deep and enduring springs of human action. The kingdom of Christ and of God commands an absolute devotion; its service inspires unfaltering courage and invincible patience. There is a grandeur and a certainty, of which the noblest secular aims fall short, in the hopes of those who are striving together for the faith of the gospel, and who work to build human life into a dwelling-place for God.

II. God's temple in the Church of Jesus Christ, while it is one, is also manifold. "In whom *each several building* [or *every part of the building*], while it is compacted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."

The image is that of an extensive pile of buildings, such as the ancient temples commonly were, in process of construction at different points over a wide area. The builders work in concert, upon a common plan. The several parts of the work are adjusted to each other; and the various operations in process are so harmonised, that the entire construction preserves the unity of the architect's design. Such an edifice was the apostolic Church—one, but of many parts —in its diverse gifts and multiplied activities animated by one Spirit and directed towards one Divine purpose.

Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, —what a various scene of activity these centres of Christian life presented! The Churches founded in these great cities must have differed in many features. Even in the communities of his own province the apostle did not, so far as we can judge, impose a uniform administration. St. Peter and St. Paul carried out their plans independently, only maintaining a general understanding with each other. The apostolic founders, inspired by one and the self-same Spirit, could labour at a distance, upon material and by methods extremely various, with entire confidence in each other and with an assurance of the unity of result which their teaching and administration would exhibit. The many buildings rested on the one foundation of the apostles. "Whether it were I or they," says our apostle, "so we preach, and so you believed." Where there is the same Spirit and the same Lord, men do not need to be scrupulous about visible conformity. Elasticity and individual initiative admit of entire harmony of principle. The hand may do its work without irritating and obstructing the eye; and the foot run on its errands without mistrusting the ear.

Such was the catholicism of the apostolic age. The true reading of verse 21, as it is restored by the Revisers, is an incidental witness to the date of the epistle. A churchman of the second century, writing under Paul's name in the interests of catholic unity as it was then understood, would scarcely have penned such a sentence without attaching to the subject the definite article: he must have written "all the building," as the copyists from whom the received text proceeds very naturally have done. From that time onwards, as the system of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was developed, external unity was more and more strictly imposed. The original "diversity of operations" became a rigid uniformity. The Church swallowed up the Churches. Finally, the spiritual bureaucracy of Rome gathered all ecclesiastical power into one centre, and placed the direction of Western Christendom in the hands of a single priest, whom it declared to be the Vicar of Jesus Christ and endowed with the Divine attribute of infallibility.

Had not Jerusalem been overthrown and its Church destroyed, the hierarchical movement would probably have made that city, rather than Rome, its centre. This was in fact the tendency, if not the express purpose, of the Judaistic party in the Church. St. Paul had vindicated in his earlier epistles the freedom of the Gentile Christian communities, and their right of non-conformity to Jewish usage. In the words "each several building, fitly framed together," there is an echo of this controversy. The Churches of his mission claim a standing side by side with those founded by other apostles. For himself and his Gentile brethren he seems to say, in the presence of the primitive Church and its leaders: "As they are Christ's, so also are we."

The co-operation of the different parts of the body of Christ is essential to their collective growth. Let all Churches beware of crushing dissent. Blows aimed at our Christian neighbours recoil upon ourselves. Undermining their foundation, we shake our own. Next to positive corruption of doctrine and life, nothing hinders so greatly the progress of the kingdom of God as the claim to exclusive legitimacy made on behalf of ancient Church organisations. Their representatives would have every part of God's temple framed upon one pattern. They refuse a place on the apostolic foundation to all Churches, however numerous, however rich in faith and good works, however strong the historical justification for their existence, however clear the marks they bear of the Spirit's seal, which do not conform to the rule they themselves have received. Their rites and ministry, they assert, are those alone approved by Christ and authorised by His apostles, within a given area. They refuse the right hand of fellowship to men who are doing Christ's work by their side; they isolate their flocks, as far as possible, from intercourse with the Christian communities around them.

This policy on the part of any Christian

Church, or Church party, is contrary to the mind of Christ and to the example of His apostles. Those who hold aloof from the comity of the Churches and prevent the many buildings of God's temple being fitly framed together, must bear their judgment, whosoever they be. They prefer conquest to peace, but that conquest they will never win; it would be fatal to themselves. Let the elder sister frankly allow the birthright of the younger sisters of Christ's house in these lands, and be our example in justice and in charity. Great will be her honour; great the glory won for our common Lord.

"Every building fitly framed together *groweth into a holy temple* in the Lord." The subject is distributive; the predicate collective. The parts give place to the whole in the writer's mind. As each several piece of the structure, each cell or chapel in the temple, spreads out to join its companion buildings and adjusts itself to the parts around it, the edifice grows into a richer completeness and becomes more fit for its sacred purpose. The separate buildings, distant in place or historical character, approximate by extension, as they spread over the unoccupied ground between them and as the connecting links are multiplied. At last a point is reached at which they will become continuous. Growing into each other step by step and forming across the diminishing distance a web of mutual attachment constantly thickening, they will insensibly, by a natural and vital growth, become one in visible communion as they are one in their underlying faith.

When each organ of the body in its own degree is perfect and holds its place in keeping with the rest, we think no longer of their individual perfection, of the charm of this feature or of that; they are forgotten in the beauty of the perfect frame. So it will be in the body of Christ, when its several communions, cleansed and filled with His Spirit, each honouring the vocation of the others, shall in freedom and in love by a spontaneous movement be gathered into one. Their strength will then be no longer weakened and their spirit chafed by internal conflict. With united forces and irresistible energy, they will assail the kingdom of darkness and subjugate the world to Christ.

For this consummation our Saviour prayed in the last hours before His death: "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that Thou didst send me" (John xvii. 21). Did He fear that His little flock of the Twelve would be parted by dissensions? or did He not look onward to the future, and see the "offences that must come," the alienations and fierce conflicts that would arise amongst His people, and the blood that would be shed in His name? Yet beyond these divisions, on the horizon of the end of the age, He foresaw the day when the wounds of His Church would be healed, when the sword that He had brought on the earth would be sheathed, and through the unity of faith and love in His people all mankind would at last come to acknowledge Him and the Father who had sent Him.

III. To appearance, we are many rather than one who bear the name of Christ. But we are one notwithstanding, if below the variety of superstructure our faith rests upon the witness of the apostles, and the several buildings have Christ Jesus Himself for chief corner-stone. The *one foundation* and the *one Spirit* constitute the unity of God's temple in the Church.

"The apostles and prophets" are named as a single body, *the prophets* being doubtless, in this passage and in chapters iii. 5 and iv. 11, the existing prophets of the apostolic Church, whose inspired teaching supplemented that of the apostles and helped to lay down the foundation of revealed truth. That foundation has been, through the providence of God, preserved for later ages in the Scriptures of the New Testament, on which the faith of Christians has rested ever since. Such a prophet Barnabas was in the first days (Acts xiii. 1), and such was the unknown, but deeply inspired writer of the epistle to the Hebrews; such prophets, again, were SS. Mark and Luke, the Evangelists. Prophecy was not a stated gift of office. Just as there were "teachers" in the early Church whose knowledge and eloquence did not entitle them to bear rule, so prophecy was frequently exercised by private persons and carried with it no such official authority as belonged in the highest degree to the apostles.

It is thought surprising that St. Paul should write thus, in so general and distant a fashion, of the order to which he belonged (comp. iii. 5). This, it is said, is the language of a later generation, which looks back with reverence to the inspired Founders. But this letter is written, as we observed at the outset, from a peculiarly objective and impersonal standpoint. It differs in this respect from other epistles of St. Paul. He is addressing a number of Churches, with some of which his personal relations were slight and distant. He is contemplating the Church in its most general character. He is not the only founder of Churches; he is one of a band of colleagues, working in different regions. It is natural that he should use the plural here. He sets his successors an example of the recognition due to fellow-labourers whose work bears the seal of Christ's Spirit.

These men have laid *the foundation*—Peter and Paul, John and James, Barnabas and Silas, and the rest. They are our spiritual progenitors, the fathers of our faith. We see Jesus Christ through their eyes; we read His teaching, and catch His Spirit in their words. Their testimony, in its essential facts, stands secure in the confidence of mankind. Nor was it their word alone, but the men themselves—their character, their life and work—laid for the Church its historical foundation. This "glorious company of the apostles" formed the first course in the new building, on whose firmness and strength the stability of the entire structure depends. Their virtues and their sufferings, as well as the revelations made through them, have guided the thoughts and shaped the life of countless multitudes of men, of the best and wisest men in all ages since. They have fixed the standard of Christian doctrine and the type of Christian character. At our best, we are but imitators of them as they were of Christ.

In regard to the chief part of their teaching, both as to its meaning and authority, the great bulk of Christians in all communions are agreed. The keen disputes which engage us upon certain points testify to the cardinal importance which is felt on all hands to attach to the words of Christ's chosen apostles. Their living witness is in our midst. The self-same Spirit that

wrought in them works amongst men and dwells in the communion of saints. He still reveals the things of Christ, and guides into truth the willing and obedient.

So "the firm foundation of God standeth"; though men, shaken themselves, seem to see it tremble. On that basis we may labour confidently and loyally, with those amongst whom the Master has placed us. Some of our fellow-workmen disown and would hinder us: that shall not prevent us from rejoicing in their good work, and admiring the gold and precious stones that they contribute to the fabric. The Lord of the temple will know how to use the labour of His many servants. He will forgive and compose their strife, who are jealous for His name. He will shape their narrow aims to His larger purposes. Out of their discords He will draw a finer harmony. As the great house grows to its dimensions, as the workmen by the extension of their labours come nearer to each other and their sectional plans merge in Christ's great purpose, reproaches will cease and misunderstandings vanish. Over many who followed not with us and whom we counted but as "strangers and sojourners," as men whose place within the walls of Zion was doubtful and unauthorised, we shall hereafter rejoice with a joy not unmixed with self-upbraiding, to find them in the fullest right our fellow-citizens amongst the saints and of the household of God.

The Holy Spirit is the supreme Builder of the Church, as He is the supreme witness to Jesus Christ (John xv. 26, 27). The words *in the Spirit*, closing the verse with solemn emphasis, denote not the mode of God's habitation—that is self-evident—but the agency engaged in building this new house of God. With one "chief corner-stone" to rest upon and one Spirit to inspire and control them, the apostles and prophets laid their foundation and the Church was "builded together" for a habitation of God. Hence its unity. But for this sovereign influence the primitive founders of Christianity, like later Church leaders, would have fallen into fatal discord. Modern critics, reasoning upon natural grounds and not understanding the grace of the Holy Spirit, assume that they did thus quarrel and contend. Had this been so, no foundation could ever have been laid; the Church would have fallen to pieces at the very beginning.

In the hands of these faithful and wise stewards of God's dispensation, "the stone which the builders rejected was made the head of the corner." Their work has been tried by fire and by flood; and it abides. The rock of Zion stands unworn by time, unshaken by the conflict of ages,—amidst the movements of history and the shifting currents of thought, the one foundation for the peace and true welfare of mankind.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SECRET OF THE AGES.

EPHESIANS iii. 1-9.

VERSES 2-13 are in form a parenthesis. They interrupt the prayer which appears to be commencing in the first verse and is not resumed until verse 14. This intervening period is parenthetical, however, in appearance more than in reality. The matter it contains is so weighty, and so essential to the argument and structure of the epistle, that it is impossible to treat it as a mere *aside*. The writer intends, at the pause which occurs after the paragraph just concluded (ii. 22), to interpose a few words of prayer before passing on to the next topic. But in the act of doing so, this subject of which his mind is full—viz., that of his own relation to God's great purpose for mankind—forces itself upon him; and the prayer that was on his lips is pent up for a few moments longer until it flows forth again, in richer measure, in verses 14-19.

Like chapter i. 3-14, this passage is an extreme instance of St. Paul's amorphous style. His sentences are not composed; they are spun in a continuous thread, an endless chain of prepositional, participial, and relative adjuncts. They grow under our eyes like living things, putting forth new processes every moment, now in this and now in that direction. Within the main parenthesis we soon come upon another parenthesis including verses 3*b* and 4 ("as I wrote afore," etc.); and at several points the grammatical connection is uncertain. In its general scope, this intricate sentence resolves itself into a statement of *what God has wrought in the apostle* toward the accomplishment of His great plan. It thus completes the exposition given already of that which *God wrought in Christ for the Church*, and that which *He has wrought through Christ in Gentile believers* in the fulfilment of the same end.

Verses 1-9 speak (1) of the mystery itself—God's gracious intention toward the human race, unknown in earlier times; and (2) of the man to whom, above others, it was given to make known the secret.

I. *The mystery* is defined twice over. First, it consists in the fact that "in Christ Jesus through the gospel the Gentiles are co-heirs and co-incorporate and co-partners in the promise" (ver. 6); and secondly, it is "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (ver. 8). The latter phrase gathers to a point what is diversely expressed in the former.

Christ is, to St. Paul, the centre and the sum of the mysteries of Divine truth, of the whole enigma of existence. In the parallel epistle he calls Him "the mystery of God—in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. ii. 2, 3: R. V.). The mystery of God, discovered in Christ, was hidden out of the sight and reach of previous times. Now, by the preaching of the gospel, it is made the common property of mankind (Col. i. 25-28).

In close connection with these statements, St. Paul speaks there, as he does here, of his own heavy sufferings endured on this account and the joy they gave him. He is the instrument of a glorious purpose worthy of God; he is the mouthpiece of a revelation waiting to be spoken since the world began, that is addressed to all mankind and interests heaven along with earth. The greatness of his office is commensurate with the greatness of the truth given him to announce.

The mystery, as we have said, consists in *Christ*. This we learned from chapter i. 4, 5, and 9, 10. In Christ the Eternal lodged His purpose and laid His plans for the world. It is His fulness that the fulness of the times dispenses. The Old Testament, the reservoir of previous revelation, had Him for its close-kept secret, "held in silence through eternal times"

(Rom. xvi. 25-27). The drift of its prophecies, the focus of its converging lights, the veiled magnet towards which its spiritual indications pointed, was "Christ." He "was the spiritual rock that followed" Israel in its wanderings, from whose springs the people drank, as it answered to the touch of one and now another of the holy men of old. The revelation of Jesus Christ gives unity, substance, and meaning to the history of Israel, which is otherwise a pathway without goal, a problem without solution. Priest and prophet, law and sacrifice; the kingly Son of David and the suffering Servant of Jehovah; the Seed of the woman with bruised foot bruising the serpent's head; the Lord whom His people seek, suddenly coming to His temple; the Stone hewn from the mountains without hands, that grows till it fills the earth—the manifold representations of Israel's ideal, centre in the Lord Jesus Christ. The lines of the great figure drawn on the canvas of prophecy—disconnected as they seem and without a plan, giving rise to a thousand dreams and speculations—are filled out and drawn into shape and take life and substance in Him. They are found to be parts of a consistent whole, sketches and studies of this fragment or of that belonging to the consummate Person and the comprehensive plan manifest in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

But while Christ gathers into Himself the accumulated wealth of former revelation, His fulness is not measured thereby or exhausted. He solves the problems of the past; He unseals the ancient mysteries. But He creates new and deeper problems, some explained in the continued teaching of His Spirit and His providence, others that remain, or emerge from time to time to tax the faith and understanding of His Church. There are the mysteries surrounding His own Person, with which the Greek Church struggled long—His eternal Sonship, His pre-incarnate relation to mankind and the creatures, the final outcome of the mediatorial reign and its subordination to the absolute sovereignty of God. These depths St. Paul sounded with his plummet; but he found them unfathomable. Theological science has explored and defined them, and illuminated them on many sides, but cannot reach to their inmost mystery. Then there is the problem of the atonement, with all the cognate difficulties touching the origin of sin, its heredity and its personal guilt, touching the adjustment of law and grace, the method of justification, the extent and efficacy of Christ's redeeming work, touching the future destiny and eternal state of souls. Another class of questions largely occupies the minds of thoughtful men today. They are studying the relation of Christ and His Church to nature and the outward world, the bearings of Christian truth upon social conditions, the working of the Spirit of God in communities, and the place of man's collective life in the progress and upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ.

For such inquiries the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to those who humbly seek His light. He is given afresh in every age. Out of Christ's unsearchable riches ever-new resources are forthcoming at His Church's need, new treasures lying hidden in the old for him who can extract them. But His riches, however far they are investigated, remain unsearchable, and inexhaustible however largely drawn upon. God's ways may be traced further and further in each generation; they will remain to the end, as they were to the mind of Paul at the limit of his bold researches, "past finding out." The inspired apostle confesses himself a child in Divine learning: "We know in part," he says, "we prophesy in part." Oh the depths of "hidden wisdom" unimagined now, that are in store for us in Christ, "fore-ordained before the worlds unto our glory!"

The particular aspect of the mystery of Christ with which the apostle is concerned, is that of His relationship to the Gentile world. "The grace of God," he says in verse 2, "was given me *for you*." Such is "the dispensation" in which God is now engaged. Upon this lavish and undreamed-of scale He is dealing forth salvation to men. St. Paul describes this revelation of God's goodness to the Gentiles by three parallel but distinct terms in verse 6. They "are fellow-heirs"—a word that carries us back to chapter i. 11-13, and assures the Gentile readers of their final redemption and heavenly glory.* They "are of the same body"—which sums up all that we have learnt from chapter ii. 11-22. And they "are fellow-partakers of the promise"—receiving upon a footing of equal privilege with Jewish believers the gift of the Spirit and the blessings promised to Israel in the Messianic kingdom.

In virtue of the dispensation committed to him, St. Paul formally proclaims the incorporation of the Gentiles into the body of Christ, their investiture with the franchise of faith. The forgiveness of sins is theirs, the light of God's smile, the breath of His Spirit, the worship and fellowship of His Church, the tasks and honours of His service. The incarnation of Christ is theirs; His life, teaching, and miracles; His cross is theirs; His resurrection and ascension, and His second coming, and the glories of His heavenly kingdom—all made their own on the bare condition of a penitent and obedient faith. The past is theirs—is ours, along with the present and the future. The God of Israel is our God. Abraham is our father, though his sons after the flesh acknowledge us not. Their prophets prophesied of the grace that should come unto us. Their poets sing the songs of Zion to Gentile peoples in a hundred tongues. They lead our prayers and praises. In their words we find expression for our heart-griefs and joys. At the wedding-feast or by the grave-side, amidst "the multitude that keep holy day" and in "dry lands" where the soul thirsts for God's ordinances, we carry the Psalmists with us and the teachers of Israel.

What a boundless wealth we Gentiles, taught by Jesus Christ, have discovered in the Jewish Bible! When will the Jewish people understand that their greatness is in Him, that the light which lightens the Gentiles is their true glory? When will they accept their part in the riches of which they have made all the world partakers? The mystery of our participation in their Christ has now been "revealed to the sons of men" long enough. Is it not time that they themselves should see it, that the veil should be lifted from the heart of Israel? The disclosure was in the first instance so astounding, so contrary to their cherished expectations, that one can scarcely wonder if it was at first rejected. But God, the King of the ages, has been asserting

* See Gal. iii. 7, v. 5; Rom. viii. 14-25; 1 Peter i. 4, 5.

and re-asserting the fact in the course of history ever since. How vain to fight against Him! how useless to deny the victory of the Nazarene!

II. But there was in Israel an election of grace,—men of unveiled heart to whom the mystery of ages was disclosed. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." Such is the rule of revelation. To the like effect Christ said: "The pure in heart shall see God. He that willeth to do His will shall know of the doctrine."

The light of God's universal love had come into the world; but where it fell on cold or impure hearts, it shone in vain. The mystery "was made manifest to His *saints*," writes the apostle in Colossians i. 26. So in this passage: "revealed to His *holy* apostles and prophets in the Spirit." The pure eye sees the true light. This was the condition which made it possible for Paul himself and his partners in the gospel to be the bearers of this august revelation. It needed sincere and devoted men, willing to be taught of God, willing to surrender every prejudice and the preconceptions of flesh and blood, in order to receive and convey to the world thoughts of God so much larger and loftier than the thoughts of men. To such men—true disciples, loyal at all costs to God and truth, holy and humble of heart—Jesus Christ gave His great commission and bade them "go and make disciples of all the nations."

The secret was further disclosed to Peter, when he was taught at the house of Cornelius "not to call any man common or unclean." He saw, and the Church of Jerusalem saw and confessed that God "gave the like gift" to uncircumcised Gentiles as to themselves and had "purified their hearts by faith." Many prophetic voices, unrecorded, confirmed this revelation. Of all this Paul is thinking here. It is to his predecessors in the knowledge of the truth rather than to himself that he refers when he speaks of "holy apostles and prophets" in verse 5. His readers would naturally turn to them in coming to this plural expression. The original apostles of Jesus and witnesses of His truth first attested the doctrine of universal grace; and that they did so was a fact of vital importance to Paul and the Gentile Church. The significance of this fact is shown by the stress which is laid upon it and the prominence given to it in the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles.

The apostle frequently alludes to revelations made to himself; he never claims that this chief matter was *revealed* personally to himself. It was an open secret when Saul entered the Church. "Whereof," he says, in verse 7, "I *became minister*"; again, "to me was this grace given, to *preach to the Gentiles* Christ's unsearchable riches." The leaders of the Jewish Christian Church knew well that their message was meant for all the world. But the abstract knowledge of a truth is one thing; the practical power to realise it is another. Until the new apostle came upon the field, there was no man ready for this great task and equal to it. It was at this crisis that Paul was raised up. Then "it pleased God to reveal His Son" in him, that he might "preach Him among the Gentiles."

The effect of this summons upon Paul himself was overwhelming, and continued to be so till the end of life. The immense favour humbles him to the dust. He strains language, heaping comparative upon superlative, to describe his astonishment as the import of his mission unfolds itself: "To me, less than the least of all the saints, was this grace given." That Saul the Pharisee and the persecutor, the most unworthy and most unlikely of men, should be the chosen vessel to bear Christ's riches to the Gentile world, how shall he sufficiently give thanks for this! how express his wonder at the unfathomable wisdom and goodness that the choice displays in the mind of God! But we can see well that this choice was precisely the fittest. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, steeped in Jewish traditions and glorying in his sacred ancestry, none knew better than the apostle Paul how rich were the treasures stored in the house of Abraham that he had to make over to the Gentiles. A true son of that house, he was the fittest to lead in the aliens, to show them its precious things and make them at home within its walls.

To himself the office was an unceasing delight. The universalism of the gospel—a commonplace of our modern rhetoric—had burst upon his mind in its unspoilt freshness and undimmed splendour. He is sailing out into an undiscovered ocean, with a boundless horizon. A new heaven and earth are opened to him in the revelation that the Gentiles are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. He is entranced, as he writes, with the largeness of the Divine purpose, with the magnificent sweep and scope of the designs of grace. These verses give us the warm and genuine impression made upon the hearts of its first recipients by the disclosure of the universal destination of the gospel of Christ.

St. Paul's work, in carrying out the dispensation of this mystery, was twofold. It was both external and internal. He was a "herald and apostle"; he was also "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim. ii. 7). He had in the former capacity to carry the good tidings from one end to the other of the Roman empire, to spread it abroad as far as his feet could travel and his voice reach, and thus "to fulfil the gospel of Christ." But there was another, mental task, as necessary and still more difficult, which likewise fell to his lot. He had to *think out* the gospel. It was his office to unfold and apply it to the wants of a new world, to solve by its aid the problems that confronted him as evangelist and pastor,—questions that contained the seed and beginning of the intellectual difficulties of the Church in future times. He had to free the gospel from the swaddling-bands of Judaism, to emancipate the spirit from the letter of a mechanical and legal interpretation. On the other hand, he had equally to guard the truth as it is in Jesus from the dissolving influences of Gentile scepticism and theosophy. Fighting his way through fierce and incessant opposition on both sides, the apostle Paul led the mind of the Church onwards and guides it still in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. These noble epistles are the fruit and record of St. Paul's theological work. Through them he has left a deeper mark on the conscience of the world than any one man besides, except the Master of truth who was more than man.

The apostle was not unaware of the vast influence he now possessed, and that must accrue to him in the future from the transcendent interest of the doctrines committed to his charge. There is no false modesty about this splendidly gifted man. It is his not only to "preach to

the Gentiles the good news of Christ's unsearchable riches"; but more than that, "to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery that has been hidden away from the ages in God who created all things." The great secret was out while Saul of Tarsus was still a persecutor and blasphemer. But as to the *management* and *dispensation* of the mystery, the practical handling of it, as to the mode and way in which God would convey and apply it to the world at large, and as to the bearings and consequences of this momentous truth,—the apostle Paul, and no one but he, had all this to expound and set in order. He was, in fact, the architect of Christian doctrine.

Theologically, Peter and John himself were Paul's debtors; and are included amongst the "all men" of verse 9 (if this reading of the text is correct). St. John had, it is true, a more direct intuition into the mind of Christ and rose to an even loftier height of contemplation; but the labours and the logic of St. Paul provided the field into which he entered in his ripe old age spent at Ephesus. John, who absorbed and assimilated everything that belonged to Christ and found for everything its principle and centre in the Master of his youth—"the way, the truth, and the life"—passed through the school of Paul. With the rest, he learnt through the new apostle to see more perfectly "what is the dispensation of the mystery hidden from the ages in God."

Well persuaded is our apostle that all readers of this letter in the Asian towns, if they have not known it before, will now "perceive" his "understanding in the mystery of Christ." All ages have discerned it since. And the ages to come will measure its value better than we can do now.

CHAPTER XIII.

EARTH TEACHING HEAVEN.

EPHESIANS iii. 10-13.

"THE mystery hidden since the ages began, in God who created all things:" so the last paragraph concluded. The added phrase "through Jesus Christ" is a comment of the pious reader, that has been incorporated in the received text; but it is wanting in the oldest copies, and is out of place. The apostle is not concerned with the prerogatives of Christ, but with the scope of the Christian economy. He is displaying the breadth and grandeur of the dispensation of grace, the infinite range of the Divine plans and operations of which it forms the centre. Its secret was cherished in the Eternal Mind. Its foundations are laid in the very basis of the world. And the disclosure of it now being made brings new light and wisdom to the powers of the celestial realms.

"There is nothing covered," said Jesus "which shall not be revealed, and hidden which shall not be known." The mysteries which God sets before His intelligent creatures are promises of knowledge; they are drafts, to be honoured in due time, upon the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ. So this great secret of the destiny of the Gentile world was "from all ages hidden, in order that now through the Church it might be made known," and by its means God's wisdom, to these sublime intelligences. This intention was a part of the "plan of the ages" formed in Christ (ver. 11). God designed by our redemption to bless higher races along with our own. The elder sons of God, those "morning stars" of creation, are schooled and instructed by what is transpiring here upon earth.

To some this will appear to be mere extravagance. They see in such expressions the marks of an unrestrained enthusiasm, of theological speculation pushed beyond its limits and unchecked by any just knowledge of the physical universe. This censure would be plausible and it might seem that the apostle had extended the mission of the gospel beyond its province, were it not for what he says in verse 11: This "purpose of the ages" God "made in *the Christ*, even *Jesus our Lord*." Jesus Christ links together angels and men. He draws after Him to earth the eyes of heaven. Christ's coming to this world and identification with it unite to it enduringly the great worlds above us. The scenes enacted upon this planet and the events of its religious history have sent their shock through the universe. The incarnation of the Son of God gives to human life a boundless interest and significance. It is idle to oppose to this conviction the fact of the littleness of the terrestial globe. Spiritual and physical magnitudes are incommensurable. You cannot measure a man's soul by the size of his dwelling-house. Science teaches us that the most powerful forces may exist and operate within the narrowest space. A microscopic cell may contain the potential life of a world. If our earth is but a grain of sand to the astronomer, it has been the home of Godhead. It is the world for which God spared not to give His own Son!

Here, then, lies the centre of the apostle's thoughts in this paragraph: *God's all-comprehending purpose in Christ*. The magnitude and completeness of this plan are indicated by the fact that it embraces in its purview *the angelic powers and their enlightenment*. So understanding it, our *human faith gains confidence and courage* (vv. 12, 13).

I. The textual critics restore the definite article which later copyists had dropped before the word *Christ* in verse 11. We have already remarked the frequency of "the Christ" in this epistle. Once besides this peculiar combination of the names of our Saviour occurs—in Colossians ii. 6, where Lightfoot renders it *the Christ, even Jesus the Lord*. So it should be rendered in this place. St. Paul sets forth the purpose of "God who created all things." He is looking back through "the ages" during which the Divine plan was kept secret. God was all the time designing His work of mercy, pointing meanwhile the hopes of men by token and promise to the Coming One. The Messiah was the burden of those prophetic ages. That inscrutable Christ of the Old Testament, the veiled mystery of Jewish hope, stands manifested before us and challenges our faith in the glorious person of "Jesus our Lord." This singular turn of expression identifies the ideal and the real, the promise and fulfilment, the dream of Old Testament prophecy and the fact of New Testament history. For Jesus our Lord is the very Christ to whom the

generations before His coming looked forward out of their twilight with wistful expectancy.

Not without meaning is He called "Jesus *our Lord.*" The "principalities and powers" of the heavenly places are in our view (ver. 10). These potentates some of the Asian Christians were fain to worship. "See ye do it not," Paul seems to say. "Jesus, the Christ of God, is alone our Lord; not these. He is our Lord *and theirs* (i. 21, 22). As our Lord He commands their homage, and gives them lessons through His Church in God's deep counsels." Everything that the apostle says tends to exalt our Redeemer and to enhance our confidence in Him. His position is central and supreme, in regard alike to the ages of time and the powers of the universe. In His hand is the key to all mysteries. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning, middle, and end of God's ways. He is the centre of Israel—Israel of the world and the human ages; while the world of men is bound through Him to the higher spheres of being, over which He too presides.

There is a splendid intellectual courage, an incredible boldness and reach of thought in St. Paul's conception of the sovereignty of Christ. Remember that He of whom these things are said, but thirty years before died a felon's death in the sight of the Jewish people. It is not *our* Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is hallowed by the lips of millions and glorified by the triumphs of centuries upon centuries past, but the Nazarene with the obscurity of His life and the cruel shame of Calvary fresh in the recollection of all men. With what immense force had the facts of His glorification wrought upon men's minds—His resurrection and ascension, the witness of His Spirit and the virtue of His gospel—for it to be possible to speak of Him thus, within a generation of His death! While "the foolishness of preaching" such a Christ and the weakness in which He was crucified were patent to all eyes, unrelieved by the influence of time and the glamour of success, how was it that the first believers raised Jesus to this limitless glory and dominion? It was through the conviction, certified by outward fact and inward experience, that "He liveth by the power of God." Thus Peter on the day of Pentecost: "By the right hand of God exalted, He has shed forth this which ye now see and hear." The resurrection from the dead, the demonstration of the Spirit, proved Jesus Christ to be that which He had claimed to be, the Saviour of men and the eternal Son of God.

The supremacy here assigned to Christ is a consequence of the exaltation described at the close of the first chapter. There we see the height, here the breadth and length of His dominion. If He is raised from the grave so high that all created powers and names are beneath His feet, we cannot wonder that the past ages were employed in preparing His way, that the basis of His throne lies in the foundation of the world.

II. The universe is one. There is a solidarity of rational and moral interests amongst all intelligences. Granting the existence of such beings as the angels of Scripture, we should expect them to be profoundly concerned in the redeeming work of Christ. They are the "watchers" and "holy ones" spoken of by the later Isaiah and Daniel, whom the Lord has "set upon the walls of Jerusalem" and who survey the affairs of nations. Such was "the angel who talked" with Zechariah in his vision, and whom the prophet overheard pleading for Jerusalem. In the Apocalypse, again, we find the angels acting as God's unseen executive. We decline to believe that these superhuman creatures are nothing more than apocalyptic machinery, that they are creations of fancy employed to give a livelier aspect to spiritual truth. "Cannot I pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" So Jesus said, in the most solemn hour of His life. And who can forget His tender words concerning the little children, whose "angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven"?

The apostle Paul, who denounces "worship of the angels" in the fellow epistle to this, earnestly believed in their existence and their interest in human affairs. If he did not write the words of Hebrews i. 14, he certainly held that "they are ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." Most clearly is their relationship to the Church affirmed by the words of the revealing angel to the apostle John: "I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book."

Christ's service is the high school of wisdom for the universe. These princes of heaven win by their ministry to Christ and His Church a great reward. Their intelligence, however lofty its range, is finite. Their keen and burning intuition could not penetrate the mystery of God's intentions toward this world. The revelations of the latter days—the incarnation, the cross, the publication of the gospel, the outpouring of the Spirit—were full of surprises to the heavenly watchers. They sang at Bethlehem; they hid their faces and shrouded heaven in blackness at the sight of Calvary. They bent down with eager observation and searching thought "desiring to look into" the things made known to men (1 Peter i. 12),—close and sympathetic students of the Church's history. The apostle felt that there were other eyes bent upon him than those of his fellowmen, and that he was acting in a grander arena than the visible world. "We are a spectacle," he says, "*to angels* and to men." So he enjoins faithfulness on Timothy, and with Timothy on all who bear the charge of the gospel, "before God and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels." What is public opinion, what the applause or derision of the crowd, to him who lives and acts in the presence of these august spectators?

"Through the Church," we are told the angels of God are "now" having His "manifold wisdom made known" to them. It is not from the abstract scheme of salvation, from the theory or theology of the Church that they get this education, but through the living Church herself. The Saviour's mission to earth created a problem for them, the development of which they follow with the most intense and sympathetic interest. With what solicitude they watch the conflict between good and evil and the varying progress of Christ's kingdom amongst men! Many things, doubtless, that engage our attention and fill a large space in our Church records, are of little account with them; and much that passes in obscurity, names and deeds unchronicled by fame, are written in heaven and pondered in other spheres. No brave and true blow is struck in Christ's battle but it has the admiration of these high spectators. No advance is made in character and habit, in Christian intelligence and ef-

ficiency and the application of the gospel to human need, but they notice and approve. When the cause of the Church and the salvation of mankind go forward, when righteousness and peace triumph, the morning stars sing together and the sons of God shout for joy. The joy that there is in the presence of the angels of God over the repenting sinner, is not the joy of sympathy or pity only; it is the delight of growing wisdom, of deepening insight into the ways of God, into the heart of the Father and the love that passes knowledge.

One would suppose, from what the apostle hints, that our world presents a problem unique in the kingdom of God, one which raises questions more complicated and crucial than have elsewhere arisen. The heavenly princedoms are learning through the Church "the *manifold* wisdom of God." His love, in its pure essence, those happy and godlike beings know. They have lived for ages in its unclouded light. His power and skill they may see displayed in proportions immensely grander than this puny globe of ours presents. God's justice, it may be, and the thunders of His law have issued forth in other regions clothed with a splendour of which the scenes of Sinai were but a faint emblem. It is in the combination of the manifold principles of the Divine government that the peculiarity of the human problem appears to lie. The delicate and continuous balancing of forces in God's plan of dealing with this world, the reconciliation of seeming incompatibilities, the issue found from positions of hopeless contradiction, the accord of goodness with severity, of inflexible rectitude and truth with fatherly compassion, afford to the greatest minds of heaven a spectacle and a study altogether wonderful. So amongst ourselves the child of a noble house, reared in cultured ease and shielded from moral peril, in visiting the homes of poverty in the crowded city, finds a new world opened to him, that can teach him Divine lessons if he has the heart to learn. His mind is awakened, his sympathies enriched. He hears the world's true voice, "the still, sad music of humanity." He measures the heights and depths of man's nature. A host of questions are thrust upon him, whose urgency he had scarcely guessed; and wide ranges of truth are lighted up for him, which before were distant and unreal. The highest have ever to learn from the lowest in Christ's school, the seeming-wise from the simple; even the pure and good, from contact with the fallen whom they seek to save.

And "the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places" are, it seems, willing to learn from those below them. As they traced the course of human history in those "eternal times" during which the mystery lay wrapped in silence, the angel watchers were too wise to play the sceptic, too cautious to criticise an unfinished plan and arraign a justice they could not yet understand. With a dignified patience they waited the uplifting of the curtain and the unravelling of the entangled plot. They looked for the coming of the Promised One. So in due time they witnessed and, for their reward, assisted in His manifestation. With the same docility these high sharers of our theological inquiries still wait to see the end of the Lord and to take their part in the dénouement of the time-drama, in the revelation of the sons of God. Let us copy their long patience. God has not made us to mock us. "What thou knowest not now," said the great Revealer, the Master of all mysteries, to His disciple, "thou shalt know hereafter."

These wise elder brothers of ours, rich in the lore of eternity, foresee the things to come as we cannot do. They are far above the smoke and dust of the earthly conflict. The doubts that shake the strongest souls amongst us, the cries of the hour which confuse and deceive us, do not trouble them. They behold us in our weakness, our fears, and our divisions; but they also look on Him who "sits expecting till His enemies are made His footstool." They see how calmly He sits, how patiently expectant, while the sound of clashing arms and the rage and tumult of the peoples go up from the earth. They mark the steadiness with which through century after century, in spite of refluent waves, the tide of mercy rises, and still rises on the shores of earth. Thrones, systems, civilisations have gone down; one after another of the powers that strove to crush or to corrupt Christ's Church has disappeared; and still the name of Jesus lives and spreads. It has traversed every continent and sea; it stands at the head of the living and moving forces of the world. Those who come nearest to the angelic point of view, and judge of the progress of things not by the froth upon the surface, but by the trend of the deeper currents, are the most confident for the future of our race. The kingdom of Satan will not fall without a struggle—a last struggle, perhaps more furious than any in the past—but it is doomed, and waning to its end. So far has the kingdom of Christ advanced, so mightily does the word of God grow and prevail in the earth, that faith may well assure itself of the promised triumph. Soon we shall shout "Alleluia! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

III. Suddenly, according to his wont, the apostle drops down from the heights of contemplation to the level of ordinary fact. He descends in verse 12 from the thought of the eternal purpose and the education of the angels to the struggling Church. The assurance of its life in the Spirit corresponds to the grandeur of that Divine order to which it belongs. "In whom," he says—in this Christ, the revealed mystery of ages past, the Teacher of angels and archangels—"we have our freedom and confident access to God through faith in Him."

If it be "Jesus our Lord" to whom these attributes belong, and He is not ashamed of us, well may we draw near with *confidence* to the Father, unashamed in the presence of His holy angels. We have no need to be abashed, if we approach the Divine Majesty with a true faith in Christ. His name gives the sinner access to the holiest place. The cherubim sheathe their swords of flame. The heavenly warders at this passport open the golden gates. We "come unto Mount Sion, the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels." Not one of these mightinesses and ancient peers of heaven, not Gabriel or Michael himself, would wish or dare to bar our entrance.

"We *have* boldness and access," says the apostle, as in chapter i. 7: "We have redemption in His blood." He insists upon the conscious fact. This freedom of approach to God, this sonship of faith, is no hope or dream of what may be; it is a present reality, a filial cry heard in a multitude both of Gentile and Jewish hearts (comp ii. 18).

This sentence exhibits the richness of synonyms characteristic of the epistle. There are *boldness* and *access*, *confidence* as well as *faith*. The three former terms Bengel nicely distinguishes: "libertatem *oris* in orando," and "admissionem in fiducia *in re*, et *corde*"—freedom of *speech* (in prayer), of *status*, and of *feeling*. The second word (as in chapter ii. 18 and Romans v. 2) appears to be rather active than passive in its force, denoting *admittance* rather than *access*. So that while the former of the parallel terms (*boldness*) describes the liberty with which the newborn Church of the redeemed address themselves to God the Father and the unchecked freedom of their petitions, the latter (*admittance*) takes us back to the act of Christ by which He introduced us to the Father's presence and gave us the place of sons in the house. Being thus admitted, we may come with confidence of heart, though we be less than the least of saints. Accepted in the Beloved, we are within our right if we say to the Father:—

> "Yet in Thy Son divinely great,
> We claim Thy providential care.
> Boldly we stand before Thy seat;
> Our Advocate hath placed us there!"

"Wherefore," concludes the imprisoned apostle, "I beg you not to lose heart at my afflictions for you." Assuredly Paul did not pray that *he* should not lose heart, as some interpret his meaning. But he knew how his friends were fretting and wearying over his long captivity. Hence he writes to the Philippians: "I would have you know that the things which have happened to me have turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel." Hence, too, he assures the Colossians earnestly of his joy in suffering for their sake (ch. i. 24).

The Church was fearful for Paul's life and distressed by his prolonged sufferings. It missed his cheering presence and the inspiration of his voice. But if the Church is so dear to God as the pages of this letter show, and grounded in His eternal purposes, then let all friends of Christ take courage. The ark freighted with such fortunes cannot sink. St. Paul is a martyr for Christ, and for Gentile Christendom! Every stroke that falls upon him, every day added to the months of his imprisonment helps to show the worth of the cause he has espoused and gives to it increased lustre: "my afflictions for you, which are your glory."

Those that love him should *boast* rather than grieve over his afflictions. "We make our boast in you amongst the Churches of God," he wrote to the distressed Thessalonians (2 Ep. i. 4), "for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and afflictions"; so he would have the Churches think of him. When good men suffer in a good cause, it is not matter for pity and dread, but rather for a holy pride.

PRAYER AND PRAISE.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE COMPREHENSION OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS iii. 14-18.

IN verse 14 the prayer is resumed which the apostle was about to offer at the beginning of the chapter, when the current of his thoughts carried him away. The supplication is offered "for this cause" (vv. 1, 14)—it arises out of the teachings of the preceding pages. Thinking of all that God has wrought in the Christ, and has accomplished by means of His gospel in multitudes of Gentiles as well as Jews, reconciling them to Himself in one body and forming them together into a temple for His Spirit, the apostle bows his knees before God on their behalf. So much he had in mind when at the end of the second chapter he was in act to pray for the Asian Christians that they might be enabled to enter into this far-reaching purpose. Other aspects of the great design of God arose upon the writer's mind before his prayer could find expression. He has told us of his own part in disclosing it to the world, and of the interest it excites amongst the dwellers in heavenly places,—thoughts full of comfort for the Gentile believers troubled by his imprisonment and continued sufferings. These further reflections add new meaning to the "For this cause" repeated from verse 1.

The prayer which he offers here is no less remarkable and unique in his epistles than the act of praise in chapter i. Addressing himself to God as the Father of angels and of men, the apostle asks that He will endow the readers in a manner corresponding to *the wealth of His glory*—in other words, that the gifts he bestows may be worthy of the universal Father, worthy of the august character in which God has now revealed Himself to mankind. According to this measure, St. Paul beseeches for the Church, in the first instance, two gifts, which after all are one,—viz., *the inward strength of the Holy Spirit* (ver. 16), and *the permanent indwelling of Christ* (ver. 17). These gifts he asks on his readers' behalf with a view to their gaining two further blessings, which are also one,—viz., *the power to understand the Divine plan* (ver. 18) as it has been expounded in this letter, and so *to know the love of Christ* (ver. 19). Still, beyond these there rises in the distance a further end for man and the Church: *the reception of the entire fulness of God*. Human desire and thought thus reach their limit: they grasp at the infinite.

In this chapter we will strive to follow the apostle's prayer to the end of the eighteenth verse, where it arrives at its chief aim and touches the main thought of the epistle, expressing the desire that all believers may have power to realise the full scope of the salvation of Christ in which they participate.

Let us pause for a moment to join in St. Paul's invocation: "I bow my knees to the Father, of whom [not *the whole family*, but] *every family* in heaven and upon earth is named." The point of St. Paul's original phrase is somewhat lost in translation. The Greek word for *family* (*patria*) is based on that for *father* (*pater*). A distinguished father anciently gave his name to his descendants; and this paternal name became the bond of family or tribal union, and the title which ennobled the race. So we have "the sons of Israel," the "sons of Aaron" or "of Korah"; and in Greek history the Atridæ, the Alcmæonidæ, who form a family of many kindred households—a *clan*, or *gens*, designated by their ancestral head. Thus Joseph (in Luke ii. 4) is described as "being of the house and family [*patria*] of David"; and Jesus is "the Son of David." Now Scripture speaks also of *sons of God;* and these of two chief orders. There are

those "in heaven," who form a race distinct from ourselves in origin—divided, it may be, amongst themselves into various orders and dwelling in their several homes in the heavenly places.

Of these are "the sons of God" whom the book of Job pictures appearing in the Divine court and forming a "family in heaven." When Christ promises (Luke xx. 36) that His disciples in their immortal state will be "equal to the angels," because they are "sons of God," it is implied that the angels are already and by birthright sons of God. Hence in Hebrews xii. 22, 23 the angels are described as "the festal gathering and assembly of *the firstborn* enrolled in heaven." We, the sons of Adam, with our many tribes and kindreds, through Jesus Christ our Elder Brother constitute a new family of God. God becomes our Name-father, and permits us also to call ourselves His sons through faith. Thus the Church of believers in the Son of God constitutes the "family on earth named" from the same Father who gave His name to the holy angels, our wise and strong and brilliant elder brothers. They and we are alike God's offspring. Heaven and earth are kindred spheres.

This passage gives to God's Fatherhood the same extension that chapter i. 21 has given to Christ's Lordship. Every order of creaturely intelligence acknowledges God for the Author of its being, and bows to Christ as its sovereign Lord. In God's name of Father the entire wealth of love that streams forth from Him through endless ages and unmeasured worlds is hidden; and in the name of sons of God there is contained the blessedness of all creatures that can bear His image.

I. What, therefore, shall the universal Father be asked to give to His needy children upon earth? They have newly learnt His name; they are barely recovered from the malady of their sin, fearful of trial, weak to meet temptation. *Strength* is their first necessity: "I bow my knees to the Father of heaven and earth, praying that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by the entering of the Spirit into your inward man." The apostle asked them in verse 13, in view of the greatness of his own calling, to be of good courage on his account; now he entreats God so to reveal to them His glory and to pour into their hearts His Spirit, that no weakness and fear may remain in them. The *strengthening* of which he speaks is the opposite of the *faintness of heart*, the failure of courage deprecated in verse 13. Using the same word, the apostle bids the Corinthians "Quit themselves like men, *be strong*" (1 Cor. xvi. 13). He desires for the Asian believers a manful heart, the strength that meets battle and danger without quailing.

The source of this strength is not in ourselves. We are to be "strengthened *with* [or *by*] *power*," —by "the power" of God "working in us" (ver. 20), the very same "power exceeding great," that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (i. 19). This superhuman might of God operating in men is always referred to the Holy Spirit: "by power made strong," he says, "*through the Spirit.*" Nothing is more familiar in Scripture than the conception of the indwelling Spirit of God as the source of moral strength. The special power that belongs to the gospel Christ ascribes altogether to this cause. "Ye shall receive power," He said to His disciples, "after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." Hence is derived the vigour of a strong faith, the valour of the good soldier of Christ Jesus, the courage of the martyrs, the cheerful and indomitable patience of multitudes of obscure sufferers for righteousness' sake. There is a great truth expressed when we describe a brave and enterprising man as a *man of spirit.* All high and commanding qualities of soul come from this invisible source. They are inspirations. In the human will, with its *vis vivida*, its elasticity and buoyancy, its steadfastness and resolved purpose, is the highest type of force and the image of the almighty Will. When that will is animated and filled with "the Spirit," the man so possessed is the embodiment of an inconceivable power. Firm principle, hope and constancy, self-mastery, superiority to pleasure and pain,—all the elements of a noble courage are proper to the man of the Spirit. Such power is not neutralised by our infirmities; it asserts itself under their limiting conditions and makes them its contributories. "My grace is sufficient for thee," said Christ to His disabled servant; "for power is perfected in weakness. In privation and loneliness, in old age and bodily decay, the strength of God in the human spirit shines with its purest lustre. Never did St. Paul rise to such a height of moral ascendency as at the time when he was "smitten down" and all but destroyed by persecution and affliction. "That the excellency of the power," he says, "may be of God and not from ourselves" (2 Cor. iv. 7-11).

The apostle points to "the inner man" as the seat of this invigoration, thinking perhaps of its secrecy. While the world buffets and dismays the Christian, new vigour and joy are infused into his soul. The surface waters and summer brooks of comfort fail; but there opens in the heart a spring fed by the river of life proceeding from the throne of God. Beneath the toil-worn frame, the mean attire, and friendless condition of the prisoner Paul—a mark for the world's scorn—there lives a strength of thought and will mightier than the empire of the Cæsars, a power of the Spirit that is to dominate the centuries to come. Of this omnipotent power dwelling in the Church of God, the apostle prays that every one of his readers may partake.

II. Parallel to the first petition, and in substance identical with it, is the second: "that the Christ may make His dwelling through faith in your hearts." Such, it seems to us, is the relation of verses 16 and 17. Christ's residence in the heart is to be viewed neither as the result, nor the antecedent of the strength given by the Spirit to the inward man: the two are simultaneous; they are the same things seen in a varying light.

We observe in this prayer the same vein of Trinitarian thought which marks the doxology of chapter i., and other leading passages in this epistle. The Father, the Spirit, and the Christ are unitedly the object of the apostle's devout supplication.

As in the previous clause, the verb of verse 17 bears emphasis and conveys the point of St. Paul's entreaty; he asks that "the Christ may *take up His abode*,—may *settle* in your hearts." The word signifies to *set up one's house* or *make one's home* in a place, by way of contrast with a temporary and uncertain sojourn (comp. ii. 19). The same verb in Colossians ii. 9 asserts that in Christ "*dwells* all the fulness of the God-

head"; and in Colossians i. 19 it declares, used in the same tense as here, how it was God's "pleasure that all the fulness should *make its dwelling* in Him" now raised from the dead, who had emptied and humbled Himself to fulfil the purpose of the Father's love. So it is desired that Christ should take His seat within us. He is never again to stand at the door and knock, nor to have a doubtful and disputed footing in the house. Let the Master come in, and claim His own. Let Him become the heart's fixed tenant and full occupier. Let Him, if He will thus condescend, make Himself at home within us and there rest in His love. For He promised: "If any man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

And "*the* Christ," not Christ alone. Why does the apostle say this? There is a reason for the definite article, as we have found elsewhere. The apostle is asking for his Asian brethren something beyond that possession of Christ which belongs to every true Christian,—more even than the permanence and certainty of this indwelling indicated by the verb. "The Christ" is Christ in the significance of His *name*. It is Christ not only possessed, but understood,—Christ realised in the import of His work, in the light of His relationship to the Father and the Spirit, and to men. It is the Christ of the Church and the ages—known and accepted for all this—that St. Paul would fain have dwelling in the heart of each of his Gentile disciples. He is endeavouring to raise them to an adequate comprehension of the greatness of the Redeemer's person and offices; he longs to have their minds possessed by his own views of Christ Jesus the Lord.

The heart, in the language of the Bible, never denotes the emotional nature by itself. The antithesis of "heart and head," the divorce of feeling and understanding in our modern speech is foreign to Scripture. The heart is our interior, conscious self—thought, feeling, will in their personal unity. It needs the whole Christ to fill and rule the whole heart,—a Christ who is the Lord of the intellect, the Light of the reason, no less than the Master of the feelings and desires.

The difference in significance between "Christ" or "Christ Jesus" and "the Christ" in such a sentence as this, is not unlike the difference between "Queen Victoria" and "the Queen." The latter phrase brings Her Majesty before us in the grandeur and splendour of her Queenship. We think of her vast dominion, of her line of royal and famous ancestry, of her beneficent and memorable reign. So, to know the Christ is to apprehend Him in the height of His Godhead, in the breadth of His humanity, in the plenitude of His nature and His powers. And this is the object to which the teaching and the prayers of St. Paul for the Churches at the present time are directed. Understanding in this larger sense the indwelling of the Christ for which he prays, we see how naturally his supplication expands into the "height and depth" of the ensuing verse.

But however large the mental conception of Christ that St. Paul desires to impart to us, it is to be grasped "through faith." All real understanding and appropriation of Christ, the simplest and the most advanced come in by this channel,—through the faith of the heart in which knowledge, will, and feeling blend in that one act of trustful apprehension of the truth concerning Jesus Christ by which the soul commits itself to Him.

How much is contained in this petition of the apostle that we need to ask for ourselves. Christ Jesus dwells now as then in the hearts of all who love Him. But how little do we know our heavenly Guest! how poor a Christ is ours, compared to the Christ of Paul's experience! how slight and empty a word is His name to multitudes of those who bear it! If men have once attained a sense of His salvation, and are satisfied of their interest in His atonement and their right to hope for eternal life through Him, their minds are at rest. They have accepted Christ and received what He has to give them; they turn their attention to other things. They do not love Christ enough to study Him. They have other mental interests,—scientific, literary, political, or industrial; but the knowledge of Christ has no intellectual attraction for them. With St. Paul's passionate ardour, the ceaseless craving of his mind to "know Him," these complacent believers have no sympathy whatever. This, they think, belongs only to a few, to men of metaphysical bias or of religious genius like the great apostle. Theology is regarded as a subject for specialists. The laity, with a lamentable and disastrous neglect, leave the study of Christian doctrine to the ministry. The Christ cannot take His due place in His people's heart, He will not reveal to them the wealth of His glory, while they know so little and care to know so little of Him. How many can be found, outside the ranks of the ordained, that make a sacrifice of other favourite pursuits to meditate on Christ? what prosperous merchant, what active man of affairs is there who will spare an hour each day from his other gains "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"?—"If at the present time the religious life of the Church is languid, and if in its enterprises there is little of audacity and vehemence, a partial explanation is to be found in that decline of intellectual interest in the contents of the Christian Faith which has characterised the last hundred or hundred and fifty years of our history."

It is a knowledge that when pursued grows upon the mind without limit. St. Paul, who knew so much, for that reason felt that all he had attained was but in the bud and beginning. "The Christ" is a subject infinite as nature, large and wide as history. With our enlarged apprehension of Him, the heart enlarges in capacity and moral power. Not unfrequently, the study of Christ in Scripture and experience gives to unlettered men, to men whose mind before their conversion was dull and uninformed, an intellectual quality, a power of discernment and apprehension that trained scholars might envy. By such thoughtful, constant fellowship with Him the vigour of spirit and courage in affliction are sustained, that the apostle first asked from God on behalf of his anxious Gentile friends.

III. The prayers now offered might suffice, if St. Paul were concerned only for the individual needs of those to whom he writes and their personal advancement in the new life. But it is otherwise. *The Church* fills his mind. Its lofty claims at every turn he has pressed on our attention. This is God's holy temple and the habitation of His Spirit; it is the body in which

Christ dwells, the bride that He has chosen. The Church is the object that draws the eyes of heaven; through it the angelic powers are learning undreamed-of lessons of God's wisdom. Round this centre the apostle's intercession must needs revolve. When he asks for his readers added strength of heart and a richer fellowship with Christ, it is in order that they may be the better able to enter into the Church's life and to apprehend God's great designs for mankind.

This object so much absorbs the writer's thoughts and has been so constantly in view from the outset, that it does not occur to him, in verse 18, to say precisely *what* that is whose "breadth and length and height and depth" the readers are to measure. The vast building stands before us and needs not to be named; we have only not to look away from it, not to forget what we have been reading all this time. It is *God's plan for the world in Christ;* it is the purpose of the ages realised in the building of His Church. This conception was so impressive to the original readers and has held their attention so closely since the apostle unfolded it in the course of the second chapter, that they would have no difficulty in supplying the ellipsis which has given so much trouble to the commentators since.

If we are asked to interpret the four several magnitudes that are assigned to this building of God, we may say with Hofmann: "It stretches *wide* over all the world of the nations, east and west. In its *length*, it reaches through all time unto the end of things. In *depth*, it penetrates to the region where the faithful sleep in death (comp. iv. 9). And it rises to heaven's *height* where Christ lives." In the like strain Bernardine à Piconio, most genial and spiritual of Romanist interpreters: "*Wide* as the furthest limits of the inhabited world, *long* as the ages of eternity through which God's love to His people will endure, *deep* as the abyss of misery and ruin from which He has raised us, *high* as the throne of Christ in the heavens where He has placed us." Such is the commonwealth to which we belong, such the dimensions of this city of God built on the foundation of the apostles,—"that lieth four-square."

Do we not need to be *strong*—to "gain full strength," as the apostle prays, in order to grasp in its substance and import this immense revelation and to handle it with practical effect? Narrowness is feebleness. The greatness of the Church, as God designed it, matches the greatness of the Christ Himself. It needs a firm spiritual faith, a far-seeing intelligence, and a charity broad as the love of Christ to comprehend this mystery. From many believing eyes it is still hidden. Alas for our cold hearts, our weak and partial judgments! alas for the materialism that infects our Church theories, and that limits God's free grace and the sovereign action of His Spirit to visible channels and ministrations "wrought by hand." Those who call themselves Churchmen and Catholics contradict the titles they boast when they bar out their loyal Christian brethren from the covenant rights of faith, when they deny churchly standing to communities with a love to Christ as warm and fruitful in good works, a gospel as pure and saving, a discipline at least as faithful as their own. Who are we that we dare to forbid those who are doing mighty works in the name of Christ, because they follow not with us? When we are fain to pull down every building of God that does not square with our own ecclesiastical plans, we do not apprehend "what is the breadth"!

We draw close about us the walls of Christ's wide house, as if to confine Him in our single chamber. We call our particular communion "the Church," and the rest "the sects"; and disfranchise, so far as our word and judgment go, a multitude of Christ's freemen and God's elect, our fellow-citizens in the new Jerusalem —saints, some of them, whose feet we well might deem ourselves unworthy to wash. A Church theory that leads to such results as these, that condemns Nonconformists to be strangers in the House of God, is self-condemned. It will perish of its own chillness and formalism. Happily, many of those who hold the doctrine of exclusive Roman or Anglican, or Baptist or Presbyterian legitimacy, are in feeling and practice more catholic than in their creed.

"With *all* the saints" the Asian Christians are called to enter into St. Paul's wider view of God's work in the world. For this is a collective idea, to be shared by many minds and that should sway all Christian hearts at once. It is the collective aim of Christianity that St. Paul wants his readers to understand, its mission to save humanity and to reconstruct the world for a temple of God. This is a calling for *all the saints;* but only for *saints*,—for men devoted to God and renewed by His Spirit. It was "revealed to His *holy* apostles and prophets" (ver. 5); and it needs men of the same quality for its bearers and interpreters.

But the first condition for this largeness of sympathy and aim is that stated at the beginning of the verse, thrown forward there with an emphasis that almost does violence to grammar: "in love being fast rooted and grounded." Where Christ dwells abidingly in the heart, love enters with Him and becomes the ground of our nature, the basis on which our thought and action rest, the soil in which our purposes grow. *Love* is the mark of the true Broad Churchman in all Churches, the man to whom Christ is all things and in all, and who, wherever he sees a Christlike man, loves him and counts him a brother.

When such love to Christ fills all our hearts and penetrates to their depths, we shall have strength to shake off our prejudices, strength to master our intellectual difficulties and limitations. We shall have the courage to adopt Christ's simple rule of fellowship: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

CHAPTER XV.

KNOWING THE UNKNOWABLE.

EPHESIANS iii. 17-19.

WE were compelled to pause before reaching the end of the apostle's comprehensive prayer. But we must not let slip the thread of its connection. Verse 19 is the necessary sequel and counterpart of verse 18. The catholic love which embraces "all the saints" and "comprehends" in its wide dimensions the extent of the Redeemer's kingdom, admits us to a deeper knowledge of Christ's own love. The breadth and length, the height and depth of the work of

Christ in men and the ages give us a worthier conception of the love that inspired and sustains it. "In the Church" at once "and in Christ Jesus" God's glory is revealed. Our Church views react upon our views of Christ and our sense of His love. Bigotry and exclusiveness towards His brethren chill the heart towards Himself. Our sectarianism stints and narrows our apprehensions of the Divine grace.

I. St. Paul prays that we may "*know* (not *comprehend*) the love of Christ"; for it "passes knowledge." Amongst the Greek words denoting mental activity, that here employed signifies knowledge in the acquisition rather than possession—*getting to know*. Hence it is rightly, and often used of things Divine that "we know in part," our knowledge of which falls short of the reality while it is growing up to it. Thus understood, the contradiction of the apostle's wish disappears. We know the unknowable, just as we "clearly see the invisible things of God" (Rom. i. 20). The idea is conveyed of an object that invites our observation and pursuit, but which at every step outreaches apprehension, each discovery revealing depths within it unperceived before. Such was the knowledge of Christ to the soul of St. Paul. To the Philippians the aged apostle writes: "I do not reckon myself to have apprehended Him. I am in pursuit! I forget the past; I press on eagerly to the goal. I have but one object in view and sacrifice everything for it,—that I may *win Christ!*"

In all the mystery of Christ, there is nothing more wonderful and past finding out than His love. For nigh thirty years Paul has been living in daily fellowship with the love of Christ, his heart full of it and all the powers of his mind bent upon its comprehension: he cannot understand it yet! At this moment it amazes him more than ever.

Great as the Christian community is, and large as the place and part assigned to it by this epistle, that is still finite and a creation of time. The apostle's doctrine of the Church is not beyond the comprehension of a mind sufficiently loving and enlightened. But though we had followed him so far and had well and truly apprehended the mystery he has revealed to us, the love of Christ is still beyond us. Our principles of judgment and standards of comparison fail us when applied to this subject. Human love has in many instances displayed heroic qualities; it can rise to a divine height of purity and tenderness; but its noblest sacrifices will not bear to be put by the side of the cross of Christ. No picture of that love but shows poor and dull compared with the reality; no eloquence lavished upon it but lowers the theme. Our logical framework of doctrine fails to enclose and hold it; the love of Christ defies analysis and escapes from all our definitions. Those who know the world best, who have ranged through history and philosophy and the life of living men and have measured most generously the possibilities of human nature, are filled with a wondering reverence when they come to know the love of Christ. "Never man spake like this man," said one; but verily never man loved like Jesus Christ. He expects to be loved more than father or mother; for His love surpasses theirs. We cannot describe His love, nor delineate its features as Paul saw them when he wrote these lines. Go to the Gospels, and behold it as it lived and wrought for men. Stand and watch at the cross. Then if the eyes of your heart are open, you will see the great sight—the love that passeth knowledge.

When, turning from Christ Himself to His own person and presence, before whom praise is speechless, we contemplate the manifestations of His love to mankind; when we consider that its fountain lies in the bosom of the Eternal; when we trace its footsteps prepared from the world's foundation, and perceive it choosing a people for its own and making its promises and raising up its heralds and forerunners; when at last it can hide and refrain itself no longer, but comes forth incarnate with lowly heart to take our infirmities and carry our diseases—yea, to put away our sin by the sacrifice of itself; when we behold that same Love which the hands of men had slain, setting up its cross for the sign of its covenant of peace with mankind, and enthroned in the majesty of heaven waiting even as a bridegroom joyously for the time when its ransomed shall be brought home, redeemed from iniquity and gathered unto itself from all the kindreds of the earth; and when we see how this mystery of love, in its sufferings and glories and its deep-laid plans for all the creatures, engages the ardent study and sympathy of the heavenly principalities,—in view of these things, who can but feel himself unworthy to know the love of Christ or to speak one word on its behalf? Are we not ready to say like Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"?

This is a revelation that searches every man's soul who looks into it. What is there so confounding to our reason and our human self-complacency as the discovery: "He loved me; He gave Himself up for me"—that He should do it, and should *need* to do it! It was this that went to Saul's heart, that gave the mortal blow to the Jewish pride in him, strong as it was with the growth of centuries. The bearer of this grace and the ambassador of Christ's love to the Gentiles, he feels himself to be "less than the least of all the saints." We carry in our hands to show to men a heavenly light, which throws our own unloveliness into dark relief.

II. The *love of Christ* connects together, in the apostle's thoughts, *the greatness of the Church* and *the fulness of God*. The two former conceptions—Christ's love and the Church's greatness—go together in our minds; knowing them, we are led onwards to the realisation of the last.

The "fulness (*pleroma*) of God," and the "filling" (or "completing") of believers in Christ are ideas characteristic of this group of epistles. The first of these expressions we have discussed already in its connection with Christ, in chapter i. 23; we shall meet with it again as "the fulness of Christ" in chapter iv. 13. The phrase before us is, in substance, identical with that of the latter text. Christ contains the Divine plenitude; He embodies it in His person, and conveys it to the world by His redemption. St. Paul desires for the Asian Christians that they may receive it; it is the ultimate mark of his prayer. He wishes them to gain the total sum of all that God communicates to men. He would have them "filled"—their nature made complete both in its individual and social relations, their powers of mind and heart brought into full exercise, their spiritual capacities developed and replenished—"filled unto all the plenitude of God."

This is no humanistic or humanitarian ideal. The mark of Christian completeness is on a different and higher plane than any that is set up by culture. The ideal Christian is a greater man than the ideal citizen or artist or philosopher: he may include within himself any or all of these charactrs, but he transcends them. He may conform to none of these types, and yet be a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Our race cannot rest in any perfection that stops short of "the fulness of God." When we have received all that God has to give in Christ, when the community of men is once more a family of God and the Father's will is done on earth as in heaven, then and not before will our life be complete. That is the goal of humanity; and the civilisation that does not lead to it is a wandering from the way. "You are complete in Christ," says the apostle. The progress of the ages since confirms the saying.

The Apostle prays that his readers may know the love of Christ. This is a part of the Divine plenitude; nor is there anything in it deeper. But there is more to know. When he asks for "*all* the fulness," he thinks of other elements of revelation in which we are to participate. God's *wisdom*, His *truth*, His *righteousness*, along with His *love* in its manifold forms,—all the qualities that, in one word, go to make up His *holiness*, are communicable and belong to the image stamped by the Holy Spirit on the nature of God's children. "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" is God's standing command to His sons. So Jesus bids His disciples, "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." St. Paul's prayer "is but another way of expressing the continuous aspiration and effort after holiness which is enjoined in our Lord's precept" (Lightfoot).

While the holiness of God gathers up into one stream of white radiance the revelation of His character, "the fulness of God" spreads it abroad in its many-coloured richness and variety. The term accords with the affluence of thought that marks this supplication. The might of the Spirit that strengthens weak human hearts, the greatness of the Christ who is the guest of our faith, His wide-spreading kingdom and the vast interests it embraces and His own love surpassing all,—these objects of the soul's desire issue from the fulness of God; and they lead us in pursuing them, like streams pouring into the ocean, back to the eternal Godhead. The mediatorial kingdom has its end: Christ, when He has "put down all rule and authority," will at last "yield it up to His God and Father"; and "the Son Himself will be subjected to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24-28). This is the crown of the Redeemer's mission, the end of which His love to the Father seeks. But when that end is reached, and the soul with immediate vision beholds the Father's glory, the Plenitude will be still new and unexhausted; the soul will then begin its deepest lessons in the knowledge of God which is life eternal.

St. Paul is conscious of the extreme boldness of the prayer he has just uttered. But he protests that, instead of going beyond God's purposes, it falls short of them. This assurance rises, in verses 20 and 21, into a rapture of praise. It is a cry of exultation, a true song of triumph, that breaks from the Apostle's lips:—

> "Now unto Him that is able to do above all things,—
> Yea, far exceedingly beyond what we ask or think,—
> According to the power that worketh in us:
> To Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus,
> Unto all generations of the age of the ages.—Amen!"
> (vv. 20, 21).

Praise soars higher than prayer. When St. Paul has reached in supplication the summit of his desires, he sees the plenitude of God's gifts still by a whole heaven outreaching him. But it is only from these mountain-tops hardly won in the exercise of prayer, in their still air and tranquil light, that the boundless realms of promise are visible. God's giving surpasses immeasurably our thought and asking; but there must be the asking and the thinking for it to surpass. He puts always more into our hand and better things than we expected—when the expectant hand is reached out to Him.

Man's desires will never overtake God's bounty. Hearing the prayer just offered, unbelief will say: "You have asked too much. It is preposterous to expect that raw Gentile converts, scarcely raised above their heathen debasement, should enter into these exalted notions of yours about Christ and the Church and should be filled with the fulness of God! Prayer must be rational and within the bounds of possibility, offered 'with the understanding' as well as 'with the spirit,' or it becomes mere extravagance."—The apostle gives a twofold answer to this kind of scepticism. He appeals to the Divine omnipotence. "With men," you say, "this is impossible." Humanly speaking, St. Paul's Gentile disciples were incapable of any high spiritual culture; they were unpromising material, with "not many wise or many noble" amongst them, some of them before their conversion stained with infamous vices. Who is to make saints and godlike men out of such human refuse as this! But "with God," as Jesus said, "all things are possible." *Fœx urbis, lux orbis:* "the scum of the city is made the light of the world." The force at work upon the minds of these degraded pagans—slaves, thieves, prostitutes, as some of them had been—is the love of Christ; it is the power of the Holy Ghost, the might of the strength which raises the dead to life eternal.

Let us therefore praise Him "who is able to do beyond all things"—beyond the best that His best servants have wished and striven for. Had men ever asked or thought of such a gift to the world as Jesus Christ? Had the prophets foreseen one-tenth part of his greatness? In their boldest dreams did the disciples anticipate the wonders of the day of Pentecost and of the later miracles of grace accomplished by their preaching? How far exceedingly had these things already surpassed the utmost that the Church asked or thought.

St. Paul's reliance is not upon the "ability" alone, upon the abstract omnipotence of God. The force upon which he counts is lodged in the Church, and is in visible and constant operation. "According to the power *that worketh in us*" he expects these vast results to be achieved. This power is the same as that he invoked in verse 16,—the might of the Spirit of God in the inward man. It is the spring of courage and joy, the source of religious intelligence (i. 17, 18) and personal holiness, the very power that raised the dead body of Jesus to life, as it will raise hereafter all the holy dead to share His immortality (Rom. viii. 11). St. Paul was conscious at this time in a remarkable degree of the

supernatural energy working within his own mind. It is of this that he speaks to the Colossians, in language very similar to that of our text, when he says: "I toil hard, striving according to His energy that works in me in power." As he labours for the Church in writing that epistle, he is sensible of another Power acting within his spirit, and distinguished from it by his consciousness, which tasks his faculties to the utmost to follow its dictates and express its meaning.

The presence of this mysterious power of the Spirit St. Paul constantly felt when engaged in prayer,—"The Spirit helpeth our infirmities"; He "makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered" (Rom. viii. 26, 27). On this point the experience of earnest Christian believers in all ages confirms that of St. Paul. The sublime prayer to which he has just given utterance is not his own. There is more in it than the mere Paul, a weak man, would have dared to ask or think. He who inspires the prayer will fulfil it. The Searcher of hearts knows better than the man who conceived it, infinitely better than we who are trying for our own help to interpret it, all that this intercession means. God will hear the pleading of His Spirit. The Power that prompts our prayers, and the Power that grants their answer are the same. The former is limited in its action by human infirmity; the latter knows no limit. Its only measure is the fulness of God. To Him who works in us all good desires, and works far beyond us to bring our good desires to good effect, be the glory of all for ever!

In such measure, then, shall glory be to God "in the Church and in Christ Jesus." We see how the Church takes up the foreground of Paul's horizon. This epistle has taught us that God desires far more than our individual salvation, however complete that might be. Christ came not to save men only, but mankind. It is "in the Church" that God's consummate glory will be seen. No man in his fragmentary selfhood, no number of men in their separate capacity can conceivably attain "unto the fulness of God." It will need all humanity for that,—to reflect the full-orbed splendour of Divine revelation. Isolated and divided from each other, we render to God a dimmed and partial glory. "With one accord, with one mouth" we are called to "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Wherefore the Apostle bids us "receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God" (Rom. xv. 6, 7).

The Church, being the creation of God's love in Christ and the receptacle of His communicative fulness, is the vessel formed for His praise. Her worship is a daily tribute to the Divine majesty and bounty. The life of her people in the world, her witness for Christ and warfare against sin, her ceaseless ministries to human sorrow and need proclaim the Divine goodness, righteousness, and truth. From the heavenly places where she dwells with Christ, she reflects the light of God's glory, and makes it shine into the depths of evil at her feet. It was the Church's voice that St. John heard in heaven as "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigneth!" Each soul new-born into the fellowship of faith adds another note to make up the multitudinous harmony of the Church's praise to God.

Nor does the Church by herself alone render this praise and honour unto God. The display of God's manifold wisdom in His dealings with mankind is drawing admiration, as St. Paul believed, from the celestial spheres (ver. 10). The story of earth's redemption is the theme of endless songs in heaven. All creation joins in concert with the redeemed from the earth, and swells the chorus of their triumph. "I heard," says John, in another place, "a voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain! And every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying:

> "Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb,
> Be blessing and honour and glory and dominion—
> For ever and ever."

But the Church is the centre of this tribute of the universe to God and to His Christ.

The Church and Christ Jesus are wedded in this doxology, even as they were in the foregoing supplication (vv. 18, 19). In the Bride and the Bridegroom, in the Redeemed and the Redeemer, in the many brethren and in the Firstborn is this perfect glory to be paid to God. "In the midst of the congregation" Christ the Son of man sings evermore the Father's praise (Heb. ii. 12). No glory is paid to God by men which is not due to Him; nor does He render to the Father any tribute in which His people are without a share. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them," said Jesus to the Father praying for His Church, "that they may be one, even as we are one" (John xvii. 22). Our union with each other in Christ is perfected by our union with Him in realising the Father's glory, in receiving and manifesting the fulness of God.

The duration of the glory to be paid to God by Christ and His Church is expressed by a cumulative phrase in keeping with the tenor of the passage to which it belongs: "unto all generations of the age of the ages." It reminds us of "the ages to come" through which the apostle in chapter ii. 7 foresaw that God's mercy to his own age would be celebrated. It carries our thoughts along the vista of the future, till time melts into eternity. When the apostle desires that God's praise may resound in the Church "unto *all generations*," he no longer supposes that the mystery of God may be finished speedily as men count years. The history of mankind stretches before his gaze into its dim futurity. The successive "generations" gather themselves into that one consummate "age" of the kingdom of God, the grand cycle in which all "the ages" are contained. With its completion time itself is no more. Its swelling current, laden with the tribute of all the worlds and all their histories, reaches the eternal ocean.

The end comes: God is all in all. At this furthest horizon of thought, Christ and His own are seen together rendering to God unceasing glory.

THE EXHORTATION.

CHAPTER iv. 1-vi. 20.

ON CHURCH LIFE.

CHAPTER iv. 1-16.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FUNDAMENTAL UNITIES.

EPHESIANS iv. 1-6.

THIS Encyclical of St. Paul to the Churches of Asia is the most formal and deliberate of his writings since the great epistle to the Romans. In entering upon its hortatory and practical part we are reminded of the transition from doctrine to exhortation in that epistle. Here, as in Romans xi., xii., the apostle's theological teaching, brought with measured steps to its conclusion, has been followed by an act of worship expressing the profound and holy joy which fills his spirit as he views the purposes of God thus displayed in the gospel and the Church. In this exalted mood, as one sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus, St. Paul surveys the condition of his readers and addresses himself to their duties and necessities. His homily, like his argument, is inwoven with the golden thread of devotion; and the smooth flow of the epistle breaks ever and again into the music of thanksgiving.

The apostle resumes the words of self-description dropped in chapter iii. 1. He appeals to his readers with pathetic dignity: "I the prisoner in the Lord"; and the expression gathers new solemnity from that which he has told us in the last chapter of the mystery and grandeur of his office. He is "*the* prisoner"—the one whose bonds were known through all the Churches and manifest even in the imperial palace (Phil. i. 12-14). It was "in the Lord" that he wore this heavy chain, brought upon him in Christ's service and borne joyfully for His people's sake. He is now a martyr apostle. If his confinement detained him from his Gentile flock, at least it should add sacred force to the message he was able to convey. The tone of the apostle's letters at this time shows that he was sensible of the increased consideration which the afflictions of the last few years had given to him in the eyes of the Church. He is thankful for this influence, and makes good use of it.

His first and main appeal to the Asian brethren, as we should expect from the previous tenor of the letter, is an exhortation to *unity*. It is an obvious conclusion from the doctrine of the Church that he has taught them. The "oneness of the Spirit" which they must "earnestly endeavour to preserve," is the unity which their possession of the Holy Spirit of itself implies. "Having access in one Spirit to the Father," the antipathetic Jewish and Gentile factors of the Church are reconciled; "in the Spirit" they "are builded together for a habitation of God" (ii. 18-22). This unity when St. Paul wrote was an actual and visible fact, despite the violent efforts of the Judaisers to destroy it. The "right hands of fellowship" between himself and James, Peter, and John at the conference of Jerusalem were a witness thereto (Gal. ii. 7-10). But it was a union that needed for its maintenance the efforts of right-thinking men and sons of peace everywhere. St. Paul bids all who read his letter help to keep Christ's peace in the Churches.

The conditions for such pursuing and preserving of peace in the fold of Christ are briefly indicated in verses 1 and 2. There must be—

(1) A due sense of the dignity of our Christian calling: "Walk worthily," he says, "of the calling wherewith you were called." This exhortation, of course, includes much besides in its scope; it is the preface to all the exhortations of the three following chapters, the basis, in fact, of every worthy appeal to Christian men; but it bears in the first instance, and pointedly, upon Church unity. Levity of temper, low and poor conceptions of religion militate against the catholic spirit; they create an atmosphere rife with causes of contention. "Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal and walk as men?"

(2) Next to low-mindedness amongst the foes of unity comes *ambition*: "Walk with all lowliness of mind and meekness," he continues. Between the low-minded and the lowly-minded there is a total difference. The man of *lowly mind* habitually feels his dependence as a creature and his unworthiness as a sinner before God. This spirit nourishes in him a wholesome self-distrust, and watchfulness over his temper and motives.—The *meek* man thinks as little of his personal claims, as the humble man of his personal merits. He is willing to give place to others where higher interests will not suffer, content to take the lowest room and to be in men's eyes of no account. How many seeds of strife and roots of bitterness would be destroyed, if this mind were in us all. Self-importance, the love of office and power, and the craving for applause must be put away, if we are to recover and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(3) When St. Paul adds "with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love," he is opposing a cause of division quite different from the last, —to wit, *impatience and resentfulness*. A high Christian ideal and a strict self-judgment will render us more sensitive to wrong-doing in the world around us. Unless tempered with abundant charity, they may lead to harsh and one-sided censure. Gentle natures, reluctant to condemn, are sometimes slow and difficult in forgiveness. Humbleness and meekness are choice graces of the Spirit. But they are self-regarding virtues at the best, and may be found in a cold nature that has little of the patience which bears with men's infirmities, of the sympathetic insight that discovers the good often lying close to their faults. "Above all things"—above kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forgivingness—"put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii. 14). Love is the last word of St. Paul's definition of the Christian temper in verse 2; it is the sum and essence of all that makes for Christian unity. In it lies a charm which can overcome both the lighter provocations and the grave offences of human intercourse,—offences that must needs rise in the purest society composed of infirm and sinful men. "Bind thyself to thy brother. Those who are bound together in love, bear all burdens lightly. Bind thyself to him, and him to thee. Both are in

thy power; for whomsoever I will, I may easily make my friend" (Chrysostom).

Verses 1-3 exhibit the temper in which the unity of the Church is to be maintained. Verses 4-6 set forth the basis upon which it rests. This passage is a brief summary of Christian doctrine. It defines the "foundation of the apostles and prophets" asserted in chapter ii. 20,—the groundwork of "every building" in God's holy temple, the foundation upon which Paul's Gentile readers, along with the Jewish saints, were growing into one holy temple in the Lord. Seven elements of unity St. Paul enumerates: one *body, Spirit, hope;* one *Lord, faith,* and *baptism;* one *God and Father of all.* They form a chain stretching from the Church on earth to the throne and being of the universal Father in heaven.

Closely considered, we find that the seven unities resolve themselves into three, centring in the names of the Divine Trinity—the Spirit, the Lord, and the Father. The Spirit and the Lord are each accompanied by two kindred uniting elements; while the one God and Father, placed alone, in Himself forms a threefold bond to His creatures—by His sovereign power, pervasive action, and immanent presence: "Who is over all, and through all, and in all" (comp. i. 23).

The rhythm of expression in these verses suggests that they belonged to some apostolic Christian song. Other passages in Paul's later epistles betray the same character; and we know from chapter v. 19 and Colossians iii. 16 that the Pauline Church was already rich in psalmody. This epistle shows that St. Paul was touched with the poetic as well as the prophetical afflatus. He expected his people to sing; and we see no reason why he should not, like Luther and the Wesleys afterwards, have taught them to do so by giving voice to the joy of the new-found faith in "hymns and spiritual songs." These lines, we could fancy, belonged to some chant sung in the Christian assemblies; they form a brief metrical creed, the confession of the Church then and in all ages.

I. *One body* there is, *and one Spirit.*

The former was a patent fact. Believers in Jesus Christ formed a single body, the same in all essentials of religion, sharply distinguished from their Jewish and their Pagan neighbours. Although the distinctions now existing amongst Christians are vastly greater and more numerous, and the boundaries between the Church and the world at many points are much less visible, yet there is a true unity that binds together those "who profess and call themselves Christians" throughout the world. As against the multitudes of heathen and idolaters; as against Jewish and Mohammedan rejectors of our Christ; as against atheists and agnostics and all deniers of the Lord, we are "one body," and should feel and act as one.

In missionary fields, confronting the overwhelming forces and horrible evils of Paganism, the servants of Christ intensely realise their unity; they see how trifling in comparison are the things that separate the Churches, and how precious and deep are the things that Christians hold in common. It may need the pressure of some threatening outward force, the sense of a great peril hanging over Christendom to silence our contentions and compel the soldiers of Christ to fall into line and present to the enemy a united front. If the unity of believers in Christ—their oneness of worship and creed, of moral ideal and discipline—is hard to discern through the variety of human forms and systems and the confusion of tongues that prevails, yet the unity is there to be discerned; and it grows clearer to us as we look for it. It is visible in the universal acceptance of Scripture and the primitive creeds, in the large measure of correspondence between the different Church standards of the Protestant communions, in our common Christian literature, in the numerous alliances and combinations, local and general, that exist for philanthropic and missionary objects, in the increasing and auspicious comity of the Churches. The nearer we get to the essentials of truth and to the experience of living Christian men, the more we realise the existence of one body in the scattered limbs and innumerable sects of Christendom.

There is "one body and one Spirit"; one body because, and so far as, there is one Spirit. What is it constitutes the unity of our physical frame? Outward attachment, mechanical juxtaposition go for nothing. What I grasp in my hand or put between my lips is no part of *me,* any more than if it were in another planet. The clothes I wear take the body's shape; they partake of its warmth and movement; they give its outward presentment. They are not of the body for all this. But the fingers that clasp, the lips that touch, the limbs that move and glow beneath the raiment,—these are the body itself; and everything belongs to it, however slight in substance, or uncomely or unserviceable, nay, however diseased and burdensome, that is vitally connected with it. The life that thrills through nerve and artery, *the spirit* that animates with one will and being the whole framework and governs its ten thousand delicate springs and interlacing cords,—it is this that makes *one body* of an otherwise inert and decaying heap of matter. Let the spirit depart, it is a body no more, but a corpse. So with the body of Christ, and its members in particular. Am I a living, integral part of the Church, quickened by its Spirit? or do I belong only to the raiment and the furniture that are about it? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

He who has the Spirit of Christ, will find a place within His body. The Spirit of Jesus Christ is a communicative, sociable spirit. The child of God seeks out his brethren; like is drawn to like, bone to bone and sinew to its sinew in the building up of the risen body. By an instinct of its life, the new-born soul forms bonds of attachment for itself to the Christian souls nearest to it, to those amongst whom it is placed in God's dispensation of grace. The ministry, the community through which it received spiritual life, and that travailed for its birth, claim it by a parental right that may not be disowned, nor at any time renounced without loss and peril.

Where the Spirit of Christ dwells as a vitalising, formative principle, it finds or makes for itself a body. Let no man say: I have the spirit of religion; I can dispense with forms. I need no fellowship with men; I prefer to walk with God.—God will not walk with men who do not care to walk with His people. He "loved the world"; and we must love it, or we displease Him. "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loves God love his brother also."

The oneness of communion amongst the people of Christ is governed by a unity of aim: "Even as also you were called in *one hope* of your calling." Our fellowship has an object to realise, our calling a prize to win. All Christian organisation is directed to a practical end. The old Pagan world fell to pieces because it was "without hope"; its golden age was in the past. No society can endure that lives upon its memories, or that contents itself with cherishing its privileges. Nothing holds men together like work and hope. This gives energy, purpose, progress to the fellowship of Christian believers. In this imperfect and unsatisfying world, with the majority of our race still in bondage to evil, it is idle for us to combine for any purpose that does not bear on human improvement and salvation. The Church of Christ is a society for the abolition of sin and death. That this will be accomplished, that God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven, is *the hope of our calling*. To this hope we "were called" by the first summons of the gospel. "Repent," it cried, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

For ourselves, in our personal quality, Christianity holds out a splendid crown of life. It promises our complete restoration to the image of God, the redemption of the body with the spirit from death, and our entrance upon an eternal fellowship with Christ in heaven. This hope, shared by us in common and affecting all the interests and relationships of daily life, is the ground of our communion. The Christian hope supplies to men, more truly and constantly than Nature in her most exalted forms,

> "The anchor of their purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of their heart, and soul
> Of all their moral being."

Happy are the wife and husband, happy the master and servants, happy the circle of friends who live and work together as "joint-heirs of the grace of life." Well says Calvin here: "If this thought were fixed in our minds, this law laid upon us, that the sons of God may no more quarrel than the kingdom of heaven can be divided, how much more careful we should be in cultivating brotherly good-will! What a dread we should have of dissensions, if we considered, as we ought to do, that those who separate from their brethren, exile themselves from the kingdom of God."

But the hope of our calling is a hope for mankind,—nay, for the entire universe. We labour for the regeneration of humanity. "We look for a new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" for the actual gathering into one in Christ of all things in all worlds, as they are already gathered in God's eternal plan. Now if it were merely a personal salvation that we had to seek, Christian communion might appear to be an optional thing, and the Church no more than a society for mutual spiritual benefit. But seen in this larger light, Church membership is of the essence of our calling. As children of the household of faith, we are heirs to its duties with its possessions. We cannot escape the obligations of our spiritual any more than of our natural birth. One Spirit dwelling in each, one sublime ideal inspiring us and guiding all our efforts, how shall we not be one body in the fellowship of Christ? This hope of our calling it is our calling to breathe into the dead world. Its virtue alone can dispel the gloom and discord of the age. From the fountain of God's love in Christ springing up in the heart of the Church, there shall pour forth

> "One common wave of thought and joy,
> Lifting mankind again!"

II. The first group of unities leads us to the second. If one Spirit dwells within us, it is *one Lord* who reigns over us. We have one hope to work for; it is because we have *one faith* to live by. A common fellowship implies a common creed.

Thus Christ Jesus the Lord takes His place fourth in this list of unities, between hope and faith, between the Spirit and the Father. He is the centre of centres, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the Christ in the midst of the ages. United with Christ, we are at unity with God and with our fellow-men. We find in Him the fulcrum of the forces that are raising the world, the corner-stone of the temple of humanity.

But let us mark that it is the one *Lord* in whom we find our unity. To think of Him as Saviour only is to treat Him as a means to an end. It is to make ourselves the centre, not Christ. This is the secret of much of the isolation and sectarianism of modern Churches. Individualism is the negation of Church life. Men value Christ for what they can get from Him for themselves. They do not follow Him and yield themselves up to Him, for the sake of what He is. "Come unto me, all ye that are burdened, and I will give you rest": they listen willingly so far. But when He goes on to say "Take my yoke upon you," their ears are deaf. There is a subtle self-seeking and self-pleasing even in the way of salvation.

From this springs the disloyalty, the want of affection for the Church, the indifference to all Christian interests beyond the personal and local, which is worse than strife; for it is death to the body of Christ. The name of the "one Lord" silences party clamours and rebukes the voices that cry, "I am of Apollos, I of Cephas." It recalls loiterers and stragglers to the ranks. It bids each of us, in his own station of life and his own place in the Church, serve the common cause without sloth and without ambition.

Christ's Lordship over us for life and death is signified by our *baptism* in His name. We have received, most of us in infancy through our parents' reverent care, the token of allegiance to the Lord Christ. The baptismal water that He bade all nations receive from His apostles, has been sprinkled upon you. Shall this be in vain? Or do you now, by the faith of your heart in Christ Jesus the Lord, endorse the faith your parents and the Church exercised on your behalf? If so, your faith saves you. Your obedience is at once accepted by the Lord to whom it is tendered; and the sign of God's redemption of the race which greeted you at your entrance into life, assumes for you all its significance and worth. It is the seal upon your brow, now stamped upon your heart, of your eternal covenant with Christ.

But it is the seal of a *corporate* life in Him. Christian baptism is no private transaction; it attests no mere secret vow passing between the soul and its Saviour. "For in one Spirit we were all baptised *into one body*, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13). Our

baptism is the sign of a common faith and hope, and binds us at once to Christ and to His Church.

One baptism there has been through all the ages since the ascending Lord said to His disciples: "Go, make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The ordinance has been administered in different ways and under varying regulations: but with few exceptions, it has been observed from the beginning by every Christian community in fulfilment of the word of Christ, and in acknowledgment of His dominion. Those who insist on the sole validity of this or that mode or channel of administration, recognise at least the intention of Churches baptising otherwise than themselves to honour the one Lord in thus confessing His name; and so far admit that there is in truth "one baptism." Wherever Christ's sacraments are observed with a true faith, they serve as visible tokens of His rule.

In this rule lies the ultimate ground of union for men, and for all creatures. Our fellowship in the faith of Christ is deep as the nature of God; its blessedness rich as His love; its bonds strong and eternal as His power.

III. The last and greatest of the unities still remains. Add to our fellowship in the one Spirit and confession of the one Lord, our adoption by the *one God and Father of all.*

To the Gentile converts of the Asian cities this was a new and marvellous thought. "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians," they had been used to shout; or haply, "Great is Aphrodité of the Pergamenes," or "Bacchus of the Philadelphians." Great they knew was "Jupiter Best and Greatest" of conquering Rome; and great the *numen* of the Cæsar, to which everywhere in this rich and servile province shrines were rising. Each city and tribe, each grove or fountain or sheltering hill had its local *genius* or *daimon*, requiring worship and sacrificial honours. Every office and occupation, every function in life—navigation, midwifery, even thieving—was under the patronage of its special deity. These petty godships by their numbers and rivalries distracted the pious heathen with continual fear lest one or other of them might not have received due observance.

With what a grand simplicity the Christian conception of "the one God and Father" rose above this vulgar pantheon, this swarm of motley deities—some gay and wanton, some dark and cruel, some of supposed beneficence, all infected with human passion and baseness—which filled the imagination of the Græco-Asiatic pagans. What rest there was for the mind, what peace and freedom for the spirit in turning from such deities to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Here is no jealous Monarch regarding men as tribute-payers, and needing to be served by human hands. He is the Father of men, pitying us as His children and giving us all things richly to enjoy. Our God is no local divinity, to be honoured here but not there, tied to His temple and images and priestly mediators; but the "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." This was the very God whom the logic of Greek thought and the practical instincts of Roman law and empire blindly sought. Through ages He had revealed Himself to the people of Israel, who were now dispersed amongst the nations to bear His light. At last He declared His full name and purpose to the world in Jesus Christ. So the gods many and lords many have had their day. By His manifestation the idols are utterly abolished. The proclamation of one God and Father signifies the gathering of men into one family of God. The one religion supplies the basis for one life in all the world.

God is *over all*, gathering all worlds and beings under the shadow of His beneficent dominion. He is *through all*, and *in all:* an Omnipresence of love, righteousness, and wisdom, actuating the powers of nature and of grace, inhabiting the Church and the heart of men. You need not go far to seek Him; if you believe in Him, you are yourself His temple.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MEASURE OF THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS iv. 7-12.

IN verse 7 the apostle passes from the unities of the Church to its diversities, from the common foundation of the Christian life to the variety presented in its superstructure. "To each single one of us was the grace given." The great gift of God in Christ is manifold in its distribution. Its manifestations are as various and fresh as the idiosyncrasies of human personality. There is no capacity of our nature, no element of human society which the gospel of Christ cannot sanctify and turn to good account.

All this the apostle keeps in view and allows for in his doctrine of the Church. He does not merge man in humanity, nor sacrifice the individual to the community. He claims for each believer direct fellowship with Christ and access to God. The earnestness with which in his earlier epistles St. Paul insisted on the responsibilities of conscience and on the personal experience of salvation, leads him now to press the claims of the Church with equal vigour. He understands well that the person has no existence apart from the community, that our moral nature is essentially social and the religious life essentially fraternal. Its vital element is "the *communion* of the Holy Spirit." Hence, to gather the real drift of this passage we must combine the first words of verse 7 with the last of verse 12: "To each single one of us was the grace given—in order to build up the body of Christ." God's grace is not bestowed on us to diffuse and lose itself in our separate individualities; but that it may minister to one life and work towards one end and build up one great body in us all. The diversity subserves a higher unity. Through ten thousand channels, in ten thousand varied forms of personal influence and action, the stream of the grace of God flows on to the accomplishment of the eternal purpose.

Like a wise master in his household and sovereign in his kingdom, the Lord of the Church distributes His manifold gifts. His bestowments and appointments are made with an eye to the furtherance of the state and house that He has in charge. As God dispenses His wisdom, so Christ His gifts "according to plan" (iii. 11). The purpose of the ages, God's great plan for mankind, determines "the measure of the gift of Christ." Now, it is to illustrate this *measure,*

to set forth the style and scale of Christ's bestowments within His Church, that the apostle brings in evidence the words of Psalm lxviii. 18. He interprets this ancient verse as he cites it, and weaves it into the texture of his argument. In the original it reads thus:

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led Thy captivity captive,
Thou hast received gifts among men,—
Yea, among the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell with them" (R. V.).

Let us go back for a moment to the occasion of the old Hebrew song. Psalm lxviii. is, as Ewald says, "the greatest, most splendid and artistic of the temple-songs of Restored Jerusalem." It celebrates Jehovah's entry into Zion. This culminating verse records, as the crowning event of Israel's history, the capture of Zion from the rebel Jebusites and the Lord's ascension in the person of His chosen to take His seat upon this holy hill. The previous verses, in which fragments of earlier songs are embedded, describe the course of the Divine Leader of Israel through former ages. In the beat and rhythm of the Hebrew lines one hears the footfall of the Conqueror's march, as He "arises and His enemies are scattered" and "kings of armies flee apace," while nature trembles at His step and bends her wild powers to serve His congregation. The sojourn in the wilderness, the scenes of Sinai, the occupancy of Canaan, the wars of the Judges were so many stages in the progress of Jehovah, which had Zion always for its goal. To Zion, the new and more glorious sanctuary, Sinai must now give place. Bashan and all mountains towering in their pride in vain "look askance at the hill which God has desired for His abode," where "Jehovah will dwell for ever." So the day of the Lord's desire has come! From the Kidron valley David leads Jehovah's triumph up the steep slopes of Mount Zion. A train of captives defiles before the Lord's anointed, who sits down on the throne that God gives him and receives in His name the submission of the heathen. The vanquished chiefs cast their spoil at his feet; it is laid up in treasure to build the future temple; while, upon this happy day of peace, "the rebellious also" share in Jehovah's grace and become His subjects.

In this conquest David "gave to men" rather than "received"—gave even to his stubborn enemies (witness his subsequent transaction with Araunah the Jebusite for the site of the temple); for that which he took from them served to build amongst them God's habitation: "that," as the Psalmist sings, "the Lord God might dwell with them." St. Paul's adaptation of the verse is both bold and true. If he departs from the letter, he unfolds the spirit of the prophetic words. That David's *giving* signified a higher *receiving*, Jewish interpreters themselves seem to have felt, for this paraphrase was current also amongst them.

The author of this Hebrew song has in no way exaggerated the importance of David's victory. The summits of the elect nation's history shine with a supernatural and prophetic light. The spirit of the Christ in the unknown singer "testified beforehand of the glory that should follow" His warfare and sufferings. From this victorious height, so hardly won, the Psalmist's verse flashes the light of promise across the space of a thousand years: and St. Paul has caught the light, and sends it on to us shining with a new and more spiritual brightness. David's "going up on high" was, to the apostle's mind, a picture of the ascent of Christ, his Son and Lord. David rose from deep humiliation to a high dominion; his exaltation brought blessing and enrichment to his people; and the spoil that he won with it went to build God's house amongst rebellious men. All this was true in parable of the dispensation of grace to mankind through Jesus Christ; and His ascension disclosed the deeper import of the words of the ancient Scripture. "Wherefore God saith" (and St. Paul takes the liberty of putting in his own words *what* He saith)—"wherefore He saith: He ascended on high; He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men."

The three short clauses of the citation supply, in effect, a threefold measure of the gifts of Christ to His Church. They are gifts *of the ascended Saviour*. They are gifts bestowed *from the fruit of His victory*. And they are gifts *to men*. Measure them, first, by the height to which He has risen—from what a depth! Measure them, again, by the spoils He has already won. Measure them, once more, by the wants of mankind, by the need He has undertaken to supply. —As He is, so He gives; as He has, so He gives; as He has given, so He will give till we are filled unto all the fulness of God.

I. Think first, then, of Him. Think of what and *where* He is! Consider "what is the height" of His exaltation; and then say, if you can, "what is the breadth" of His munificence.

We know well how He gave as a poor and suffering man upon earth—gave, with what affluence, pity, and delight, bread to the hungry thousands, wine to the wedding-feast, health to the sick, sight to the blind, pardon to the sinful, sometimes life to the dead! Has His elevation altered Him? Too often it is so with vain and weak men like ourselves. Their wealth increases, but their hearts contract. The more they have to give, the less they love to give. They go up on high as men count it, and climb to places of power and eminence; and they forget the friends of youth and the ranks from which they sprang—low-minded men. Not so with our exalted Friend. "It is not one that went down, and another that went up," says Theodoret. "He that descended, *it is He* also that ascended up far above all the heavens!" (ver. 10). Jesus of Nazareth is on the throne of God,—"the same yesterday and to-day!" But now the resources of the universe are at His disposal. Out of that treasure He can choose the best gifts for you and me.

Mere authority, even Omnipotence, could not suffice to save and bless moral beings like ourselves; nor even the best will joined to Omnipotence. Christ gained by His humiliation, in some sense, a new fulness added to the fulness of the Godhead. This gain of His sufferings is implied in what the apostle writes in Colossians i. 19 concerning the risen and exalted Redeemer: "It was well-pleasing that *all* the fulness should make its dwelling in Him." His plenitude is that of the Ascended One *who had descended*. "If He ascended, what does it mean but that He also descended into the under regions of the earth?" (ver. 9). If He went up, why then He had been down!—down to the Virgin's womb and the manger cradle, wrapping

His Godhead within the frame and the brain of a little child; down to the home and the bench of the village carpenter; down to the contradiction of sinners and the level of their scorn; down to the death of the cross,—to the nether abyss, to that dim populous underworld into which we look shuddering over the grave's edge! And from that lower gulf He mounted up again to the solid earth and the light of day and the world of breathing men; and up, and up again, through the rent clouds and the ranks of shouting angels, and under the lifted heads of the everlasting doors, until He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

Think of the regions He has traversed, the range of being through which the Lord Jesus passed in descending and ascending, "that He might fill all things." Heaven, earth, hades—hades, earth, heaven again are His; not in mere sovereignty of power, but in experience and communion of life. Each He has annexed to His dominion by inhabitation and the right of self-devoting love, as from sphere to sphere He "travelled in the greatness of His power, mighty to save." He is Lord of angels; but still more of men,—Lord of the living, and of the dead. To them that sleep in the dust He has proclaimed His accomplished sacrifice and the right of universal judgment given Him by the Father.

Nor did Abraham alone and Moses and Elijah have the joy of "seeing His day," but all the holy men of old, who had embraced its promise and "died in faith," who looked forward through their imperfect sacrifices "which could never quite take away sins" to the better thing which God provided for us, and for their perfection along with us. On the two side-posts of the gate of death our great High Priest sprinkled His atoning blood. He turned the abode of corruption into a sweet and quiet sleeping chamber for His saints. Then at His touch those cruel doors swung back upon their hinges, and He issued forth the Prince of life, with the keys of death and hades hanging from His girdle. From the depths of the grave to the heaven of heavens His Mastership extends. With the perfume of His presence and the rich incense of His sacrifice Jesus Christ has "filled all things." The universe is made for us one realm of redeeming grace, the kingdom of the Son of God's love.

"So there crowns Him the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown;
And His love fills infinitude wholly, nor leaves up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in!"

So "Christ is all things, and in all." And we are nothing; but we have everything in Him.

How, pray, will He give who has thus given Himself,—who has thus endured and achieved on our behalf? Let our hearts consider; let our faith and our need be bold to ask. One promise from His lips is enough: "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

II. A second estimate of the gifts to be looked for from Christ, we derive from *His conquests already won.* David as he entered Zion's gates "led captivity captive,"—led, that is in Hebrew phrase, a great, a notable captivity. Out of the gifts thus received he enriched his people. The resources that victory placed at his disposal, furnished the store from which to build God's house. In like fashion Christ builds His Church, and blesses the human race. With the spoils of His battle He adorns His bride. The prey taken from the mighty becomes the strength and beauty of His sanctuary. The prisoners of His love He makes the servants of mankind.

This "captivity" implies a warfare, even as the ascent of Christ a previous descending. The Son of God came not into His earthly kingdom as kings are said to have come sometimes disguised amongst their subjects, that they might learn better of their state and hear their true mind; nor as the Greeks fabled of their gods, who wandered unknown on earth seeking adventure and wearied haply of the cloying felicities of heaven, suffering contempt and doing to men hard service. He came, the Good Shepherd, to seek lost sheep. He came, the Mighty One of God, to destroy the works of the devil, to drive out "the strong one armed" who held the fortress of man's soul. He had a war to wage with the usurping prince of the world. In the temptation of the wilderness, in the strife with disease and demoniac powers, in the debate with Scribes and Pharisees, in the anguish of Gethsemane and Calvary that conflict was fought out; and by death He abolished him who holds the power of death, by His blood He "bought us for God." But with the spoils of victory, He bears the scars of battle,—tokens glorious for Him, humbling indeed to us, which will tell for ever how they pierced His hands and feet!

For Him pain and conflict are gone by. It remains to gather in the spoil of His victory of love, the harvest sown in His tears and His blood. And what are the trophies of the Captain of our salvation? what the fruit of His dread passion? For one, there was the dying thief, whom with His nailed hands the Lord Jesus snatched from a felon's doom and bore from Calvary to Paradise. There was Mary the Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons, the first to greet Him risen. There were the three thousand whom on one day, in the might of His Spirit, the ascended Lord and Christ took captive in rebel Jerusalem, "lifted from the earth" that He might draw all men unto Him. And there was the writer of this letter, once His blasphemer and persecutor. By a look, by a word, Jesus arrested Saul at the height of his murderous enmity, and changed him from a Pharisee into an apostle to the Gentiles, from the destroyer into the wise masterbuilder of His Church.

St. Paul's own case suggested, surely, the application he makes of this ancient text of the Psalter and lighted up its Messianic import. In the glory of His triumph Jesus Christ had appeared to make him captive, and put him at once to service. From that hour Paul was led along enthralled, the willing bond-slave of the Lord Jesus and celebrant of His victory. "Thanks be unto God," he cries, "who ever triumphs over us in the Christ, and makes manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place."

Such, and of such sort are the prisoners of the war of Jesus; such the gifts that through sinners pardoned and subdued He bestows upon mankind,—"patterns to those who should hereafter believe." Time would fail to follow the train of the captives of the love of Christ, which stretches unbroken and ever multiplying through the centuries to this day. We, too, in our turn

have laid our rebel selves at His feet; and all that we surrender to Him, by right of conquest He gives over to the service of mankind.

> "His love the conquest more than wins;
> To all I shall proclaim:
> Jesus the King, the Conqueror reigns;
> Bow down to Jesu's name!"

He gives out of the spoil of His war with evil,—gives what He receives. Yet He gives not *as* He receives. Everything laid in His hands is changed by their touch. Publicans and Pharisees become apostles. Magdalenes are made queens and mothers in His Israel. From the dregs of our streets He raises up a host of sons to Abraham. From the ranks of scepticism and anti-Christian hate the Lord Christ wins new champions and captains for His cause. He coins earth's basest metal into heaven's fine gold. He takes weak things of the earth and foolish, to strike the mightiest blows of battle.

What may we not expect from Him who has led captive such a captivity! What surprises of blessing and miracles of grace there are awaiting us, that shall fill our mouth with laughter and our tongue with singing—gifts and succours coming to the Church from unlooked-for quarters and reinforcements from the ranks of the enemy. And what discomfitures and captivities are preparing for the haters of the Lord,—if, at least, the future is to be as the past; and if we may judge from the apostle's word, and from his example, of the measure of the gift of Christ.

III. A third line of measurement is supplied in the last word of verse 8, and is drawn out in verses 11 and 12. "He gave gifts *to men* —He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, with a view to the full equipment of the saints for the work of ministration, for building up of the body of Christ." Yes, and some martyrs, some missionaries, some Church rulers and Church statesmen, some poets, some deep thinkers and theologians, some leaders of philanthropy and helpers of the poor; all given for the same end —to minister to the life of His Church, to furnish it with the means for carrying on its mission, and to enable every saint to contribute his part to the commonwealth of Christ according to the measure of Christ's gift to each.

Comparison with verse 16 that follows and with verse 7 that precedes, seems to us to make it clear that we should read, without a comma, the second and third clauses of verse 12 as continuations of the first. The "work of ministering" and the "building up of the body of Christ" are not assigned to special orders of ministry as their exclusive calling. Such honour have all His saints. It is the office of the clergy to see that the laity do their duty, of "the ministry" to make each saint a minister of Christ, to guide, instruct, and animate the entire membership of Christ's body in the work He has laid upon it. Upon this plan the Christian fellowship was organised and officered in the apostolic times. Church government is a means to an end. Its primitive form was that best suited to the age; and even then varied under different circumstances. It was not precisely the same at Jerusalem and at Corinth; at Corinth in 58, and at Ephesus in 66 A. D. That is the best Church system, under any given conditions, which serves best to conserve and develop the spiritual energy of the body of Christ.

The distribution of Church office indicated in verse 11 corresponds closely to what we find in the Pastoral epistles. The apostle does not profess to enumerate all grades of ministry. The "deacons" are wanting; although we know from Philippians i. 1 that this order already existed in Pauline Churches. *Pastors* (shepherds) —a title only employed here by the apostle—is a fitting synonym for the "bishops" (*i. e.*, overseers) of whom he speaks in Acts xx. 28, Philippians i. 1, and largely in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, whose functions were spiritual and disciplinary as well as administrative. Addressing the Ephesian elders at Miletus four years before, St. Paul bade them "shepherd the Church of God."

In 1 Peter v. 1, 2 the same charge is laid by the Jewish apostle upon his "fellow-elders," that they should "shepherd the flock of God, making themselves examples" to it; Christ Himself he has previously called "Shepherd and Bishop of souls" (1 Peter ii. 25). The expression is derived from the words of Jesus recorded in John x., concerning the true and false shepherd of God's flock, and Himself the Good Shepherd, —words familiar and dear to His disciples.

The office of *teaching*, as in 1 Timothy v. 17, is conjoined with that of shepherding. From that passage we infer that the freedom of teaching so conspicuous in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. xiv. 26, etc.) was still recognised. Teaching and ruling are not made identical, nor inseparable functions, any more than in Romans xii. 7, 8; but they were frequently associated, and hence are coupled together here.—Of apostolic *evangelists* we have examples in Timothy and the second Philip; men outside the rank of the apostles, but who, like them, preached the gospel from place to place. The name apostles (equivalent to our *missionaries*) served, in its wider sense, to include ministers of this class along with those directly commissioned by the Lord Jesus.

The *prophets*, like the apostles and evangelists, belonged to the Church at large, rather than to one locality. But their gift of inspiration did not carry with it the claim to rule in the Church. This was the function of the apostles generally, and of the pastor-bishops, or elders, locally appointed.

The first three orders (apostles, prophets, evangelists) linked Church to Church and served the entire body; the last two (pastors and teachers) had charge of local and congregational affairs. The apostles (the Twelve and Paul), with the prophets, were the founders of the Church. Their distinctive functions ceased when the foundation was laid and the deposit of revealed truth was complete. The evangelistic and pastoral callings remain; and out of them have sprung all the variety of Christian ministries since exercised. Evangelists, with apostles or missionaries, bring new souls to Christ and carry His message into new lands. Pastors and teachers follow in their train, tending the ingathered sheep, and labouring to make each flock that they shepherd and every single man perfect in Christ Jesus.

Marvellous were Christ's "gifts for men" bestowed in the apostolic ministry. What a gift to the Christian community, for example, was Paul himself! In his natural endowments, so rich and finely blended, in his training and early experience, in the supernatural mode of his con-

version, everything wrought together to give to men in the apostle Paul a man supremely fitted to be Christ's ambassador to the Pagan world, and for all ages the "teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." "*A chosen vessel* unto me," said the Lord Jesus, "to bear my name."

Such a gift to the world was St. Augustine: a man of the most powerful intellect and will, master of the thought and life of his time. Long an alien from the household of faith, he was saved at last as by miracle, and utterly subdued to the will of Christ. In the awful crisis of the fifth century, when the Roman empire was breaking up and the very foundations of life seemed to be dissolved, it was the work of this heroic man to reassert the sovereignty of grace and to re-establish faith in the Divine order of the world.

Such another gift to men was Martin Luther, the captive of justifying grace, won from the monastery and the bondage of Rome to set Germany and Europe free. What a soul of fire, what a voice of power was his! to whose lips our Lord Christ set the great trumpet of the Reformation; and he blew a blast that waked the sleeping peoples of the North, and made the walls of Babylon rock again to their foundation. Such a gift to Scotland was John Knox, who from his own soul breathed the spirit of religion into the life of a nation, and gave it a body and organic form in which to dwell and work for centuries.

Such a gift to England was John Wesley. Can we conceive a richer boon conferred by the Head of the Church upon the English race than the raising up of this great evangelist and pastor and teacher, at such a time as that of his appearance? Standing at the distance of a hundred years, we are able to measure in some degree the magnitude of this bestowment. In none of the leaders and commanders whom Christ has given to His people was there more signally manifest that combination of faculties, that concurrence of providences and adjustment to circumstances, and that transforming and attempering influence of grace in all—the "effectual working in the measure of each single part" of the man and his history, which marks those special gifts that Christ is wont to bestow upon His people in seasons of special emergency and need.

We are passing into a new age, such as none of these great men dreamed of, an age as exigent and perilous as any that have gone before it. The ascendency of physical science, the political enfranchisement of the masses, the universal spread of education, the emancipation of critical thought, the gigantic growth of the press, the enormous increase and aggregation of wealth, the multiplication of large cities, the worldwide facilities of intercourse,—these and other causes more subtle are rapidly transforming human society. Old barriers have disappeared; while new difficulties are being created, of a magnitude to overtask the faith of the strongest. The Church is confronted with problems larger far in their dimensions than those our fathers knew. Demands are being made on her resources such as she has never had to meet before. Shall we be equal to the needs of the coming times? —Nay, that is not the question; but will *He?*

There is nothing new or surprising to the Lord Jesus in the progress of our times and the developments of modern thought, nothing for which He is not perfectly prepared. He has taken their measure long ere this, and holds them within His grasp. The government is upon His shoulders—"the weight of all this unintelligible world"—and He can bear it well. He has gifts in store for the twentieth century, when it arrives, as adequate as those He bestowed upon the first or fifth, upon the sixteenth or eighteenth of our era. There are Augustines and Wesleys yet to come. Hidden in the Almighty's quiver are shafts as polished and as keen as any He has used, which He will launch forth in the war of the ages at the appointed hour. The need, the peril, the greatness of the time will be the measure of the gift of Christ.

There is a danger, however, in waiting for great leaders and in looking for signal displays of Christ's power amongst men. His "kingdom comes not with observation," so that men should say, Lo here! or Lo there! It steals upon us unforeseen; it is amongst us before we know. "We looked," says Rutherford, "that He should take the higher way along the mountains; and lo, He came by the lower way of the valleys!" While men listen to the earthquake and the wind rending the mountains, a still, small voice speaks the message of God to prepared hearts. Rarely can we measure at the first the worth of Christ's best gifts. When the fruit appears, after long patience, the world will haply discover when and how the seed was sown. But not always then.

> "The sower, passing onward, was not known;
> And all men reaped the harvest as their own."

Those who are most ready to appraise their fellows are constantly at fault. Our last may prove Christ's first; our first His last! "Each of us shall give account of himself to God": each must answer for his own stewardship, and the grace that was given to each. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more." But let every man see to it that his part in the building of God's temple is well and faithfully done. Soon the fire will try every man's work, of what sort it is.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH.

EPHESIANS iv. 13-16.

WE must spend a few moments in unravelling this knotty paragraph and determining the relation of its involved clauses to each other, before we can expound it. This passage is enough to prove St. Paul's hand in the letter. No writer of equal power was ever so little of a literary craftsman. His epistles read, as M. Renan says, like "a rapid conversation stenographed." Sometimes, as in several places in Colossians ii., his ideas are shot out in disjointed clauses, hardly more continuous than shorthand notes; often, as in this epistle, they pour in a full stream, sentence hurrying after sentence and phrase heaped upon phrase with an exuberance that bewilders us. In his spoken address the interpretation of tone and gesture, doubtless, supplied the syntactical adjustments so often wanting in Paul's written composition.

The gifts pertaining to special office in the Church were bestowed to promote its corporate efficiency and to further its general growth (vv.

11, 12). Now the purpose of these endowments sets a *limit* to their use. "Christ gave apostles, prophets," and the rest—"*till we all arrive* at our perfect manhood and reach the stature of His fulness." Such is the connection of verse 13 with the foregoing context. The aim of the Christian ministry is to make itself superfluous, to raise men beyond its need. Knowledge and prophesyings, apostolates and pastorates, the missions of the evangelist and the schools of the teacher will one day cease; their work will be done, their end gained, when all believers are brought "to the unity of faith, to the full knowledge of the Son of God." The work of Christ's servants can have no grander aim, no further goal lying beyond this. Verse 14, therefore, does not disclose an ulterior purpose arising out of that affirmed in the previous sentence; it restates the same purpose. To make men of us (ver. 13) and to prevent our being children (ver. 14) is the identical object for which apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers are called to office. The goal marked out for all believers in the knowledge and the moral likeness of Christ (ver. 13), is set up that it may direct the Church's course through dangers shunned and enemies vanquished (ver 14) to the attainment of her corporate perfection (vv. 15, 16). The whole thought of this section turns upon the idea of "the perfecting of the saints" in verse 12. Verse 16 looks backward to this; verse 7 looked forward to it.

So much for the general construction of the period. As to its particular words and phrases, we must observe:—

(1) The "perfect [full-grown] man" of verse 13 is the *individual*, not the generic man, not "the one [collective] new man" of chapter ii. 15. The Greek words for *man* in these two places differ. The apostle proposes to the Christian ministry the end that he was himself pursuing, viz., to "present *every man* perfect in Christ."

(2) "*Sleight* of men" (A. V. and R. V.) does not seem to us to express the precise meaning of the words so translated in verse 14. *Kubeia* (from *kubos*, a cube, or die) occurs only here in the New Testament; in classical Greek it appears in its literal sense of *dice-play, gambling*. The interpreters have drawn from this the idea of *trickery, cheating*—the common accompaniment of gambling. But the kindred verb (*to play dice, to gamble*) has another well-established use in Greek, namely, *to hazard*: this supplies for St. Paul's noun the signification of *sport* or *hazarding*, preferred by Beza among the older expositors and by von Soden amongst the newest. *In the sport of men*, says von Soden: "conduct wanting in every kind of earnestness and clear purpose. These men *play* with religion, and with the welfare of Christian souls." This metaphor accords admirably with that of the restless waves and uncertain winds just preceding it; while it leads fittingly to the further qualification "in craftiness," which is almost an idle synonym after "sleight."

(3) Another rare word is found in this verse, not very precisely rendered as "wiles"—a translation suiting it better in chapter vi. 11. Here the noun is singular in number; *methodeia*. It signifies *methodising, reducing to a plan*; and then, in a bad sense, *scheming, plotting*. "Error" is thus personified: it "schemes" just as in 2 Thessalonians ii. 7 it "works." Amid the reckless speculations and the unscrupulous perversions of the gospel now disturbing the infant faith of the Asian Churches, the apostle saw the outline of a great system of error shaping itself. There was a method in this madness. *Unto the scheme of error*—into the meshes of its net—those were being driven who yielded to the prevailing tendencies of speculative thought. With all its cross currents and capricious movements, it was bearing steadily in one direction. Reckless pilots steered ignorant souls this way and that over the wind-swept seas of religious doubt; but they brought them at last to the same rocks and quicksands.

(4) As the contrast between manhood and childhood links verses 13 and 14, so it is by the contrast of error and craftiness with *truth* that we pass from verse 14 to verse 15. "*Speaking* truth" insufficiently renders the opening word of the latter verse. The "*dealing* truly" of the Revised margin is preferable. In Galatians iv. 16 the apostle employs the same verb, signifying not truth of speech alone, but of deed and life (comp. Eph. v. 9). The expression resembles that of 1 John iii. 19: "We are *of the truth*, and shall assure our hearts before Him," where truth and love are found in the like union.

(5) The last difficulty of this kind we have to deal with, lies in the connection of the clauses of verse 16. "Through every joint of supply" is an incongruous adjunct to the previous clause, "fitly framed and knit together," although the rendering "joint" gives this connection a superficial aptness. The apostle's word means *juncture*, rather than *joint*. The *points of contact* between the members of Christ's body form the channels of supply through which the entire frame receives nourishment. The clause "through every juncture of the supply"—an expression somewhat obscure at the best—points forwards, not backwards. It describes the means by which the Church of Christ, compacted in its general framework by those larger ligatures which its ministry furnishes (vv. 11, 12), builds up its inward life,—through a communion wherein "each single part" of the body shares, and every tie that binds one Christian soul to another serves to nourish the common life of grace. We may paraphrase the sentence thus: "Drawing its life from Christ, the entire body knit together in a well-compacted frame, makes use of every link that unites its members and of each particular member in his place to contribute to its sustenance, thus building itself up in love evermore."

These difficult verses unfold to us three main conceptions: The goal of the Church's life (ver. 13), the malady which arrests its development (ver. 14), and the means and conditions of its growth (vv. 15, 16).

I. The mark at which the Church has to arrive is set forth, in harmony with the tenor of the epistle, in a twofold way,—in its *collective* and its *individual* aspects. We must all "unitedly attain the oneness of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God"; and we must attain, each of us, "a perfect manhood, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The "one faith" of the Church's foundation (ver. 5) is, at the same time, its end and goal. The final unity will be the unfolding of the primal unity; the implicit will become explicit; the germ will be reproduced in the developed organism. "The faith" is still, in St. Paul, the *fides qua credimus*, not *quam credimus*; it is the

living faith of all hearts in the same Christ and gospel. When "we all" believe heartily and understandingly in "the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation," the goal will be in sight. All our defects are, at the bottom, deficiencies of faith. We fail to apprehend and appropriate the fulness of God in Christ. Faith is the essence of the heart's life: it forms the common consciousness of the body of Christ.

While faith is the central organ of the Church's life, *the Son of God* is its central object. The dangers assailing the Church and the divisions threatening its unity touch His Person; and whatever touches the Head, vitally affects the health of the body and the well-being of every member in it. Many had believed in Jesus as the Christ and received blessing from Him, whose knowledge of Him as the Son of God was defective. This ignorance exposed their faith to perversion by the plausible errors circulating in the Churches of Asia Minor. The haze of speculation dimmed His glory and distorted His image. Dazzled by the "philosophy and empty deceit" of specious talkers, these half-instructed believers formed erroneous or uncertain views of Christ. And a divided Christ makes a divided Church. We may hold divergent opinions upon many points of doctrine—in regard to Church order and the Sacraments, in regard to the nature of the future judgment, in regard to the mode and limits of inspiration, in regard to the dialect and expression of our spiritual life—and yet retain, notwithstanding, a large measure of cordial unity and find ourselves able to co-operate with each other for many Christian purposes. But when our difference concerns the Person of Christ, it is felt at once to be fundamental. There is a gulf between those who worship and those who do not worship the Son of God.

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God." (1 John iv. 15). This is the touchstone of catholic truth that the apostles have laid down; and by this we must hold fast. The kingship of the Lord Jesus is the rallying-point of Christendom. In His name we set up our banners. There are a thousand differences we can afford to sink, and quarrels we may well forget, if our hearts are one towards Him. Let me meet a man of any sect or country, who loves and worships my Lord Christ with all his mind and strength, he is my brother; and who shall forbid us "with one mind and one mouth to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? It is nothing but our ignorance of Him, and of each other, that prevents us doing this already. Let us set ourselves again to the study of Christ. Let us strive "all of us" to "attain to the full knowledge of the Son of God"; it is the way to reunion. As we approach the central revelation, and the glory of Christ who is the image of God shines in its original brightness upon our hearts, prejudices will melt away; the opinions and interests and sentiments that divide us will be lost in the transcendent and absorbing vision of the one Lord Jesus Christ.

> "Names and sects and parties fall:
> Thou, O Christ, art all in all!"

The second and third *unto* of verse 13 are parallel with the first, and with each other. A truer faith and better knowledge of Christ, uniting believers to each other, at the same time develop in each of them a riper character. Jesus Christ was the "perfect man." In Him our nature attained, without the least flaw or failure, its true end,—which is to glorify God. In His fulness the plenitude of God is embodied; it is made human, and attainable to faith. In Jesus Christ humanity rose to its ideal stature; and we see what is the proper level of our nature, the dignity and worth to which we have to rise. We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son." All the many brethren of Jesus measure themselves against the stature of the Firstborn; and they will have to say to the end with St. Paul: "Not as though I had attained, either were already perfect. I follow after; I press towards the mark." A true heart that has seen perfection will never rest short of it.

"Till we arrive—till we *all* arrive" at this, the work of the Christian ministry is incomplete. Teachers must still school us, pastors shepherd us, evangelists mission us. There is work enough and to spare for them all—and will be, to all appearance, for many a generation to come. The goal of the regenerate life is never absolutely won; it is hid with Christ in God. But there is to be a constant approximation to it, both in the individual believer and in the body of Christ's people. And a time is coming when that goal will be practically attained, so far as earthly conditions allow. The Church after long strife will be reunited, after long trial will be perfected; and Christ will "present her to Himself" a bride worthy of her Lord, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Then this world will have had its use, and will give place to the new heavens and earth.

II. The goal that the apostle marked out did not appear to him to be in immediate prospect. The childishness of so many Christian believers stood in the way of its attainment. In this condition they were exposed to the seductions of error, and ready to be driven this way and that by the evil influences active in the world of thought around them. So long as the Church contains a number of unstable souls, so long she will remain subject to strife and corruption. When he says in verse 14, "that we may be *no longer children* tossed to and fro," etc., this implies that many Christian believers at that time were of this childish sort, and were being so distracted and misled. The apostle writes on purpose to instruct these "babes" and to raise them to a more manly style of Christian thought and life.

It is a grievous thing to a minister of Christ to see those who for the time ought to be teachers, fit for the Church's strong meat and the harder tasks of her service, remaining still infantile in their condition, needing to be nursed and humoured, narrow in their views of truth, petty and personal in their aims, wanting in all generous feeling and exalted thought. Some men, like St. Paul himself, advance from the beginning to a settled faith, to a large intelligence and a full and manly consecration to God. Others remain "babes in Christ" to the end. Their souls live, but never thrive. They suffer from every change in the moral atmosphere, from every new wind of doctrine. These invalids are objects full of interest to the moral pathologist; they are marked not unfrequently by fine and delicate qualities. But they are a constant anxiety to the Church. Till they grow into something more robust they must remain to

crowd the Church's nursery, instead of taking part in her battle like brave and strenuous men.

The appearance of false doctrine in the Asian Churches made their undeveloped condition a matter for peculiar apprehension to the apostle. The Colossian heresy, for example, with which he is dealing at this present moment, would have no attraction for ripe and settled Christians. But such a "scheme of error" was exactly suited to catch men with a certain tincture of philosophy and in general sympathy with current thought, who had embraced Christianity under some vague sense of its satisfaction for their spiritual needs, but without an intelligent grasp of its principles or a thorough experience of its power.

St. Paul speaks of "every wind of *the* doctrine," having in his mind a more or less definite form of erroneous teaching, a certain "plan of error." Reading this verse in the light of the companion letter to Colossæ and the letters addressed to Timothy when at Ephesus a few years later, we can understand its significance. We can watch the storm that was rising in the Græco-Asiatic Churches. The characteristics of early Gnosticism are well defined in the miniature picture of verse 14. We note, in the first place, its protean and capricious form, half Judaistic, half philosophical—ascetic in one direction, libertine in another: "tossed by the waves, and carried about with every wind." In the next place, its intellectual spirit,—that of a loose and reckless speculation: "in the hazarding of men," —not in the abiding truth of God. Morally, it was vitiated by "craftiness." And in its issue and result, this new teaching was leading "to the scheme of error" which the apostle four years ago had sorrowfully predicted, in bidding farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts xx.). This scheme was no other than the gigantic Gnostic system, which devastated the Eastern Churches and inflicted deep and lasting wounds upon them.

The struggle with legalism was now over and past, at least in its critical phase. The apostle of the Gentiles had won the battle with Judaism and saved the Church in its first great conflict. But another strife is impending (comp. vi. 10); a most pernicious error has made its appearance within the Church itself. St. Paul was not to see more than the commencement of the new movement, which took two generations to gather its full force; but he had a true prophetic insight, and he saw that the strength of the Church in the coming day of trial lay in the depth and reality of her knowledge of the Son of God.

At every crisis in human thought there emerges some prevailing method of truth, or of error, the resultant of current tendencies, which unites the suffrages of a large body of thinkers and claims to embody the spirit of the age. Such a method of error our own age has produced as the outcome of the anti-Christian speculation of modern times, in the doctrines current under the names of Positivism, Secularism, or Agnosticism. While the Gnosticism of the early ages asserted the infinite distance of God from the world and the intrinsic evil of matter, modern Agnosticism removes God still further from us, beyond the reach of thought, and leaves us with material nature as the one positive and accessible reality, as the basis of life and law. Faith and knowledge of the Son of God it banishes as dreams of our childhood. The supernatural, it tells us, is an illusion; and we must resign ourselves to be once more without God in the world and without hope beyond death.

This materialistic philosophy gathers to a head the unbelief of the century. It is the living antagonist of Divine revelation. It supplies the appointed trial of faith for educated men of our generation, and the test of the intellectual vigour and manhood of the Church.

III. In the midst of the changing perils and long delays of her history, the Church is called evermore to press towards the mark of her calling. The conditions on which her progress depends are summed up in verses 15 and 16.

To the craft of false teachers St. Paul would have his Churches oppose the weapons only of *truth and love.* "Holding the truth in love," they will "grow up in all things unto Christ." Sincere believers, heartily devoted to Christ, will not fall into fatal error. A healthy life instinctively repels disease. They "have an anointing from the Holy One" which is their protection (1 John ii. 20-29). In all that belongs to godliness and a noble manhood, such natures will expand; temptation and the assaults of error stimulate rather than arrest their growth. And with the growth and ripening in her fellowship of such men of God, the whole Church grows.

Next to the moral condition lies the spiritual condition of advancement,—viz., the full recognition of *the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.* Christ assumes here two opposite relations to the members of His body. He is the Head *into* (or *unto*) which we grow in all things; but at the same time, *from* whom all the body derives its increase (ver. 16). He is the perfect ideal for us each; He is the common source of life and progress for us all. In our individual efforts after holiness and knowledge, in our personal aspirations and struggles, Jesus Christ is our model, our constant aim: we "grow into Him" (ver. 15). But as we learn to live for others, as we merge our own aims in the life of the Church and of humanity, we feel, even more deeply than our personal needs had made us to do, our dependence upon Him. We see that the forces which are at work to raise mankind, to stay the strifes and heal the wounds of humanity, emanate from the living Christ (ver. 16). He is the head of the Church and the heart of the world.

The third, practical condition of Church growth is brought out by the closing words of the paragraph. It is *organisation*: "all the body fitly framed [comp. ii. 21] and knit together." Each local *ecclesia,* or assembly of saints, will have its stated officers, its regulated and seemly order in worship and in work. And within this fit frame, there must be the warm union of hearts, the frank exchange of thought and feeling, the brotherly counsel in all things touching the kingdom of God, by which Christian men in each place of their assembling are "knit together." From these local and congregational centres, the Christian fellowship spreads out its arms to embrace all that love our Lord Jesus Christ.

A building or a machine is *fitted* together by the adjustment of its parts. A body needs, besides this mechanical construction, a pervasive life, a sympathetic force *knitting* it together: "knit together in love," the apostle says in Colossians ii. 2; and so it is "in love" that this "body builds up itself." The tense of the participles in the first part of verse 16 is present (con-

tinuous); we see a body in process of incorporation, whose several organs, imperfectly developed and imperfectly co-operant, are increasingly drawn to each other and bound more firmly in one as each becomes more complete in itself. The perfect Christian and the perfect Church are taking shape at once. Each of them requires the other for its due realisation.

The rest of the sentence, following the comma that we place at "knit together," has its parallel in Colossians ii. 19: "All the body, through its junctures and bands being supplied and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." According to St. Paul's physiology, the "bands" knit the body together, but the "junctures" are its means of supply. Each point of contact is a means of nourishment to the frame. In touch with each other, Christians communicate the life flowing from the common Head. The apostle would make *Christian intercourse a universal means of grace.* No two Christian men should meet anywhere, upon any business, without themselves and the whole Church being the better for it.

"Wherever two or three are met together in my name," said Jesus, "there am I in the midst." In the multitude of these obscure and humble meetings of brethren who love each other for Christ's sake, is the grace supplied, the love diffused abroad, by which the Church lives and thrives. The vitality of the Church of Christ does not depend so much upon the large and visible features of its construction—upon Synods and Conferences, upon Bishops and Presbyteries and the like, influential and venerable as these authorities may be; but upon the spiritual intercourse that goes on amongst the body of its people. "Each several part" of Christ's great body, "according to the measure" of its capacity, is required to receive and to transmit the common grace.

However defective in other points of organisation, the society in which this takes place fulfils the office of an ecclesiastical body. It will grow into the fulness of Christ; it "builds up itself in love." The primary condition of Church health and progress is that there shall be an unobstructed flow of the life of grace from point to point through the tissues and substance of the entire frame.

ON CHRISTIAN MORALS.

EPHESIANS iv. 17-v. 21.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WALK OF THE GENTILES.

EPHESIANS iv. 17-19.

CHRIST has called into existence and formed around Him already a new world. Those who are members of His body are brought into another order of being from that to which they had formerly belonged. They have therefore to walk in quite another way—"no longer as the Gentiles." St. Paul does not say "as the other Gentiles" (A. V.); for his readers, though Gentiles by birth (ii. 11), are now of the household of faith and the city of God. They hold the franchise of the "commonwealth of Israel." As at a later time the apostle John in his Gospel, though a born Jew, yet from the standpoint of the new Israel writes of "the Jews" as a distant and alien people, so St. Paul distinguishes his readers from "the Gentiles" who were their natural kindred.

When he "testifies," with a pointed emphasis, "that *you* no longer walk as do indeed the Gentiles," and when in verse 20 he exclaims, "But *you* did not thus learn the Christ," it appears that there were those bearing Christ's name and professing to have learnt of Him who did thus walk. This, indeed, he expressly asserts in writing to the Philippians (chapter iii. 18, 19): "Many walk, of whom I told you oftentimes, and now tell you even weeping,—the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose god is their belly, and their glory in their shame, who mind earthly things." We cannot but associate this warning with the apprehension expressed in verse 14 above. The reckless and unscrupulous teachers against whose seductions the apostle guards the infant Churches of Asia Minor, tampered with the morals as well as with the faith of their disciples, and were drawing them back insidiously to their former habits of life.

The connection between the foregoing part of this chapter and that on which we now enter, lies in the relation of the new life of the Christian believer to the new community which he has entered. The old world of Gentile society had formed the "old man" as he then existed, the product of centuries of debasing idolatry. But in Christ that world is abolished, and a "new man" is born. The world in which the Asian Christians once lived as "Gentiles in the flesh," is dead to them. They are partakers of the regenerate humanity constituted in Jesus Christ. From this idea the apostle deduces the ethical doctrine of the following paragraphs. His ideal "new man" is no mere ego, devoted to his personal perfection: he is part and parcel of the redeemed society of men; his virtues are those of a member of the Christian order and commonwealth.

The representation given of Gentile life in the three verses before us is highly condensed and pungent. It is from the same hand as the lurid picture of Romans i. 18-32. While this delineation is comparatively brief and cursory, it carries the analysis in some respects deeper than does that memorable passage. We may distinguish the main features of the description, as they bring into view in turn the *mental, spiritual,* and *moral* characteristics of the existing Paganism. Man's intellect was confounded; religion was dead; profligacy was flagrant and shameless.

I. "The Gentiles walk," the apostle says, "in *vanity of their mind*"—with reason frustrate and impotent; "being *darkened in their understanding*"—with no clear or settled principles, no sound theory of life. Similarly he wrote in Romans i. 21: "They were frustrated in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened." But here he seems to trace the futility further back, beneath the "reasonings" to the "reason" (*nous*) itself. The Gentile mind was deranged at its foundation. Reason seemed to have suffered a paralysis. Man has forfeited his claim to be a rational creature, when he worships ob-

jects so degraded as the heathen gods, when he practises vices so detestable and ruinous.

The men of intellect, who held themselves aloof from popular beliefs, for the most part confessed that their philosophies were speculative and futile, that certainty in the greatest and most serious matters was unattainable. Pilate's question, "What is truth?"—no jesting question surely—passed from lip to lip and from one school of thought to another, without an answer. Five centuries before this time the human intellect had a marvellous awakening. The art and philosophy of Greece sprang into their glorious life, like Athené born from the head of Zeus, full-grown, and in shining armour. With such leaders as Pericles and Phidias, as Sophocles and Plato, it seemed as though nothing was impossible to the mind of man. At last the genius of our race had blossomed; rich and golden fruit would surely follow, to be gathered from the tree of life. But the blossoms fell, and the fruit proved as rottenness. Grecian art had sunk into a meretricious skill; poetry was little more than a trick of words; pilosophy a wrangling of the schools. Rome towered in the majesty of her arms and laws above the faded glory of Greece. She promised a more practical and sober ideal, a rule of world-wide justice and peace and material plenty. But this dream vanished, like the other. The age of the Cæsars was an age of disillusion. Scepticism and cynicism, disbelief in goodness, despair of the future possessed men's minds. Stoics and Epicureans, old and new Academics, Peripatetics and Pythagoreans disputed the palm of wisdom in mere strife of words. Few of them possessed any earnest faith in their own systems. The one craving of Athens and the learned was "to hear some new thing," for of the old things all thinking men were weary. Only rhetoric and scepticism flourished. Reason had built up her noblest constructions as if in sport, to pull them down again. "On the whole, this last period of Greek philosophy, extending into the Christian era, bore the marks of intellectual exhaustion and impoverishment, and of despair in the solution of its high problem" (Döllinger). The world itself admitted the apostle's reproach that "by wisdom it knew not God." It knew nothing, therefore, to sure purpose; nothing that availed to satisfy or save it.

Our own age, it may be said, possesses a philosophic method unknown to the ancient world. The old metaphysical systems failed; but we have relaid the foundations of life and thought upon the solid ground of nature. Modern culture rests upon a basis of positive and demonstrated knowledge, whose value is independent of religious belief. Scientific discovery has put us in command of material forces that secure the race against any such relapse as that which took place in the overthrow of the Græco-Roman civilisation. *Pessimism* answers these pretensions made for physical science by her idolaters. Pessimism is the nemesis of irreligious thought. It creeps like a slow palsy over the highest and ablest minds that reject the Christian hope. What avails it to yoke steam to our chariot, if black care still sits behind the rider? to wing our thoughts with the lightning, if those thoughts are no happier or worthier than before?

"Civilisation contains within itself the elements of a fresh servitude. Man conquers the powers of nature, and becomes in turn their slave" (F. W. Robertson). Poverty grows gaunt and desperate by the side of lavish wealth. A new barbarism is bred in what science grimly calls the *proletariate*, a barbarism more vicious and dangerous than the old, that is generated by the inhuman conditions of life under the existing régime of industrial science.

Education gives man quickness of wit and new capacity for evil or good; culture makes him more sensitive; refinement more delicate in his virtues or his vices. But there is no tendency in these forces as we see them now in operation, any more than in the classical discipline, to make nobler or better men. Secular knowledge supplies nothing to bind society together, no force to tame the selfish passions, to guard the moral interests of mankind. Science has given an immense impetus to the forces acting on civilised men; it cannot change or elevate their character. It puts new and potent instruments into our hands; but whether those instruments shall be tools to build the city of God or weapons for its destruction, is determined by the spirit of the wielders. In the midst of this splendid machinery, master of the planet's wealth and lord of nature's forces, the civilised man at the end of this boastful century stands with a dull and empty heart—without God. Poor creature, he wants to know whether "life is worth living"! He has gained the world, but lost his soul.

In vanity of mind and darkness of reasoning men stumble onwards to the end of life, to the end of time. The world's wisdom and the lessons of its history give no hope of any real advance from darkness to light until, as Plato said, "We are able more safely and securely to make our journey, borne on some firmer vehicle, on some Divine word."* Such a vehicle those who believe in Christ have found in His teaching. The moral progress of the Christian ages is due to its guidance. And that moral progress has created the conditions and given the stimulus to which our material and scientific progress is due. Spiritual life gives permanence and value to all man's acquisitions. Both of this world and of that to come "godliness holds the promise." We are only beginning to learn how much was meant when Jesus Christ announced Himself as "the light of the world." He brought into the world a light which was to shine through all the realms of human life.

II. The delusion of mind in which the nations walked resulted in a settled state of *estrangement from God*. They were "alienated from the life of God."

"Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," St. Paul said in chapter ii. 12, using as he does here, the Greek perfect participle, which denotes an abiding fact. These two alienations generally coincide. Outside the religious community, we are outside the religious life. This expression gathers to a point what was said in verses 11, 12 of chapter ii., and further back in verses 1-3; it discloses the spring of the soul's malady and decay in its separation from the living God. When shall we learn that in God only is our life? We may exist without God, as a tree cast out in the desert, or a body wasting in the grave; but that is not *life*.

Everywhere the apostle moved amongst men who seemed to him dead—joyless, empty-hearted, weary of an idle learning or lost in sullen ignorance, caring only to eat and drink till they

* "Phædo," § xxxv.

should die like the beasts. Their so-called gods were phantasms of the Divine, in which the wiser of them scarcely even pretended to believe. The ancient natural pieties—not wholly untouched by the Spirit of God, despite their idolatry—that peopled with fair fancy the Grecian shores and skies, and taught the sturdy Roman his manfulness and hallowed his love of home and city, were all but extinguished. Death was at the heart of Pagan religion; corruption in its breath. Few indeed were those who believed in the existence of a wise and righteous Power behind the veil of sense. The Roman augurs laughed at their own auspices; the priests made a traffic of their temple ceremonies. Sorcery of all kinds was rife, as rife as scepticism. The most fashionable rites of the day were the gloomy and revolting mysteries imported from Egypt and Syria. A hundred years before, the Roman poet Lucretius expressed, with his burning indignation, the indisposition of earnest and high-minded men towards the creeds of the later classic times:—

> "Humana ante oculos fœde cum vita jaceret,
> In terris oppressa gravi sub religione,
> Quæ caput e cœli regionibus ostendebat
> Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
> Primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra
> Est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra."
> —"De Rerum Natura," Bk. I., 62–67.

How alienated from the life of God were those who conceived such sentiments, and those whose creed excited this repugnance. And when amongst ourselves, as it occurs in some unhappy instances, a similar bitterness is cherished, it is matter of double sorrow,—of grief at once for the alienation prompting thoughts so dark and unjust towards our God and Father, and for the misshapen guise in which our holy religion has been presented to make this aversion possible.

The phrase "alienated from the life of God" denotes an objective position rather than a subjective disposition, the state and place of the man who is far from God and his true life. God exiles sinners from His presence. By a necessary law, their sins acts as a sentence of deprivation. Under its ban they go forth, like Cain, from the presence of the Lord. They can no longer partake of the light of life which streams forth evermore from God and fills the souls that abide in His love.

And this banishment was due to the cause already described,—to the radical perversion of the Gentile mind, which is re-affirmed in the double prepositional clause of verse 18: "because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart." The repeated preposition (*because of*) attaches the two parallel clauses to the same predicate. Together they serve to explain this sad estrangement from the Divine life; the second *because* supplements the first. It is the ingrained "ignorance" of men that excludes them from the life of God; and this ignorance is no misfortune or unavoidable fate, it is due to a positive "hardening of the heart."

Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, but of indevotion. If men knew God they would certainly love and serve Him. St. Paul agreed with Socrates and Plato in holding that virtue is knowledge. The debasement of the heathen world, he declares again and again, was due to the fact that it "knew not God." The Corinthian Church was corrupted and its Christian life imperilled by the presence in it of some who "had not the knowledge of God" (1 Cor. xv. 33, 34). At Athens, the centre of heathen wisdom, he spoke of the Pagan ages as "the times of ignorance" (Acts xvii. 30); and found in this want of knowledge a measure of excuse. But the ignorance he censures is not of the understanding alone; nor is it curable by philosophy and science. It has an intrinsic ground,—"existing *in* them."

Since the world's creation, the apostle says, God's unseen presence has been clearly visible (Rom. i. 20). Yet multitudes of men have always held false and corrupting views of the Divine nature. At this present time, in the full light of Christianity, men of high intellect and wide knowledge of nature are found proclaiming in the most positive terms that God, if He exists, is unknowable. This ignorance it is not for us to censure; every man must give account of himself to God. There may be in individual cases, amongst the enlightened deniers of God in our own days, causes of misunderstanding beyond the will, obstructing and darkening circumstances, on the ground of which in His merciful and wise judgment God may "overlook" that ignorance, even as He did the ignorance of earlier ages. But it is manifest that while this veil remains, those on whose heart it lies cannot partake in the life of God. Living in unbelief, they walk in darkness to the end, knowing not whither they go.

The Gentile ignorance of God was attended, as St. Paul saw it, with an *induration of heart*, of which it was at once the cause and effect. There is a wilful stupidity, a studied misconstruction of God's will, which has played a large part in the history of unbelief. The Israelitish people presented at this time a terrible example of such guilty callousness (Rom. xi. 7-10, 25). They professed a mighty zeal for God; but it was a passion for the deity of their partial and corrupt imagination, which turned to hatred of the true God and Father of men when He appeared in the person of His Son. Behind their pride of knowledge lay the ignorance of a hard and impenitent heart.

In the case of the heathen, hardness of heart and religious ignorance plainly went together. The knowledge of God was not altogether wanting amongst them; He "left Himself not without witness," as the apostle told them (Acts xiv. 17). Where there is, amid whatever darkness, a mind seeking after truth and right, some ray of light is given, some gleam of a better hope by which the soul may draw nigh to God,—coming whence or how perhaps none can tell. The gospel of Christ finds in every new land souls waiting for God's salvation. Such a preparation for the Lord, in hearts touched and softened by the preventings of grace, its first messengers discovered everywhere,—a remnant in Israel and a great multitude amongst the heathen.

But the Jewish nation as a whole, and the mass of the pagans, remained at present obstinately disbelieving. They had no perception of the life of God, and felt no need of it; and when offered, they thrust it from them. Theirs was another god, "the god of this world," who "blinds the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). And their "ungodliness and unrighteousness" were not to be pitied more than blamed. They might have known better; they were "holding down the truth in unrighteousness," putting out the light

that was in them and contradicting their better instincts. The wickedness of that generation was the outcome of a hardening of heart and blinding of conscience that had been going on for generations past.

III. By two conspicuous features the decaying Paganism of the Christian era was distinguished, —its unbelief and its *licentiousness*. In his letter to the Romans St. Paul declares that the second of these deplorable characteristics was the consequence of the former, and a punishment for it inflicted by God. Here he points to it as a manifestation of the hardening of heart which caused their ignorance of God: "Having lost all feeling, they gave themselves up to lasciviousness, so as to commit every kind of uncleanness in greediness."

Upon that brilliant classic civilisation there lies a shocking stain of impurity. St. Paul stamps upon it the burning word *Aselgeia* (*lasciviousness*), like a brand on the harlot's brow. The habits of daily life, the literature and art of the Greek world, the atmosphere of society in the great cities was laden with corruption. Sexual vice was no longer counted vice. It was provided for by public law; it was incorporated into the worship of the gods. It was cultivated in every luxurious and monstrous excess. It was eating out the manhood of the Greek and Latin races. From the imperial Cæsar down to the horde of slaves, it seemed as though every class of society had abandoned itself to the horrid practices of lust.

The "greediness" with which debauchery was then pursued is at the bottom self-idolatry, self-deification; it is the absorption of the God-given passion and will of man's nature in the gratification of his appetites. Here lies the reservoir and spring of sin, the burning deep within the soul of him who knows no God but his own will, no law above his own desire. He plunges into sensual indulgence, or he grasps covetously at wealth or office; he wrecks the purity, or tramples on the rights of others; he robs the weak, he corrupts the innocent, he deceives and mocks the simple—to feed the gluttonous idol of self that sits upon God's seat within him. The military hero wading to a throne through seas of blood, the politician who wins power and office by the sleights of a supple tongue, the dealer on the exchange who supplants every competitor by his shrewd foresight and unscrupulous daring, and absorbs the fruit of the labour of thousands of his fellow-men, the sensualist devising some new and more voluptuous refinement of vice—these are all the miserable slaves of their own lust, driven on by the insatiate craving of the false god that they carry within their breast.

For the light-hearted Greeks, lovers of beauty and of laughter, self was deified as Aphrodité, goddess of fleshly desire, who was turned by their worship into *Aselgeia*,—she of whom of old it was said, "Her house is the way to Sheol." Not such as the chaste wife and house-keeping mother of Hebrew praise, but Laïs with her venal charms was the subject of Greek song and art. Pure ideals of womanhood the classic nations had once known—or never would those nations have become great and famous—a Greek Alcestis and Antigoné, Roman Cornelias and Lucretias, noble maids and matrons. But these, in the dissolution of manners, had given place to other models. The wives and daughters of the Greek citizens were shut up to contempt and ignorance, while the priestesses of vice—*hetæræ* they were called, or *companions* of men—queened it in their voluptuous beauty, until their bloom faded and poison or madness ended their fatal days.

Amongst the Jews whom our Lord addressed, the choice lay between "God and Mammon"; in Corinth and Ephesus, it was "Christ or Belial." These ancient gods of the world—"mud-gods," as Thomas Carlyle called them—are set up in the high places of our populous cities. To the slavery of business and the pride of wealth men sacrifice health and leisure, improvement of mind, religion, charity, love of country, family affection. How many of the evils of English society come from this root of all evil!

Hard by the temple of Mammon stands that of Belial. Their votaries mingle in the crowded amusements of the day and rub shoulders with each other. Aselgeia flaunts herself, wise observers tell us, with increasing boldness in the European capitals. Theatre and picture-gallery and novel pander to the desire of the eye and the lust of the flesh. The daily newspapers retail cases of divorce and hideous criminal trials with greater exactness than the debates of Parliament; and the appetite for this garbage grows by what it feeds upon. It is plain to see whereunto the decay of public decency and the revival of the animalism of pagan art and manners will grow, if it be not checked by a deepened Christian faith and feeling.

Past feeling, says the apostle of the brazen impudicity of his time. The loss of the religious sense blunted all moral sensibility. The Greeks, by an early instinct of their language, had one word for *modesty* and *reverence*, for self-respect and awe before the Divine. There is nothing more terrible than the loss of shame. When immodesty is no longer felt as an affront, when there fails to rise in the blood and burn upon the cheek the hot resentment of a wholesome nature against things that are foul, when we grow tolerant and familiar with their presence, we are far down the slopes of hell. It needs only the kindling of passion, or the removal of the checks of circumstance, to complete the descent. The pain that the sight of evil gives is a divine shield against it. Wearing this shield the sinless Christ fought our battle, and bore the anguish of our sin.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO HUMAN TYPES.

EPHESIANS iv. 20-24.

BUT as for you!—The apostle points us from heathendom to Christendom. From the men of blinded understanding and impure life he turns to the cleansed and instructed. "Not thus did *you* learn the Christ"—not to remain in the darkness and filth of your Gentile state.

The phrase is highly condensed. The apostle, in this letter so exuberant in expression, yet on occasion is as concise as in Galatians. One is tempted, as Beza suggested and Hofmann insists, to put a stop at this point and to read: "But with you it is not so: you learned the Christ!" In spite of its abruptness, this construction would be necessary, if it were only "the Gentiles" of verse 17 with whose "walk"

St. Paul means to contrast that of his readers. But, as we have seen, he has before his eye a third class of men, unprincipled Christian teachers (verse 14), men who had in some sense learnt of Christ and yet walked in Gentile ways and were leading others back to them. Verse 20, after all, forms a coherent clause. It points an antithesis of solemn import. There are genuine, and there are supposed conversions; there are true and false ways of learning Christ.

Strictly speaking, it is not *Christ*, but *the Christ* whom St. Paul presumes his readers to have duly learnt. The words imply a comprehending faith, that knows who and what Christ is and what believing in Him means, that has mastered His great lessons. To such a faith, which views Christ in the scope and breadth of His redemption, this epistle throughout appeals; for its impartation and increase St. Paul prayed the wonderful prayer of the third chapter. When he writes not simply, "You have believed in Christ," but "You have *learned the Christ*," he puts their faith upon a high level; it is the faith of approved disciples in Christ's school. For such men the "philosophy and vain deceit" of Colossæ and the plausibilities of the new "scheme of error" will have no charm. They have found the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hidden in Christ.

The apostle's confidence in the Christian knowledge of his readers is, however, qualified in verse 21 in a somewhat remarkable way: "If verily it is He whom you heard, and in Him that you were taught, as truth is in Jesus." We noted at the outset the bearing of this sentence on the destination of the letter. It would never occur to St. Paul to question whether the *Ephesian* Christians were taught Christ's true doctrine. If there were any believers in the world who, beyond a doubt, had heard the truth as in Jesus in its certainty and fulness, it was those amongst whom the apostle had "taught publicly and from house to house," "not shunning to declare all the counsel of God" and "for three years night and day unceasingly with tears admonishing each single one" (Acts xx. 18-35). To suppose these words written in irony, or in a modest affectation, is to credit St. Paul with something like an ineptitude. Doubt was really possible as to whether all his readers had heard of Christ aright, and understood the obligations of their faith. Supposing, as we have done, that the epistle was designed for the Christians of the province of Asia generally, this qualification is natural and intelligible.

There are several considerations which help to account for it. When St. Paul first arrived at Ephesus, eight years before this time, he "found certain disciples" there who had been "baptised into John's baptism," but had not "received the Holy Spirit" nor even heard of such a thing (Acts xix. 1-7). Apollos formerly belonged to this company, having preached and "taught carefully the things about Jesus," while he "knew only the baptism of John" (Acts xviii. 25). One very much desires to know more about this Church of the Baptist's disciples in Asia Minor. Its existence so far away from Palestine testifies to the power of John's ministry and the deep impression that his witness to the Messiahship of Jesus made on his disciples. The ready reception of Paul's fuller gospel by this little circle indicates that their knowledge of Jesus Christ erred only by defect; they had received it from Judea by a source dating earlier than the day of Pentecost. The partial knowledge of Jesus current for so long at Ephesus, may have extended to other parts of the province, where St. Paul had not been able to correct it as he had done in the metropolis.

Judaistic Christians, such as those who at Rome "preached Christ of envy and strife," were also disseminating an imperfect Christian doctrine. They limited the rights of uncircumcised believers; they misrepresented the Gentile apostle and undermined his influence. A third and still more lamentable cause of uncertainty, in regard to the Christian belief of Asian Churches, was introduced by the rise of Gnosticising error in this quarter. Some who read the epistle had, it might be, received their first knowledge of Christ through channels tainted with error similar to that which was propagated at Colossæ. With the seed of the kingdom the enemy was mingling vicious tares. The apostle has reason to fear that there were those within the wide circle to which his letter is addressed, who had in one form or other heard a different gospel and a Christ other than the true Christ of apostolic teaching.

Where does he find the test and touchstone of the true Christian doctrine?—In the historical Jesus: "as there is truth *in Jesus*." Not often, nor without distinct meaning, does St. Paul use the birth-name of the Saviour by itself. Where he does it is most significant. He has in mind the facts of the gospel history; he speaks of "the Jesus" of Nazareth and Calvary. The Christ whom St. Paul feared that some of his readers might have heard of was not the veritable *Jesus* Christ, but a shadowy and notional Christ, lost amongst the crowd of angels, such as was now being taught to the Colossians. This Christ was neither the image of God, nor the true Son of man. He supplied no sufficient redemption from sin, no ideal of character, no sure guidance and authority to direct the daily walk. Those who followed such a Christ would fall back unchecked into Gentile vice. Instead of the light of life shining in the character and words of Jesus, they must resort to "the doctrines and commandments of men" (Col. ii. 8-23).

Amongst the Gnostics of the second century there was held a distinction between the human (fleshly and imperfect) *Jesus* and the Divine *Christ*, who were regarded as distinct beings, united to each other from the time of the baptism of Jesus to His death. The critics who assert the late and non-Pauline authorship of the epistle assert that this peculiar doctrine is aimed at in the words before us, and that the identification of Christ with Jesus has a polemical reference to this advanced Gnostic error. The verses that follow show that the writer has a different and entirely practical aim. The apostle points us to our true ideal, to "the Christ" of all revelation manifest in "the Jesus" of the gospel. Here we see "the new man created after God," whose nature we must embody in ourselves. The counteractive of a false spiritualism is found in the incarnate life of the Son of God. The dualism which separated God from the world and man's spirit from his flesh, had its refutation in "the Jesus" of Paul's preaching, whom we see in the Four Gospels. Those who persisted in the attempt to graft the dualistic theosophy upon the Christian faith were in the end compelled to divide and destroy the Christ Himself. They

broke up into *Jesus and Christ* the unity of His incarnate Person.

It is an entire mistake to suppose that the apostle Paul was indifferent to the historical tradition of Jesus; that the Christ he taught was a product of his personal inspiration, of his inward experience and theological reflection. This preaching of an abstract Christ, distinct from the actual Jesus, is the very thing that he condemns. Although his explicit references in the epistles to the teaching of Jesus and the events of His earthly life are not numerous, they are such as to prove that the Churches St. Paul taught were well instructed in that history. From the beginning the apostle made himself well acquainted with the facts concerning Jesus, and had become possessor of all that the earlier witnesses could relate. His conception of the Lord Jesus Christ is living and realistic in the highest degree. Its germ was in the visible appearance of the glorified Jesus to himself on the Damascus road; but that expanding germ struck down its roots into the rich soil of the Church's recollections of the incarnate Redeemer as He lived and taught and laboured, as He died and rose again amongst men. Paul's Christ was the Jesus of Peter and of John and of our own Evangelists; there was no other. He warns the Church against all unhistorical, subjective Christs, the product of human speculation.

The Asian Christians who held a true faith had received Jesus as the Christ. So accepting Him, they accepted a fixed standard and ideal of life for themselves. With Jesus Christ evidently set forth before their eyes, let them look back upon their past life; let them contrast what they had been with what they are to be. Let them consider what things they must "put off" and what "put on," so that they may "be found in Him."

Strangely did the image of Jesus confront the pagan world; keenly its light smote on that gross darkness. There stood the Word made flesh—purity immaculate, love in its very self—shaped forth in no dream of fancy or philosophy, but in the veritable man Christ Jesus, born of Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate,—truth expressed

> "In loveliness of perfect deeds,
> More strong than all poetic thought."

And this life of Jesus, living in those who loved Him (2 Cor. iv. 11), ended not when He passed from earth; it passed from land to land, speaking many tongues, raising up new witnesses at every step as it moved along. It was not a new system, a new creed, but *new men* that it gave the world in Christ's disciples, men redeemed from all iniquity, noble and pure as sons of God. It was the sight of Jesus, and of men like Jesus, that shamed the old world, so corrupt and false and hardened in its sin. In vain she summoned the gates of death to silence the witnesses of Jesus. At last

> "She veiled her eagles, snapped her sword,
> And laid her sceptre down;
> Her stately purple she abhorred,
> And her imperial crown.
> She broke her flutes, she stopped her sports,
> Her artists could not please;
> She tore her books, she shut her courts,
> She fled her palaces;
> Lust of the eye and pride of life—
> She left it all behind,
> And hurried, torn with inward strife,
> The wilderness to find."
> —*Obermann Once More.*

The Galilean conquered! The new man was destined to convict and destroy the old. "God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3).

When Jesus lived, died, and rose again, an inconceivable revolution in human affairs had been effected. The cross was planted on the territory of the god of this world; its victory was inevitable. The "grain of wheat" fell into the ground to die: there might be still a long, cruel winter; many a storm and blight would delay its growth; but the harvest was secure. Jesus Christ was the type and the head of a new moral order, destined to control the universe.

To see the new and the old man side by side was enough to assure one that the future lay with Jesus. Corruption and decrepitude marked every feature of Gentile life. It was gangrened with vice,—"wasting away in its deceitful lusts."

St. Paul had before his eyes, as he wrote, a conspicuous type of the decaying Pagan order. He had appealed as a citizen of the empire to *Cæsar* as his judge. He was in durance as *Nero's* prisoner, and was acquainted with the life of the palace (Phil. i. 13). Never, perhaps, has any line of rulers dominated mankind so absolutely or held in their single hand so completely the resources of the world as did the Cæsars of St. Paul's time. Their name has ever since served to mark the summit of autocratic power. It was, surely, the vision of Tiberius sitting at Rome that Jesus saw in the wilderness, when "the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and said, All this hath been delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." The Emperor was the topstone of the splendid edifice of Pagan civilisation, that had been rearing for so many ages. And Nero was the final product and paragon of the Cæsarean house!

At this epoch, writes M. Renan, "*Nero and Jesus*, Christ and Antichrist, stand opposed, confronting each other, if I may dare to say so, like heaven and hell. . . . In face of Jesus there presents itself a monster, who is the ideal of evil as Jesus of goodness. . . . Nero's was an evil nature, hypocritical, vain, frivolous, prodigiously given to declamation and display; a blending of false intellect, profound wickedness, cruel and artful egotism carried to an incredible degree of refinement and subtlety. . . . He is a monster who has no second in history, and whose equal we can only find in the pathological annals of the scaffold. . . . The school of crime in which he had grown up, the execrable influence of his mother, the stroke of parricide forced upon him, as one might say, by this abominable woman, by which he had entered on the stage of public life, made the world take to his eyes the form of a horrible comedy, with himself for the chief actor in it. At the moment we have now reached [when St. Paul entered Rome], Nero had detached himself completely from the philosophers who had been his tutors. He had killed nearly all his relations. He had made the most shameful follies the common fashion. A large part of Roman society, following his example, had descended to the lowest level of debasement. The cruelty of the ancient world had reached its consummation. . . . The world had touched the

bottom of the abyss of evil; it could only re-ascend."

Such was the man who occupied at this time the summit of human power and glory,—the man who lighted the torch of Christian martyrdom and at whose sentence St. Paul's head was destined to fall, the Wild Beast of John's awful vision. Nero of Rome, the son of Agrippina, embodied the triumph of Satan as the god of this world. Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Mary, reigned only in a few loving and pure hearts. Future history, as the scroll of the Apocalypse unfolded it, was to be the battle-field of these two confronting powers, the war of Christ with Antichrist.

Could it be doubtful, to any one who had measured the rival forces, on which side victory must fall? St. Paul pronounces the fate of the whole kingdom of evil in this world, when he declares that "the old man" is "perishing, according to the lusts of deceit." It is an application of the maxim he gave us in Galatians vi. 8: "He that soweth to his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." In its mad sensuality and prodigal lusts, the vile Roman world he saw around him was speeding to its ruin. That ruin was delayed; there were moral forces left in the fabric of the Roman State, which in the following generations reasserted themselves and held back for a time the tide of disaster; but in the end Rome fell, as the ancient world-empires of the East had fallen, through her own corruption, and by "the wrath" which is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." For the solitary man, for the household, for the body politic and the family of nations the rule is the same. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The passions which carry men and nations to their ruin are "lusts of *deceit*." The tempter is the liar. Sin is an enormous fraud. "You shall not die," said the serpent in the garden; "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be as God!" So forbidden desire was born, and "the woman *being deceived* fell into transgression."

> "So glistered the dire Snake, and into fraud
> Led Eve, our credulous mother, to the tree
> Of prohibition, root of all our woe."

By its baits of sensuous pleasure, and still more by its show of freedom and power to stir our pride, sin cheats us of our manhood; it sows life with misery, and makes us self-despising slaves. It knows how to use God's law as an incitement to transgression, turning the very prohibition into a challenge to our bold desires. "Sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me, and by it slew me." Over the pit of destruction play the same dancing lights that have lured countless generations,—the glitter of gold; the purple robe and jewelled coronet; the wine moving in the cup; fair, soft faces lit with laughter. The straying foot and hot desires give chase, till the inevitable moment comes when the treacherous soil yields, and the pursuer plunges beyond escape into sin's reeking gulfs. Then the illusion is over. The gay faces grow foul; the glittering prize proves dust; the sweet fruit turns to ashes; the cup of pleasure burns with the fire of hell. And the sinner knows at last that his greed has cheated him, that he is as foolish as he is wicked.

Let us remember that there is but one way of escape from the all-encompassing deceit of sin. It is in "learning Christ." Not in learning *about* Christ, but in learning *Him*. It is a common artifice of the great deceit to "wash the outside of cup and platter." The old man is improved and civilised; he is baptised in infancy and called a Christian. He puts off many of his old ways, he dresses himself in a decorous garb and style; and so deceives himself into thinking that he is new, while his heart is unchanged. He may turn ascetic, and deny this or that *to* himself; and yet never deny *himself*. He observes religious forms and makes charitable benefactions, as though he would compound with God for his unforsaken sin. But all this is only a plausible and hateful manifestation of the lusts of deceit.

To learn the Christ is to learn the way of the cross. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," He bids us; "for I am meek and lowly in heart." Till we have done this we are not even at the beginning of our lesson.

From the perishing old man the apostle turns, in verses 23, 24, to the new. These two clauses differ in their form of expression more than the English rendering indicates. When he writes, "that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind," it is a *continual rejuvenation* that he describes; the verb is present in tense, and the newness implied is that of recency and youth, newness in point of age. But the "new man" to be "put on" (ver. 24) is of a *new kind and order*; and in this instance the verb is of the aorist tense signifying an event, not a continuous act. The new man is put on when the Christian way of life is adopted, when we enter personally into the new humanity founded in Christ. We "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14), who covers and absorbs the old self, even as those who await in the flesh His second advent will "put on the house from heaven," when "the mortal" in them will be "swallowed up of life" (2 Cor. iv. 2-4). Thus two distinct conceptions of the life of faith are placed before our minds. It consists, on the one hand, of a quickening, constantly renewed, in the springs of our individual thought and will; and it is at the same time the assumption of another nature, the investiture of the soul with the Divine character and form of its being.

Borne on the stream of his evil passions, we saw "the old man" in his "former manner of life," hastening to the gulf of ruin. For the man renewed in Christ the stream of life flows steadily in the opposite direction, and with a swelling tide moves upward to God. His knowledge and love are always growing in depth, in refinement, in energy and joy. Thus it was with the apostle in his advancing age. The fresh impulses of the Holy Spirit, the unfolding to his spirit of the mystery of God, the fellowship of Christian brethren, and the interests of the work of the Church renewed Paul's youth like the eagle's. If in years and toil he is old, his soul is full of ardour, his intellect keen and eager; the "outward man decays, but the inward man is renewed day by day."

This new nature had a new birth. The soul reanimating itself perpetually from the fresh springs that are in God, had in God the beginning of its renovated life. We have not to create or fashion for ourselves the perfect life, but to *adopt* it,—to realise the Christian ideal (ver. 24). We are called to put on the new type of manhood as completely as we renounce the old (ver. 22).

The new man is there before our eyes, manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom we live henceforth. When we "learn the Christ," when we have become His true disciples, we "put on" His nature and "walk in Him." The inward reception of His Spirit is attended by the outward assumption of His character as our calling amongst men.

Now, the character of Jesus is human nature as God first formed it. It existed in His thoughts from eternity. If it be asked whether St. Paul refers, in verse 24, to the creation of Adam in God's likeness, or to the image of God appearing in Jesus Christ, or to the Christian nature formed in the regenerate, we should say that, to the apostle's mind, the first and last of these creations are merged in the second. The Son of God's love is His primeval image. The race of Adam was created in Christ (Col. i. 15, 16). The first model of that image, in the natural father of mankind, was marred by sin and has become "the old man" corrupt and perishing. The new pattern replacing this broken type is the original ideal, displayed "in the likeness of sinful flesh"—wearing no longer the charm of childish innocence, but the glory of sin vanquished and sacrifice endured—in the Son of God made perfect through suffering. Through all there has been only one image of God, one ideal humanity. The Adam of Paradise was, within his limits, what the Image of God had been in perfectness from eternity. And Jesus in His human personality represented, under the changed circumstances brought about by sin, what Adam might have grown to be as a complete and disciplined man.

The qualities which the Apostle insists upon in the new man are two: "*righteousness* and *holiness* [or *piety*] of the truth." This is the Old Testament conception of a perfect life, whose realisation the devout Zacharias anticipates when he sings how God has "shown mercy to our fathers, in remembrance of His holy covenant, ... that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." Enchanting vision, still to be fulfilled! "Righteousness" is the sum of all that should be in a man's relations towards God's law; "holiness" is a right disposition and bearing towards God Himself. This is not St. Paul's ordinary word for holiness (*sanctification, sanctity*), which he puts so often at the head of his letters, addressing his readers as "saints" in Christ Jesus. That other term designates Christian believers as devoted persons, claimed by God for His own; it signifies holiness as a calling. The word of our text denotes specifically the holiness of temper and behaviour—"that becometh saints." The two words differ very much as *devotedness* from *devoutness*.

A religious temper, a reverent mind, marks the true child of grace. His soul is full of the loving fear of God. In the new humanity, in the type of man that will prevail in the latter days when the truth as in Jesus has been learnt by mankind, justice and piety will hold a balanced sway. The man of the coming times will not be atheistic or agnostic: he will be devout. He will not be narrow and self-seeking; he will not be pharisaic and pretentious, practising the world's ethics with the Christian's creed: he will be upright and generous, manly and godlike.

CHAPTER XXI.

DISCARDED VICES.

EPHESIANS iv. 25–v. 6.

THE transformation described in the last paragraph (vv. 17-24) has now to be carried into detail. The vices of the old heathen self must be each of them replaced by the corresponding graces of the new man in Christ Jesus.

The peculiarity of the instructions given by the apostle for this purpose does not lie in the virtues enjoined, but in the light in which they are set and the motives by which they are inculcated. The common conscience condemns lying and theft, malice and uncleanness; they were denounced with eloquence by heathen moralists. But the ethics of the New Testament differed in many respects from the best moral philosophy: in its direct appeal to the conscience, in its vigour and decision, in the clearness with which it traced our maladies to the heart's alienation from God; but most of all in the remedy which it applied, the new principle of faith in Christ. The surgeon's knife lays bare the root of the disease; and the physician's hand pours in the healing balm.

Let us observe at the outset that St. Paul deals with the actual and pressing temptations of his readers. He recalls what they had been and forbids them to be such again. The associations and habits of former life, the hereditary force of evil, the atmosphere of Gentile society, and added to all this, as we discover from chapter v. 6, the persuasions of the sophistical teachers now beginning to infest the Church, tended to draw the Asian Christians back to Gentile ways and to break down the moral distinctions that separated them from the pagan world.

Amongst the discarded vices of the forsaken Gentile life, the following are here distinguished: *lying, theft, anger, idle speech, malice, impurity, greed.* These may be reduced to sins of temper, of word, and of act. Let us discuss them in the order in which they are brought before us.

1. "The falsehood" of verse 25 is the antithesis of "the truth" from which righteousness and holiness spring (ver. 24). In accepting the one, Paul's Gentile readers "had put off" the other. When these heathen converts became Christians, they renounced the great lie of idolatry, the system of error and deceit on which their lives were built. They have passed from the realm of illusion to that of truth. "Now," the apostle says, "let your daily speech accord with this fact: you have bidden farewell to falsehood; *speak* truth, each with his neighbour." The true religion breeds truthful men; a sound faith makes an honest tongue. Hence there is no vice more hateful than jesuitry, nothing more shocking than the conduct of those who defend what they call "the truth" by disingenuous arts, by tricks of rhetoric and the shifts of an unscrupulous partisanship. "Will you speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?" *As Christ's truth is in me*, cries the apostle, when he would give the strongest possible assurance of the fact he wishes to assert. The social conventions and make-believes, the countless simulations and dissimulations by which the game of life is carried on, belong to the old man with his lusts of deceit,

to the universal lie that runs through all ungodliness and unrighteousness, which is in the last analysis the denial of God.

St. Paul applies here the words of Zechariah viii. 16, in which the prophet promises to restored Israel better days on the condition that they should "speak truth each with his neighbour, and judge truth and the judgment of peace in their gates. And let none of you," he continues, "imagine evil in his heart against his neighbour; and love no false oath, for all these things do I hate, saith the Lord." Such is the law of the New Covenant life. No doubt St. Paul is thinking of the intercourse of Christians with each other when he quotes this command and adds the reason, "For we are *members one of another*." But the word *neighbour*, as Jesus showed, has in the Christian vocabulary no limited import; it includes the Samaritan, the heathen man and publican. When the apostle bids his converts "Follow what is good towards one another, and towards all" (1 Thess. v. 15), he certainly presumes the neighbourly obligation of truthfulness to be no less comprehensive.

Believers in Christ represent a communion which in principle embraces all men. The human race is one family in Christ. For any man to lie to his fellow is, virtually, to lie to himself. It is as if the eye should conspire to cheat the hand, or the one hand play false to the other. Truth is the right which each man claims instinctively from his neighbour; it is the tacit compact that binds together all intelligences. Without neighbourly and brotherly love perfect truthfulness is scarcely possible. "Self-respect will never destroy self-seeking, which will always find in self-interest a side accessible to the temptations of falsehood" (Harless).

2. Like the first precept, the second is borrowed from the Old Testament and shaped to the uses of the New. "*Be ye angry*, and sin not": so the words of Psalm iv. 4 stand in the Greek version and in the margin of our Revised Bible, where we commonly read, "Stand in awe, and sin not. Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." The apostle's further injunction, that anger should be stayed before nightfall, accords with the Psalmist's words; the calming effect of the night's quiet the apostle anticipates in the approach of evening. As the day's heat cools and its strain is relaxed, the fires of anger should die down. With the Jews, it will be remembered, the new day began at evening. Plutarch, the excellent heathen moralist contemporary with St. Paul, gives this as an ancient rule of the Pythagoreans: "If at any time they happened to be provoked by anger to abusive language, before the sun set they would take each other's hands and embracing make up their quarrel." If Paul had heard of this admirable prescription, he would be delighted to recognise and quote it as one of those many facts of Gentile life which "show the work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. ii. 15). The passion which outlives the day, on which the angry man sleeps and that wakes with him in the morning, takes root in his breast; it becomes a settled rancour, prompting ill thoughts and deeds.

There is no surer way of tempting the devil to tempt us than to brood over our wrongs. Every cherished grudge is a "place given" to the tempter, a new entrenchment for the Evil One in his war against the soul, from which he may shoot his "fire-tipped darts" (vi. 16). Let us dismiss with each day the day's vexations, commending as evening falls our cares and griefs to the Divine compassion and seeking, as for ourselves, so for those who may have done us wrong, forgiveness and a better mind. We shall rise with the coming light armed with new patience and charity, to bring into the world's turmoil a calm and generous wisdom that will earn for us us the blessing of the peace-makers, who shall be called sons of God.

Still the apostle says: "*Be angry*, and sin not." He does not condemn anger in itself, nor wholly forbid it a place within the breast of the saint. Wrath is a glorious attribute of God,—perilous, indeed, for the best of men; but he who cannot be angry has no strength for good. The apostle knew this holy passion, the flame of Jehovah that burns unceasingly against the false and foul and cruel. But he knew its dangers—how easily an ardent soul kindled to exasperation forgets the bounds of wisdom and love; how strong and jealous a curb the temper needs, lest just indignation turn to sin, and Satan gain over us a double advantage, first by the wicked provocation and then by the uncontrolled resentment it excites.

3. From anger we pass to *theft*.

The eighth commandment is put here in a form indicating that some of the apostle's readers had been habitual sinners against it. Literally his words read: "Let him *that steals* play the thief no more." The Greek present participle does not, however, necessarily imply a pursuit now going on, but an habitual or characteristic pursuit, that by which the agent was known and designated: "Let the thief no longer steal!" From the lowest dregs of the Greek cities—from its profligate and criminal classes—the gospel had drawn its converts (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 9-11). In the Ephesian Church there were converted thieves; and Christianity had to make of them honest workmen.

The words of verse 28, addressed to a company of thieves, vividly shows the transforming effect of the gospel of Christ: "Let him toil, working with his hands what is good, that he may have wherewith to give to him that is in need." The apostle brings the loftiest motives to bear instantly upon the basest natures, and is sure of a response. He makes no appeal to self-interest, he says nothing of the fear of punishment, nothing even of the pride of honest labour. Pity for their fellows, the spirit of self-sacrifice and generosity is to set those pilfering and violent hands to unaccustomed toil. The appeal was as wise as it was bold. Utilitarianism will never raise the morally degraded. Preach to them thrift and self-improvement, show them the pleasures of an ordered home and the advantages of respectability, they will still feel that their own way of life pleases and suits them best. But let the divine spark of charity be kindled in their breast—let the man have love and pity and not self to work for, and he is a new creature. His indolence is conquered; his meanness changed to the noble sense of a common manhood. Love never faileth.

4. We have passed from speech to temper, and from temper to act; in the warning of verses 29, 30 we come back to speech again.

We doubt whether *corrupt talk* is here intended. That comes in for condemnation in verses 2 and 3 of the next chapter. The Greek adjective is the same that is used of the "*worthless* fruit"

of the "*worthless* [*good-for-nothing*] tree" in Matthew xii. 33; and again of the "*bad* fish" of Matthew xiii. 48, which the fisherman throws away not because they are corrupt or offensive, but because they are useless for food. So it is against *inane*, inept and useless talk that St. Paul sets his face. Jesus said that "for *every idle word* men must give account to God" (Matt. xii. 36).

Jesus Christ laid great stress upon the exercise of the gift of speech. "By thy words," He said to His disciples, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words condemned." The possession of a human tongue is an immense responsibility. Infinite good or mischef lies in its power. (With the tongue we should include the pen, as being the tongue's deputy.) Who shall say how great is the sum of injury, the waste of time, the irritation, the enfeeblement of mind and dissipation of spirit, the destruction of Christian fellowship that is due to thoughtless speech and writing? The apostle does not simply forbid injurious words, he puts an embargo on all that is not positively useful. It is not enough to say: "My chatter does nobody harm; if there is no good in it, there is no evil." He replies: "If you cannot speak to profit, be silent till you can."

Not that St. Paul requires all Christian speech to be grave and serious. Many a true word is spoken in jest; and "grace" may be "given to the hearers" by words clothed in the grace of a genial fancy and playful wit, as well as in the direct enforcement of solemn themes. It is the mere talk, whether frivolous or pompous —spoken from the pulpit or the easy chair—the incontinence of tongue, the flux of senseless, graceless, unprofitable utterance that St. Paul desires to arrest: "let it not proceed out of your mouth." Such speech must not "escape the fence of the teeth." It is an oppression to every serious listener; it is an injury to the utterer himself. Above all, it "grieves the Holy Spirit."

The witness of the Holy Spirit is the seal of God's possession in us; it is the assurance to ourselves that we are His sons in Christ and heirs of life eternal. From the day it is affixed to the heart, this seal need never be broken nor the witness withheld, "until the day of redemption." Dwelling within the Church as the guard of its communion, and loving us with the love of God, the Spirit of grace is hurt and grieved by foolish words coming from lips that He has sanctified. As Israel in its ancient rebellions "vexed His Holy Spirit" (Isa. lxiii. 10), so do those who burden Christian fellowship and who enervate their own inward life by speech without worth and purpose. As His fire is quenched by distrust (1 Thess. v. 19), so His love is vexed by folly. His witness grows faint and silent; the soul loses its joyous assurance, its sense of the peace of God. When our inward life thus declines, the cause lies not unfrequently in our own heedless speech. Or we have listened willingly and without reproof to "words that may do hurt," words of foolish jesting or idle gossip, of mischief and backbiting. The Spirit of truth retires affronted from His desecrated temple, not to return until the iniquity of the lips is purged and the wilful tongue bends to the yoke of Christ. Let us grieve before the Holy Spirit, that He be not grieved with us for such offences. Let us pray evermore: "Set a watch, O Jehovah, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

5. In his previous reproofs the apostle has glanced in various ways at love as the remedy of our moral disorders and defects. Falsehood, anger, theft, misuse of the tongue involve disregard of the welfare of others; if they do not spring from positive ill-will, they foster and aggravate it. It is now time to deal directly with this evil that assumes so many forms, the most various of our sins and companion to every other: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing be put away from you, with all malice."

The last of these terms is the most typical. *Malice* is badness of disposition, the aptness to envy and hatred, which apart from any special occasion is always ready to break out in bitterness and wrath. *Bitterness* is malice sharpened to a point and directed against the exasperating object. *Wrath* and *anger* are synonymous, the former being the passionate outburst of resentment in rage, the latter the settled indignation of the aggrieved soul: this passion was put under restraint already in verses 26, 27. *Clamour* and *railing* give audible expression to these and their kindred tempers. Clamour is the loud self-assertion of the angry man, who will make every one hear his grievance; while the railer carries the war of the tongue into his enemy's camp, and vents his displeasure in abuse and insult.

These sins of speech were rife in heathen society; and there were some amongst Paul's readers, doubtless, who found it hard to forego their indulgence. Especially difficult was this when Christians suffered all manner of evil from their heathen neighbours and former friends; it cost a severe struggle to be silent and "keep the mouth as with a bridle" under fierce and malicious taunts. Never to return evil for evil and railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing,—this was one of the lessons most difficult to flesh and blood.

Kindness in act, *tenderheartedness* of feeling are to take the place of malice with its brood of bitter passions. Where injury used to be met with reviling and insult retorted in worse insult, the men of the new life will be found "forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave" them. Here we touch the spring of Christian virtue, the master motive in the apostle's theory of life. The cross of Jesus Christ is the centre of Pauline ethics, as of Pauline theology. The sacrifice of Calvary, while it is the ground of our salvation, supplies the standard and incentive of moral attainment. It makes life *an imitation of God*.

The commencement of the new chapter at this point makes an unfortunate division; for its first two verses are in close consecution with the last verse of chap. iv. By kindness and pitifulness of heart, by readiness to forgive, God's "beloved children" will "show themselves imitators" of their Father. The apostle echoes the saying of His Master, in which the law of His kingdom was laid down: "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be called children of the Highest: for He is kind to the thankless and evil. Be ye therefore pitiful, as your Father is pitiful" (Luke vi. 35, 36). Before the cross of Jesus was set up, men could not know how much God loved the world and how far He was ready to go in the way of forgiveness. Yet Christ Himself saw the same love displayed in the Father's daily providence. He bids us imi-

tate Him who makes His sun shine and His rain fall on the just and unjust, on the evil and the good. To the insight of Jesus, nature's impartial bounties in which unbelief sees only moral indifference spoke of God's compassion; they proceed from the same love that gave His Son to taste death for every man.

In chapter iv. 32-v. 2 the Father's love and the Son's self-sacrifice are spoken of in terms precisely parallel. They are altogether one in quality. Christ does not by His sacrifice persuade an angry Father to love His children; it is the Divine compassion in Christ that dictates and carries into effect the sacrifice. At the same time it was "an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God." God is love; but love is not everything in God. Justice is also Divine, and absolutely in its own realm. Law can no more forego its rights than love forget its compassions. Love must fulfil all righteousness; it must suffer law to mark out its path of obedience, or it remains an effusive ineffectual sentiment, helpless to bless and save. Christ's feet followed the stern and straight path of self-devotion; "He humbled Himself and became obedient," He was "born under law." And the law of God imposing death as the penalty for sin, which shaped Christ's sacrifice, made it acceptable to God. Thus it was "an odour of a sweet smell."

Hence the love which follows Christ's example, is love wedded with duty. It finds in an ordered devotion to the good of men the means to fulfil the all-holy Will and to present in turn its "offering to God." Such love will be above the mere pleasing of men, above sentimentalism and indulgence; it will aim higher than secular ideals and temporal contentment. It regards men in their kinship to God and obligation to His law, and seeks to make them worthy of their calling. All human duties, for those who love God, are subordinate to this; all commands are summed up in one: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The apostle pronounced the first and last word of his teaching when he said: "Walk in love, as the Christ also loved us."

6. Above all others, one sin stamped the Gentile world of that time with infamy,—its *uncleanness*.

St. Paul has stigmatised this already in the burning words of verse 19. There we saw this vice in its intrinsic loathsomeness; here it is set in the light of Christ's love on the one hand (ver. 2), and of the final judgment on the other (vv. 5, 6). Thus it is banished from the Christian fellowship in every form—even in the lightest, where it glances from the lips in words of jest: "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not even be named among you." Along with "filthiness, foolish talk and jesting" are to be heard no more. Passing from verse 2 to verse 3 by the contrastive *But*, one feels how repugnant are these things to the love of Christ. The perfume of the sacrifice of Calvary, so pleasing in heaven, sweetens our life on earth; its grace drives wanton and selfish passions from the heart, and destroys the pestilence of evil in the social atmosphere. Lust cannot breathe in the sight of the cross.

The "good-for-nothing speech" of chapter iv. 29 comes up once more for condemnation in the *foolish speech* and *jesting* of this passage. The former is the idle talk of a stupid, the latter of a clever man. Both, under the conditions of heathen society, were tainted with foulness. Loose speech easily becomes low speech. Wit, unchastened by reverence, finds a tempting field for its exercise in the delicate relations of life, and displays its skill in veiled indecencies and jests that desecrate the purer feelings, while they avoid open grossness.

St. Paul's word for "jesting" is one of the singular terms of this epistle. By etymology it denotes a *well-turned* style of expression, the versatile speech of one who can touch lightly on many themes and aptly blend the grave and gay. This social gift was prized amongst the polished Greeks. But it was a faculty so commonly abused, that the word describing it fell into bad odour: it came to signify banter and persiflage; and then, still worse, the kind of talk here indicated,—the wit whose zest lies in its flavour of impurity. "The very profligate old man in the 'Miles Gloriosus' of Plautus (iii. 1. 42-52), who prides himself, and not without reason, upon his wit, his elegance and refinement [*cavillator lepidus, facetus*], is exactly the εὐτράπελος. And keeping in mind that εὐτραπελία, being only once expressly and by name forbidden in Scripture, is forbidden to Ephesians, it is not a little notable to find him urging that all this was to be expected from him, being as he was an Ephesian by birth:—

> "Post *Ephesi sum natus*; non enim in Apulia, non Animulæ."

In place of senseless prating and wanton jests —things unbefitting to a rational creature, much more to a saint—the Asian Greeks are to find in *thanksgiving* employment for their ready tongue. St. Paul's rule is not one of mere prohibition. The versatile tongue that disported itself in unhallowed and frivolous utterance, may be turned into a precious instrument for God's service. Let the fire of Divine love touch the jester's lips, and that mouth will show forth His praise which once poured out dishonour to its Maker and shame to His image in man.

7. At the end of the Ephesian catalogue of vices, as at the beginning (iv. 19), uncleanness is joined with *covetousness*, or *greed*.

This, too, is "not even to be named amongst you, as becometh saints." *Money! property!* these are the words dearest and most familiar in the mouths of a large class of men of the world, the only themes on which they speak with lively interest. But Christian lips are cleansed from the service both of Belial and of Mammon. When his business follows the trader from the shop to the fireside and the social circle, and even into the Church, when it becomes the staple subject of his conversation, it is clear that he has fallen into the low vice of covetousness. He is becoming, instead of a man, a money-making machine, an "idolater" of

> "Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
> From heaven."

The apostle classes the covetous man with the fornicator and the unclean, amongst those who by their worship of the shameful idols of the god of this world exclude themselves from their "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

A serious warning this for all who handle the world's wealth. They have a perilous war to wage, and an enemy who lurks for them at every step in their path. Will they prove themselves masters of their business, or its slaves? Will

they escape the golden leprosy,—the passion for accumulation, the lust of property? None are found more dead to the claims of humanity and kindred, none further from the kingdom of Christ and God, none more "closely wrapped" within their "sensual fleece" than rich men who have prospered by the idolatry of gain. Dives has chosen and won his kingdom. He "receives in his lifetime his good things"; afterwards he must look for "torments."

CHAPTER XXII.

DOCTRINE AND ETHICS.

EPHESIANS iv. 25-v. 6.

THE homily that we have briefly reviewed in the last chapter demands further consideration. It affords a striking and instructive example of St. Paul's method as a teacher of morals, and makes an important contribution to evangelical ethics. The common vices are here prohibited on specifically Christian grounds. The new nature formed in Christ casts them off as alien and dead things; they are the sloughed skin of the old life, the discarded dress of the old man who was slain by the cross of Christ and lies buried in His grave.

The apostle does not condemn these sins as being contrary to God's law: that is taken for granted. But the legal condemnation was ineffectual (Rom. viii. 3). The wrath revealed from heaven against man's unrighteousness had left that unrighteousness unchastened and defiant. The revelation of law, approved and echoed by conscience, taught man his guilt; it could do no more. All this St. Paul assumes; he builds on the ground of law and its acknowledged findings.

Nor does the apostle make use of the principles of philosophical ethics, which in their general form were familiar to him as to all educated men of the day. He says nothing of the rule of nature and right reason, of the intrinsic fitness, the harmony and beauty of virtue; nothing of expediency as the guide of life, of the inward contentment that comes from well-doing, of the wise calculation by which happiness is determined and the lower is subordinated to the higher good. St. Paul nowhere discountenances motives and sanctions of this sort; he contravenes none of the lines of argument by which reason is brought to the aid of duty, and conscience vindicates itself against passion and false self-interest. Indeed, there are maxims in his teaching which remind us of each of the two great schools of ethics, and that make room in the Christian theory of life both for the philosophy of experience and that of intuition. The true theory recognises, indeed, the experimental and evolutional as well as the fixed and intrinsic in morality, and supplies their synthesis.

But it is not the apostle's business to adjust his position to that of Stoics and Epicureans, or to unfold a new philosophy; but to teach the way of the new life. His Gentile disciples had been untruthful, passionate in temper, covetous, licentious: the gospel which he preached had turned them from these sins to God; from the same gospel he draws the motives and convictions which are to shape their future life and to give to the new spirit within them its fit expression. St. Paul has no quarrel with ethical science, much less with the inspired law of his fathers; but both had proved ineffectual to keep men from iniquity, or to redeem them fallen into it. Above them both, above all theories and all external rules he sets the law of the Spirit of life in Christ.

The originality of Christian ethics, we repeat, does not lie in its detailed precepts. There is not one, it may be, even of the noblest maxims of Jesus that had not been uttered by some previous moralist. With the New Testament in our hands, it may be possible to collect from non-Christian sources—from Greek philosophers, from the Jewish Talmud, from Egyptian sages and Hindoo poets, from Buddha and Confucius—a moral anthology which thus sifted out of the refuse of antiquity, like particles of iron drawn by the magnet, may bear comparison with the ethics of Christianity. If Christ is indeed the Son of man, we should expect Him to gather into one all that is highest in the thoughts and aspirations of mankind. Addressing the Athenians on Mars' Hill, the apostle could appeal to "certain of your own poets" in support of his doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. The noblest minds in all ages witness to Jesus Christ and prove themselves to be, in some sort, of His kindred.

> "They are but broken lights of Thee;
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they!"

It is Christ in us, it is the personal fellowship of the soul with Him and with the living God through Him, that forms the vital and constitutive factor of Christianity. Here is the secret of its moral efficacy. The Christ is the centre root of the race; He is the image of God in which we were made. The life-blood of mankind flowed in Him as in His heart, and poured forth from Him as from its fountain in sacrifice for the common sin. Jesus gathered into Himself and restored the virtue of humanity broken into a thousand fragments; but He did much more than this. While He re-created in His personal character our lost manhood, by His death and resurrection He has gained for that ideal a transcendent power that seizes upon men and regenerates and transforms them. "With unveiled face beholding in the mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image" (receiving the glory that we see), "as from the Lord of the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

There is, therefore, an evangelical ethics, a Christian science of life. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" has a system and method of its own. It has a rational solution and explanation to render for our moral problems. But its solution is given, as St. Paul and as his Master loved to give it, in practice, not in theory. It teaches the art of living to multitudes to whom the names of ethics and moral science are unknown. Those who understand the method of Christ best are commonly too busy in its practice to theorise about it. They are physicians tending the sick and the dying, not professors in some school of medicine. Yet professors have their use, as well as practitioners. The task of developing a Christian science of life, of exhibiting the truth of revelation in its theoretical bearings and its relations to the thought of the age, forms a part of the practical duties of the Church and touches deeply the welfare of souls. For other times this work has been nobly accomplished by Christian thinkers. Shall we not pray the

Lord of the harvest that He will thrust forth into this field fit labourers; that He will raise up men mighty through God to overthrow every high thing that exalts itself against His knowledge, and wise to build up to the level of the times the great fabric of Christian ethics and discipline?

There emerge in this exhortation four distinct principles, which lay at the basis of St. Paul's views of life and conduct.

I. In the first place, the fundamental truth of *the Fatherhood of God.* "Be imitators of God," he writes, "as beloved children." And in chapter iv. 24: "Put on the new man, which *was created after God.*"

Man's life has its law, for it has its source, in the nature of the Eternal. Behind our race-instincts and the laws imposed on us in the long struggle for existence, behind those imperatives of practical reason involved in the structure of our intelligence, are the presence and the active will of Almighty God our heavenly Father. His image we see in the Son of man.

Here is the fountainhead of truth, from which the two great streams of philosophical thought upon morals have diverged. If man is the child of a Being absolutely good, then moral goodness belongs to the essence of his nature; it is discoverable in the instincts of his reason and will. Were not our nature warped by sin, such reasoning must have commanded immediate assent and led to consistent and self-evident results. Again, if man is the *child* of God, the finite of the Infinite, his moral character must, presumably, have been in the beginning germinal rather than complete, needing—even apart from sin and its malformations—development and education, the discipline of a fatherly providence, inculcating the lessons and forming the habits which belong to his ripe manhood and full-grown stature. Intuitional morals bear witness to the God of creation; experimental morals to the God of providence and history. The Divine Fatherhood is the keystone of the arch in which they meet.

The command to "be imitators of God" makes *personality* the sovereign element in life. If consciousness is a finite and passing phenomenon, if God be but a name for the sum of the impersonal laws that regulate the universe, for the "stream of tendency" in the worlds, *Father* and *love* are meaningless terms applied to the Supreme and religion dissolves into an impalpable mist. Is the universe governed by personal will, or by impersonal force? Is reason, or is gravitation the index to the nature of the Absolute? This is the vital question of modern thought. The latter is the answer given by a large, if not a preponderant body of philosophical opinion in our own day,—as it was given, virtually, by the natural philosophers of Greece in the dawn of science. Man's triumphs over nature and the splendour of his discoveries in the physical realm bewilder his reason. The scientists, like other conquerors, have been intoxicated with victory. The universe, it seems, was about to yield to them its last secrets; they were prepared to analyse the human soul and resolve the conception of God into its material elements. Religion and conscience, however, prove to be intractable subjects in the physical laboratory; they are coming out of the crucible unchanged and refined. We are able by this time to take a more sober measure of the possibilities of the scientific method, and to see what inductive logic and natural selection can do for us, and what they cannot do. We can walk in the light of the new revelation, without being dazzled by it. Things are less altered than we thought. The old boundaries reappear. The spirit resumes its place, and rules a wider realm than before. Reason refuses to be the victim of its own success, and to immolate itself for the deification of material law. "Forasmuch as we are God's offspring," we ought not to think, and we will not think, that the Godhead is like to blind forces and reasonless properties of matter. Love, thought, will in us raise our being above the realm of the impersonal; and these faculties point us upward to Him from whom they came, the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

The great tide of joy, the victorious energy which the sense of God's love brings into the life of a Christian, is evidence of its reality. The believer is a child walking in the light of his Father's smile—dependent, ignorant, but the object of an Almighty love. A thousand tokens speak to him of the Divine care; his tasks and trials are sweetened by the confidence that they are appointed for wise ends beyond his present knowledge. To another in that same house there is no heavenly Father, no unseen hand that guides, no gleam of a brighter and purer day lighting up its dull chambers. There are human companions, weak, erring, and wearying like oneself. There is work to do, with the night coming swiftly; and the brave heart girds itself to duty, finding in the service of man its motive and employment—but, alas, with how poor success and how faint a hope!

It is not the loss of strength for human service, nor the dying out of joy which unbelief entails, that is its chief calamity; but the unbelief itself. The sun in the soul's heaven is put out. The personal relationship to the Supreme which gave dignity and worth to our individual being, which imparted sacredness and enduring power to all other ties, is destroyed. The heart is orphaned; the temple of the spirit is desolate. The mainspring of life is broken.

"Make haste to answer me, O Jehovah; my spirit faileth!
Hide not Thy face from me,
Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit!"

II. *The solidarity of mankind in Christ* furnishes the apostle with a powerful lever for raising the ethical standard of his readers. The thought that "we are members one of another" forbids deceit. That he may "have whereof to give to the needy" is the purpose that provokes the thief to industry. The desire to "give grace" to the hearers and to "build them up" in truth and goodness imparts seriousness and elevation to social intercourse. The irritations and injuries we inflict on each other, with or without purpose, furnish occasion for us to "be kind one to another, good-hearted, *forgiving yourselves*"—for this is the expression the apostle uses in chapter iv. 32, and in Colossians iii. 13. Self is so merged in the community, that in dealing censure or forgiveness to an offending brother the Christian man feels as though he were dealing with himself—as though it were the hand that forgave the foot for tripping, or the ear that pardoned some blunder of the eye.

Showing grace is what the apostle literally says

here, speaking both of human and Divine forgiveness. In this lie the charm and power of true forgiveness. The forgiver after the order of grace does not pardon like a judge moved by magnanimity or pity for transgressors, but in love to his own kind and desire for their amendment. He identifies himself with the wrong-doer, weighs his temptation and all that drew him into error. Such forgiveness, while it never ignores the wrong, admits every qualifying circumstance and just extenuation. This is the kind of pardon that touches the sinner's heart; for it goes to the heart of the sin, isolating it from all other feelings and conditions that are not sin; it takes the wrong upon itself in understanding and perception; it puts its finger upon the aching, festering spot where the criminality lies and applies to that its healing balm.

"Even as God in Christ forgave you." And how did God forgive? Not by a grand imperial decree, as of some monarch too exalted to resent the injuries of men or to inquire into their futile proceedings. Had such forgiveness been possible to Divine justice, it could have wrought in us no real salvation. Our forgiveness is that of God in Christ. The Forgiver has sat down by the prisoner's side, has felt his misery and the force of his temptations, and in everything but the actual sin has made Himself one with the sinner, even to bearing the extreme penalty of his guilt. In the act of making sacrifice, Jesus prayed for those that slew Him: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" This intercession breathed the spirit of the new forgiveness. There is a real remission of sins, a release granted justly and upon due satisfaction; but it is the act of justice charged with love, of a justice as tender and considerate as it is strong, and which eagerly takes account of all that bespeaks in the offender a possibility of better things. It is a forgiveness that does justice to the humanity as well as the criminality in the sinner.

To proclaim by word and deed this forgiveness of God to the sinful world is the vocation of the Church. And where she does thus declare it, by whatever means or ministry, Christ's promise to her is verified: "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them." We may so reconcile men to ourselves as to bring them back to God. Has some one done you a wrong? There is your opportunity of saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins. Thus Christ used the great wrong we all did Him. It is your privilege to show the wrong-doer that you and he are made one by the blood of Christ.

"Walk in love," St. Paul says, "as the Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us a sacrifice." When the apostle writes *the Christ*, he points us along the whole line of the revelation of the cross. We think of the Christhood of Jesus, of the Christliness of such love as this. Christ's was a representative and exemplary love, with its forerunners and its followers all walking in one path. "The Christ loved *and gave*"; for love that does not give, that prompts to no effort and puts itself to no sacrifice, is but a luxury of the heart,—useless and even selfish. And He "gave up *Himself*"—the only gift that could suffice. The rich who bestow many gifts in furtherance of humanitarian and religious work and still do not bestow themselves, their sympathetic thought, their presence and personal aid, are withholding the best thing, the one thing required to make their bounties efficacious. In what we give and forgive, it is the accent of sympathy, the giving of the heart with it that adds grace to the act. "Though I dole out all my goods, though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." We do a thousand things to serve and benefit our fellow-men, and yet evade the real sacrifice,—which is simply to love them.

In studying this epistle, we have felt increasingly that the Church is the centre of humanity. The love born and nourished in the household of faith goes out into the world with a universal mission. The solidarity of moral interests that is realised there, embraces all the kindreds of the earth. The incarnation of Christ knits all flesh into one redeemed family. The continents and races of mankind are members one of another, with Jesus Christ for head. We are brothers and sisters of humanity: He our elder brother, and God our common Father in heaven, —His Father and ours.

Auguste Comte writes in his "System of Positive Polity": "The promises of supernatural religion appealed exclusively to man's selfish instincts. . . . The sympathetic instincts found no place in the theological synthesis." It would be impossible to affirm anything more completely at variance with the truth, anything more absolutely opposed to the doctrine of Christ and the theological synthesis of the apostles. And yet it was upon this ground that the great French thinker renounced Christianity, proposing his new religion of humanity as a substitute for a selfish and effete supernaturalism! Why did he not go to the New Testament itself to find out what Christianity means? "To combine permanently concert with independence," Comte excellently says, "is the capital problem of society, a problem which religion alone can solve, by love primarily, then by faith on a basis of love." Precisely so; and this is the solution offered by Jesus Christ. His self-sacrificing love is the basis on which our faith rests; and that faith works by love in all those who truly possess it. This is the evangelical theory. The morale of the Church, it is true, has fallen shamefully below its doctrine; but this doctrine is, after all, the one fruitful and progressive moral force in the world; and it is certain to be carried into effect.

In the darkest hour of Israel's oppression and of international hate, one of her great prophets thus described the triumph of supernatural religion: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance" (Isai. xix. 24, 25). This is our programme still.

III. Another of St. Paul's ruling ideas lying at the basis of Christian ethics is his conception of *man's future destiny*. The apostle warns his readers that they "grieve not the Holy Spirit, in whom they were sealed till the day of redemption." He tells them that "the impure and the covetous have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

There is thus disclosed a world beyond the world, a life growing out of life, an eternal and invisible kingdom of whose possession the Spirit that lives in Christian men is the earnest

and firstfruits. This kingdom is the joint inheritance of the sons of God, brethren with Christ and in Christ, who are conformed to His image and found worthy to "stand before the Son of man." Those are excluded from the inheritance, who by their moral nature are alien to it: "Without are dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." This revelation has had a most powerful influence on the progress of ethics. It has given a momentous importance to individual conduct, a new grandeur to the moral issues of the present life. "Man's life," viewed in the light of the Christian gospel, "has duties that are alone great, that go up to Heaven, and down to Hell." The tangled skein is at last to be unravelled, the mysterious problem of mortal life will have its solution at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ.

It is true that the wicked flourish and spread themselves like green trees in the sunshine; and the covetous boast of their hearts' desire. To see this was the trial of ancient faith; and the good man had to charge himself constantly that he should not fret because of evil-doers. It required an heroic faith to believe in God's kingdom and righteousness, when the visible course of things made all against them, and there was no clear light beyond. God's saints had to learn first that God is Himself the sufficient good, and must be trusted to do right. But this was the faith of defence rather than of victory,—of endurance, not enthusiasm. In the knowledge of Christ's victory over death and entrance on our behalf into the heavenly world, "in hope of life eternal which God who cannot lie hath promised," men have fought against their own sins, have struggled for the right and spent themselves to save their fellows with a vigour and success never witnessed before, and in numbers far exceeding those that all other creeds and systems have enlisted in the holy cause of humanity.

Human reason had guessed and hope had dreamed of the soul's immortality. Christianity gives this hope certainty, and adds to it the assurance of the resurrection of the body. Man's entire nature is thus redeemed. Chastity takes its due place amongst the virtues, and becomes the mark of a Christian as distinguished from a pagan life. "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God who raised up the Lord Jesus, will raise us also through His power. Your bodies are limbs of Christ, . . . a temple of the Holy Spirit which you have from God. . . . Glorify God in your body." So St. Paul exhorts the Christians of Corinth (1 Cor. vi.), living in the centre and shrine of heathen vice. This doctrine of the sanctity of the body has been the salvation of the family. It has saved civilisation from perishing through sexual corruption, and is still our chief defence against this fearful evil.

Our bodily dress, we now learn, is one with the spirit that it infolds. We shall lay it aside only to resume it,—transfigured, but with a form and impress continuous with its present being. This identical self, the same both in its outward and inward personality, will appear before the tribunal of Christ, that it may "receive the things done in the body." This announcement gives reasonableness and distinctness to the expectation of future judgment. The judgment assumes, with its solemn grandeur, a matter-of-fact reality, an immediate bearing on the daily conduct of life, which lends a powerful reinforcement to the conscience, while it supplies a fitting and glorious conclusion to our course as moral beings.

IV. Finally, *the atonement of the cross* stamps its own character and spirit on the entire ethics of Christianity. The Fatherhood of God, the unity and solidarity of mankind, the issues of eternal life or death awaiting us in the unseen world—all the great factors and fundamentals of revealed religion gather about the cross of Christ; they lend to it their august significance, and gain from it new import and impressiveness.

The fact that Christ "gave Himself up for us an offering and sacrifice to God"—gave Himself, as it is put elsewhere, "for our sins"—throws an awful light upon the nature of human transgression. The blood spilt in the strife with our sin and shed to wash out its stain, reveals its foulness and malignity. All that inspired men had taught, that good men had believed and felt, and penitent men confessed in regard to the evil of human sin, is more than verified by the sacrifice which the Holy One of God has undergone in order to put it away. It was felt that "the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins," that the sacrifices man could offer for himself, or the creatures on his behalf, were ineffectual; the guilt was too real to be expiated in this fashion, the wound too deep to be healed by those poor appliances. But who had suspected that such a remedy as this was needed, and forthcoming? How deep the resentment of eternal Justice against the transgressions of men, if the blood of God's own Son alone could make propitiation! How rank the offence against the Divine holiness, if to purge its abomination the vessel containing the most sweet fragrance of His sinless nature must be broken! What tears of contrition, what cleansing fires of hate against our own sins, what scorn of their baseness, what stern resolves against them are awakened by the sight of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

This negative side of the ethical bearing of Christ's sacrifice is implied in the words of the apostle in the second verse, and in the contrast indicated between its sweet savour and those unclean things whose very names it should banish from our midst (ver. 3). On its positive effects—the love and self-devotion it inspires, the conformity of our lives to its example—we have dwelt already. Let us add, however, that the sacrifice of Christ demands from us, above all, *devotion to Christ Himself*. Our first duty as Christians is to love Christ, to serve and follow Christ. "He died for all," says the apostle, "that the living should live no longer to themselves, but to Him that died for them and rose again." When Mary of Bethany poured on the Saviour's head her box of precious ointment, the Master accepted the tribute and approved the act; and the poor have been gainers by it a thousand times the pence which Judas deemed wasted on the head he was watching to betray. There is no conflict between the claims of Christ and those of philanthropy, between the needs of His worship and the needs of the destitute and suffering in our streets. Every new subject won to the kingdom of Christ is another helper won for His poor. Every act of love rendered to Him deepens the channel of sympathy by which relief and blessing come to sorrowful humanity.

Let the gospel of Christ's kingdom be preached in word and deed to all nations, let the love of Christ be brought to bear upon the great masses of mankind, and the time of the world's salvation will be come. Its sin will be hated, forsaken, forgiven. Its social evils will be banished; its weapons of war turned to ploughshares and pruning hooks. Its scattered races and nations will be re-united in the obedience of faith, and formed into one Christian confederacy and commonwealth of the peoples, a peaceful kingdom of the Son of God's love.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT.

EPHESIANS v. 7-14.

THE contrast between the Christian and heathen way of life is now, finally, to be set forth under St. Paul's familiar figure of *the light and the darkness.* He bids his Gentile readers not to be "joint-partakers with them"—with the sons of disobedience upon whom God's wrath is coming (ver. 6)—for he has hailed them already, in chapter iii. 6, as "joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." "Once" indeed they shared in the lot of the disobedient; but for them the darkness has past, and the true light now shineth.

In wrath or promise, in hope of life eternal or in the fearful looking for of judgment they, and we, must partake. This future participation depends upon present character. "Do not," the apostle entreats, "cast in your lot again with the unclean and covetous. Their ways you have renounced, and their doom you have exchanged for the heritage of the saints. Let no vain words deceive you into supposing that you may keep your new inheritance, and yet return to your old sins. Show yourselves worthy of your calling. Walk as children of the light, and you will possess the eternal kingdom." Each man carries with him into the next state of being the entail of his past life. That heritage depends on his own choice; yet not upon his individual will working by itself, but on the grace and will of God working with him, as that grace is accepted or rejected. He has light: he must walk in it; and he will reach the realm of light. Thus the apostle, in verses 7 and 8, concludes his warning against relapse into heathen sin.

Verses 9 and 10 delineate *the character of the children of the light*: verses 11-14 set forth *their influence upon the surrounding darkness.* Into these two divisions the exposition of this paragraph naturally falls.

I. "The fruit *of the light*" (not *of the Spirit*) is the true text of verse 9, as it stands in the older Greek copies, Versions, and Fathers. Calvin showed his judgment and independence in preferring this reading to that of the received Greek text. Similarly Bengel,* and most of the later critics. The sentence is parenthetical, and contains a singular and instructive figure. It is one of those sparks from the anvil, in which great writers not unfrequently give us their finest utterances,—sentences that get a peculiar point from the eagerness with which they are struck off in the heat and clash of thought, as the mind reaches forward to some thought lying beyond. The clause is an epitome, in five words, of Christian virtue, whose qualities, origin, and method are all defined. It sums up exquisitely the moral teaching of the epistle. Galatians v. 22, 23 (*the fruit of the Spirit*) and Philippians iv. 8 (*Whatsoever things are true*, etc.) are parallel to this passage, as Pauline definitions, equally perfect, of the virtues of a Christian man. This has the advantage of the others in brevity and epigrammatic point.

"You are light in the Lord," the apostle said; "walk as children of the light." But his readers might ask: "What does this mean? It is poetry: let us have it translated into plain prose. How shall we walk as children of the light? Show us the path."—"I will tell you," the apostle answers: "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Walk in these ways; let your life bear this fruit; and you will be true children of the light of God. So living, you will find out what it is that pleases God, and how joyful a thing it is to please Him (ver. 10). Your life will then be free from all complicity with the works of darkness. It will shine with a brightness clear and penetrating, that will put to shame the works of darkness and transform the darkness itself. It will speak with a voice that all must hear, bidding them awake from the sleep of sin to see in Christ their light of life." Such is the setting in which this delightful definition stands.

But it is more than a definition. While this sentence declares what Christian virtue is, it signifies also whence it comes, how it is generated and maintained. It asserts the connection that exists between Christian character and Christian faith. The fruit cannot be grown without the tree, any more than the tree can grow soundly without yielding its proper fruit. *Right is the fruit of light.*

The principle that religion is the basis of moral virtue is one that many moralists disputed in St. Paul's time; and it has fallen into some discredit in our own. In philosophical theory, and to a large extent in popular maxim and belief, it is assumed that faith and morals, character and creed, are not only distinct, but independent things, and that there is no necessary connection between the two. Christians are themselves to blame for this fallacy, through the discrepancy not seldom visible between their creed and life. Our narrowness of view and the harshness of our ethical judgments have helped to foster this grave error.

Great Christian teachers have spoken of the virtues of the heathen as "splendid sins." But Christ and His Apostles never said so. He said: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold." And they said: "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." The Christian creed has no jealousy in regard to human excellence. "Whatsoever things are true and honourable and just and pure," wherever and in whomsoever they are found, our faith honours and delights in them, and accepts them to the utmost of their worth. But then it claims them all for its own,—as the fruit of the one "true light which lighteth every

* Mr. Wesley adopted this and other emendations from Bengel, "that great light of the Christian world," in the translation accompanying his "Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament." He there supplied the Methodist preachers with many of the most valuable improvements made in the Revised Version, a hundred years before the time.

man." Wherever this fruit appears, we know that that light has been, though its ways are past finding out. Through secret crevices, by subtle refractions and multiplied reflections, the true light reaches many a life lying far outside its visible course.

All goodness has one source; for, said Jesus, "there is none good but one, that is God." The channels may be tortuous, obstructed and obscure: the stream is always one. There is nothing more touching, and nothing more encouraging to our faith in God's universal love and His will that all men should be saved, than to see, as we do sometimes under conditions most adverse and in spots the most unlikely, features of moral beauty and Christlike goodness appearing like springs in the desert or flowers blooming in Alpine snows,—signs of the universal light,

> "Which yet in the absolutest drench of dark
> Ne'er wants its witness, some stray beauty-beam
> To the despair of hell!"

The action of God's grace in Christ is by no means limited to the sphere of its recognised working. All the more earnestly on this account do we vindicate this grace against those who deny its necessity or the permanence of its moral influence. The fruit, in the main, they approve. But they would cut down the plant from which it came; they seek to quench the light under which it grew. They are like men who should take you to some lofty tree that has flourished for ages rooted in the rock, and who should say: "See how wide its branches and how stout its stem, how firmly it stands upon its native soil! Let us cut it loose from those dark and ugly roots—that mysterious theology, those superstitions of the past. The human mind has outgrown them. Virtue can support itself on its own proper basis. It is time to assert the dignity of man, and to proclaim the independence of morality." If these men have their way, and if European society renounces the authority of God, how quickly will that tree of the Lord's planting, the vast growth of Christian virtue and beneficence, wither to its topmost bough; and the next storm will bring it to the ground, with all its stately strength and summer beauty. Unbelief in God lays the axe at the root of human society. Our life—the life of individuals, of families and nations—is rooted in the unseen and hid with Christ in God. Thence it draws its vitality and virtue, through those spiritual fibres by which we are linked to God and lay hold on eternal life. Since Christ Jesus our forerunner entered the heavenly places the anchor of human hope has been cast within the veil; if that anchor drags, there is no other that will hold. The rocks are plain to see on which our richly freighted ship of life will founder. Without the religion of Jesus Christ our civilisation is not worth a hundred years' purchase.

Moral effects do not follow upon their causes as rapidly as physical effects: they follow as certainly. We live largely upon the accumulated ethical capital of our forefathers. When that is spent, we are left to our intrinsic poverty of soul, to our faithlessness and feebleness. The scepticism of one generation bears fruit in the immorality of the next, or the next after that; the unbelief and cynicism of the teacher in the vice of his disciple. Such fruit of blasting and mildew the decay of faith has never failed to bear.

The corresponding truth will be at once acknowledged. There is no real religion without virtue. If the godly man is not a good man, if he is not a sincere and pure-hearted man, "that man's religion is vain": no matter what his professions or his emotions, no matter what his services to the Church. He is one of those to whom Jesus Christ will say: "I know you not; depart from me, all ye that work iniquity." There is a flaw in him somewhere, a rift within the lute that spoils all its music. "A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit."

In Christ's garden there forms in clustered beauty and perfectness the ripe growth of virtue, which in the sunshine of His love and under the freshening breath of His Spirit sends forth its spices and "yieldeth its fruit every month." In it there abide *goodness*, *righteousness*, *truth*—these three; and who shall say which of them is greatest?

1. *Goodness* stands first, as the most visible and obvious form of Christian excellence,—that which every one looks for in a religious man, and which every one admires when it is to be seen. Righteousness, regarded by itself, is not so readily appreciated. There is something austere and forbidding in it. "For a righteous man scarcely would one die"—you respect, even revere him; but you do not love him: "but for the good man peradventure, one would even dare to die."

Christian goodness is the sanctification of the heart and its affections, renewed and governed by the love of God in Christ. It is, notwithstanding, but seldom inculcated in the New Testament; because it is referred to its spring and principle in *love*. Goodness is love embodied. Now love, as the Christian knows it, is of God. "We love," says the apostle John, "because He first loved us. . . . He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is the faith that makes good men,—the best the world has ever known, the best that it holds now. Vanity, selfishness, evil temper and desire are shamed and burnt out of the soul by the holy fire of the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. In the warm, tender light of the cross the heart is softened and cleansed, and expanded to the widest charity. It becomes the home of all generous instincts and pure affections. So "the fruit of the light is in all goodness."

2. And *righteousness*.

This second and central definition applies a searching test to all spurious forms of goodness, superficial or sentimental,—to the goodness of mere good manners, or good nature. The principle of righteousness, fully understood, includes everything in moral worth, and is often used to denote in one word the entire fruit of God's grace in man. For righteousness is the sanctification of the conscience. It is loyalty to God's holy and perfect l r. It is no mere outward keeping of formal rules, such as the legal righteousness of Judaism, no submission to necessity or calculation of advantages: it is a love of the law in a man's inmost spirit; it is the quality of a heart one with that law, reconciled to it as it is reconciled to God Himself in Jesus Christ.

At the bottom, therefore, righteousness and goodness are one. Each is the counterface and complement of the other. Righteousness is to goodness as the strong backbone of principle, the firm hand and the vigorous grasp of duty, the steadfast foot that plants itself on the eternal

ground of the right and true and stands against a world's assault. Goodness without righteousness is a weak and fitful sentiment: righteousness without goodness is a dead formality. He cannot love God or his neighbour truly, who does not love God's law; and he knows nothing aright of that law, who does not know that it is the law of love.

This also, this above all is "the fruit of the light." Two watchwords we have from the lips of Jesus, two mottoes of His own life and mission,—the one given at the end, the other at the beginning of His course: "Greater *love* hath none than this, that one lay down his life for his friends"; and, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all *righteousness*." By a double flame was He consumed a sacrifice upon the cross,—by the passion of His zeal for God's righteousness, and by the passion of His pity for mankind. In that twofold light we see light, and become "light in the Lord." Therefore the fruit of the light, the moral product of a true faith in the gospel, is in all *goodness and righteousness*.

There is a danger of merging the latter in the former of these attributes. Evangelical piety is credited with an excess of the sentimental and emotional disposition, cultivated at the expense of the more sterling elements of character. High principle, scrupulous honour, stern fidelity to duty are no less essential to the image of Christ in the soul than are warm feeling and zealous devotion to his service. *Jesus Christ the righteous*, as His apostles loved to call Him, is the pattern of a manly faith, up to which we must grow in all things." "*He* is the propitiation for our sins." Never was there an act of such unswerving integrity and absolute loyalty to the law of right as the sacrifice of Calvary. God forbid that we should magnify love at the expense of law, or make good feeling a substitute for duty.

3. *Truth* comes last in this enumeration, for it signifies the inward reality and depth of the other two.

Truth does not mean veracity alone, the mere truth of the lips. Heathen honesty goes as far as this. Men of the world expect as much from each other, and brand the liar with their contempt. Truth of words requires a reality behind itself. The acted falsehood is excluded, the hinted and intended lie no less than that expressly uttered. Beyond all this is the truth of the man that God requires—speech, action, thought, all consistent, harmonious, and transparent, with the light of God's truth shining through them. Truth is the harmony of the inward and the outward, the correspondence of what the man is in himself with that which he appears and wishes to appear to be.

Now, it is only children of the light, only men thoroughly good and upright, who can, in this strict sense, be men of truth. So long as any malice or iniquity is left in our nature, we have something to conceal. We cannot afford to be sincere. We are compelled to pay, by very shame, the degrading tribute which vice renders to virtue, the homage of hypocrisy. But find a man whose intellect, whose heart and will, tried at whatever point, ring sound and true, in whom there is no affectation, no make-believe, no pretence or exaggeration, no discrepancy, no discord in the music of his life and thought, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile"—there is a saint for you, and a man of God: there is one whom you may "grapple to your soul with hooks of steel."

Truth is the hall-mark of entire sanctification; it is the highest and rarest attainment of the Christian life. It is equally the charm of an innocent, unspoilt childhood, and of a ripe and purified old age. The apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is the most perfect embodiment, after his Master, of this consummating grace. In him righteousness and love were blended in the translucence of an utter simplicity and truth.

We must beware of giving a subjective and merely personal aspect to this divine quality. While truth is the unity of the outward and inward, of heart and act and word in the man, it is at the same time the agreement of the man with the reality of things as they exist in God. The former kind of truth rests upon the latter; the subjective upon the objective order. The truth of God makes us true. We magnify our own sincerity until it becomes vitiated and pretentious. In our eagerness to realise and express our own convictions, we give too little pains to form them upon a sound basis; we make a great virtue of *speaking out* what is in our hearts, but take small heed of what *comes in* to the heart, and speak out of a loose self-confidence and idolatry of our own opinions. So the Pharisees were true, who called Christ an impostor. So every careless slanderer, and scandalmonger credulous of evil, who believes the lies he propagates. "Imagination has pictured to itself a domain in which every one who enters should be compelled to speak only what he thought, and pleased itself by calling such domain the Palace of Truth. A palace of veracity, if you will; but no temple of the truth. A place where each one would be at liberty to utter his own crude unrealities, to bring forth his delusions, mistakes, half-formed, hasty judgments; where the depraved ear would reckon discord harmony, and the depraved eye mistake colour; the depraved moral taste take Herod or Tiberius for a king, and shout beneath the Redeemer's cross, 'Himself He cannot save!' A temple of the truth? Nay, only a palace echoing with veracious falsehoods, a Babel of confused sounds, in which egotism would rival egotism, and truth would be each man's own lie." In the pride of our veracity, we miss the verity of things; we are true only to our blind self, false to the light of God. "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice:" so said He who was truth incarnate, making His word a law for all true men.

"In *all* goodness and righteousness and truth," says the apostle. Let us seek them all. We are apt to become specialists in virtue, as in other departments of life. Men will endeavour even to compensate by extreme efforts in one direction for deficiencies in some other direction, which they scarcely desire to make good. So they grow out of shape, into oddities and moral malformations. There is a want of balance and of finish about a multitude of Christian lives, even of those who have long and steadily pursued the way of faith. We have sweetness without strength, and strength without gentleness, and truth spoken without love, and words of passionate zeal without accuracy and heedfulness.

All this is infinitely sad, and infinitely damaging to the cause of our religion.

> It is the little rift within the lute
> That by-and-by will make the music mute,

> And ever widening slowly silence all;
> The little rift within the lover's lute,
> Or little pitted speck in garnered fruit,
> That rotting inward slowly moulders all."

Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged by the Lord. Let us count no wrong a trifle. Let us never imagine that our defects in one kin will be atoned for by excellences in another. Our friends may say this, in charity, for us; it is a fatal thing when a man begins to say so to himself. "May the God of peace sanctify you fully. May your whole spirit, soul, and body in blameless integrity be preserved to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. v. 23).

II. The *effect* upon surrounding darkness of the light of God in Christian lives is described in verses 11-14, in words which it remains for us briefly to examine.

Verse 12 distinguishes "the things secretly done" by the Gentiles, "of which it is a shame even to speak," from the open and manifest forms of evil in which they invite their Christian neighbours to join (ver. 11). Instead of doing this and "having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," they must "rather reprove them." Silent absence, or abstinence is not enough. Where sin is open to rebuke, it should at all hazards be rebuked. On the other hand, St. Paul does not warrant Christians in prying into the hidden sins of the world around them and playing the moral detective. Publicity is not a remedy for all evils, but a great aggravation of some, and the surest means of disseminating them. "It is a shame"—a disgrace to our common nature, and a grievous peril to the young and innocent—to fill the public prints with the nauseous details of crime and to taint the air with its putridities.

"But all things," the apostle says—whether it be those open works of darkness, profitless of good, which expose themselves to direct conviction, or the depths of Satan that hide their infamy from the light of day—"all things being reproved by the light, are made manifest" (ver. 13). The fruit of the light convicts the unfruitful works of darkness. The daily life of a Christian man amongst men of the world is a perpetual reproof, that tells against secret sins of which no word is spoken, of which the reprover never guesses, as well as against open and unblushing vices.

"This is the condemnation," said Jesus, "that light is come into the world." And this condemnation every one who walks in Christ's steps, and breathes His Spirit amid the corruptions of the world, is carrying on, more frequently in silence than by spoken argument. Our unconscious and spontaneous influence is the most real and effective part of it. Life is the light of men—words only are the index of the life from which they spring. Just so far as our lives touch the conscience of others and reveal the difference between darkness and light, so far do we hold forth the word of life and carry on the Holy Spirit's work of convincing the world of sin. "Let your light so shine."

This manifestation leads to a transformation: "For every thing that is made manifest *is light*" (ver. 13). "You are light in the Lord," St. Paul says to his converted Gentile readers,—you who were "once darkness," once wandering in the lusts and pleasures of the heathen around you, without hope and without God. The light of the gospel disclosed, and then dispelled the darkness of that former time; and so it may be with your still heathen kindred, through the light you bring to them. So it will be with the night of sin that is spread over the world. The light which shines upon sin-laden and sorrowful hearts shines on them to change them into its own nature. *The manifested is light:* in other words, if men can be made to see the true nature of their sin, they will forsake it. If the light can but penetrate their conscience it will save them. "Wherefore He saith:—

> "Awake, O sleeper; and arise from out of the dead!
> And the Christ shall dawn upon thee!"

The speaker of this verse can be no other than God, or the Spirit of God in Scripture. The sentence is no mere quotation. It re-utters, in the style of Mary's or Zechariah's song, the promise of the Old Covenant from the lips of the New. It gathers up the import of the prophecies concerning the salvation of Christ, as they sounded in the apostle's ears and as he conveyed them to the world. Isaiah lx. 1-3 supplies the basis of our passage, where the prophet awakens Zion from the sleep of the Exile and bids her shine once more in the glory of her God and show forth His light to the nations: "Arise," he cries, "shine, for thy light is come!" There are echoes in the verse, besides, of Isaiah li. 17, xxvi. 19; perhaps even of Jonah i. 6: "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God!" We seem to have here, as in chapter iv. 4-6, a snatch of the earliest Christian hymns. The lines are a free paraphrase from the Old Testament, formed by weaving together Messianic passages—belonging to such a hymn as might be sung at baptisms in the Pauline Churches. Certainly those Churches did not wait until the second century to compose their hymns and spiritual songs (comp. ver. 19). Our Lord's sublime announcement (John v. 25), already verified, that "the hour had come when the dead should hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard should live," gave the key to the prophetic sayings which promised through Israel the light of life to all nations.

With this song on her lips the Church went forth, clad in the armour of light, strong in the joy of salvation; and darkness and the works of darkness fled before her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NEW WINE OF THE SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS v. 15-21.

VERY solemnly did the moral homily to the Asian Christians begin in chapter iv. 17: "This therefore I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles walk." So much has now been said and testified in the intervening paragraphs, by way both of dehortation and exhortation. Here the apostle pauses; and casting his eye over the whole pathway of life he has marked out in this discourse, he bids his readers: "Look then carefully how you walk. Show that you are not fools, but wise to observe your steps and to seize your opportunities in these evil times,—days so perilous that you need your best wisdom and knowledge of God's will to save you from fatal stumbling."

So far St. Paul's renewed exhortation, in

verses 15-17, inculcates care and wary discretion, —the skill that in the strategy of life finds its vantage in unequal ground, that makes opposing winds help forward the seafarer. In this sober wisdom it is likely the Asian Christians were deficient. In many ways, both directly and indirectly, the need of increased thoughtfulness on the readers' part has been indicated. But there is another side to the Christian nature: it has its moods of exhilaration, as well as of caution and reflection; ardent emotion, eager speech, and exultant song are things proper to a high religious life. For these the apostle makes room in verses 18-20, while the three foregoing verses enjoin the circumspection and vigilance that become the good soldier of Christ Jesus.

A striking contrast thus arises between the *sobriety* and the *excitement* that mark the life of grace. We see with what strictness we must watch ourselves, and guard the character and interests of the Church; and with what joyousness and holy freedom we may take our part in its communion. Temperament and constitution modify these injunctions in their personal application. The Holy Spirit does not enable us all to speak with equal fervour and freedom, nor to sing with the same tunefulness. His power operates in the limbs of Christ's body "according to the measure of each single part." But the self-same Spirit works in both these contrasted ways,—in the sanguine and the melancholic disposition, in the demonstrative and in the reserved, in the quick play of fancy and the brightness and impulsiveness of youth no less than in the sober gait and solid sense of riper age. Let us see how the two opposite aspects of Christian experience are set out in the apostle's words.

I. First of all, upon the one side, *heedfulness* is enjoined. The children of light must use the light to see their way. To "stumble at noonday" is a proof of folly or blindness. So misusing our light, we shall quickly lose it and return to the paths of darkness.

According to the preferable (Revised) order of the words, the qualifying adverb "carefully" belongs to the "look," not to the "walk." The circumspect *look* precedes the wise step. The spot is marked on which the foot is to be planted; the eye ranges right and left and takes in the bearings of the new position, forecasting its possibilities. "Look before you leap," our sage proverb says. According to the carefulness of the look, the success of the leap is likely to be.

There is no word in the epistle more apposite than this to

> "our day
> Of haste, half-work, and disarray."

We are too restless to think, too impatient to learn. Everything is sacrificed to speed. The telegraph and the daily newspaper symbolise the age. The public ear loves to be caught quickly and with new sensations: a premium is set on carelessness and hurry. Earnest men, eager for the triumph of a good cause, push forward with unsifted statements and unweighed denunciations, that discredit Christian advocacy and wound the cause of truth and charity. Time, thus wronged and driven beyond her pace, has her revenge; she deals hardly with these light judgments of the hour. They are as the chaff which the wind carrieth away. After all, it is still truth that lives; thorough work that lasts; accuracy that hits the mark. And the time-servers are "unwise," both intellectually and morally. They are most unwise who think to succeed in life's high calling without self-distrust, and without scrupulous care and pains in all work they do for the kingdom of God.

In the evil of his own times St. Paul sees a special reason for heedfulness: "Walk not as unwise, but as wise, buying up the opportunity, *because the days are evil.*" In Colossians iv. 5 the parallel sentence shows that in giving this caution he is thinking of the relation of Christians to the outside world: "Walk in wisdom toward those without, buying up the opportunity." Evil days they were, when Paul lay in Nero's prison; when that wild beast was raging against everything that resisted his mad will or reproved his monstrous vices. With supreme power in the hands of such a creature of Satan, who could tell what fires of persecution were kindling for the people of Christ, or what terrible revelation of God's anger against the present evil world might be impending. At Ephesus the spirit of heathenism had shown itself peculiarly menacing. Here, too, in the rich and cultivated province of Asia where the currents of Eastern and Western thoughts met, heresy and its corruptions made their first decided appearance in the Churches of the Gentiles. Conflicts are approaching which will try to the uttermost the strength of the Christian faith and the temper of its weapons (vi. 10-16).

As wise men, reading thoughtfully the signs of the times, the Asian Christians will "redeem the [present] season." They will use to the utmost the light given them. They will employ every means to increase their knowledge of Christ, to confirm their faith and the habits of their spiritual life. They are like men expecting a siege, who strengthen their fortifications and furbish their weapons and practise their drill and lay up store of supplies, that they may "stand in the evil day." Such wisdom Ecclesiastes preaches to the young man: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, or ever the evil days come."

Within a year after this epistle was penned, Rome was burnt and the crime of its burning washed out, at Nero's caprice, in Christian blood. In four years more St. Paul and St. Peter had died a martyr's death at Rome; and Nero had fallen by the assassin's hand. At once the empire was convulsed with civil war; and the year 68-69 was known as that of the Four Emperors. Amid the storms threatening the ruin of the Roman State, the Jewish war against Rome was carried on, ending in the year 70 with the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish temple and nationality. These were the days of tribulation of which our Lord spoke, "such as had not been since the beginning of the world" (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22). The entire fabric of life was shaken; and in the midst of earthquake and tempest, blood and fire, Israel met its day of judgment and the former age passed away. In the year 63, when the apostle wrote, the sky was everywhere red and lowering with signs of coming storm. None knew where or how the tempest might break, or what would be its issue.

When men amid evil days and portents of danger must be told not to be "foolish" nor "drunken with wine," one is disposed to tax

them with levity. It was difficult for these Asian Greeks to take life seriously, and to realise the gravity of their situation. St. Paul appeals to them by their duty, still more than by their danger: "Be not foolish, but understand what *the will of the Lord* is." As he bade the Thessalonians consider that chastity was not matter of choice and of their own advantage only, it was "God's will" (1 Thess. iv. 3), so the Ephesians must understand that Christ is no mere adviser, nor the Christian life an optional system that men may adopt when and so far as it suits them. He is our Lord; and it is our business to understand, in order that we may execute, His designs. For this Christ's servants require a watchful eye and an alert intelligence. They must be no dullards nor simpletons, who would enter into the Divine Master's plans; no triflers, no creatures of sentiment and impulse, who are to be the agents of His will. He can and does employ every sincere heart that gives itself in love to Him. But His nobler tasks are for the wise taught by His Spirit, for those who can "understand," with penetrating sympathy and breadth of comprehension, "what the will of the Lord is." Hence the distinction of St. Paul himself, and of John the beloved disciple, amongst His ministers and witnesses,—men great in mind as they were in heart, whose thoughts about Christ were as grand as their love to Him was fervent.

Nowhere does the apostle say so much of "the will of God" in regard to the dispensation of grace as he does in this epistle. For he sees life and salvation here in their largest bearings and proportions. He prayed at the outset that the Gentile readers might realise the value that God puts upon them, and the mighty forces He has set at work for their salvation (i. 18-20); and again, that they might comprehend the vast dimensions of His plan for the building of the Church (iii. 18). Now that he has shown the relation of this eternal purpose to the character and everyday life of the converted Gentiles, "the will of God" becomes matter of immediate import; it is revealed in its bearing upon conduct, upon the affairs of business and society. It is not the purpose, the promises, the doctrine of the Lord alone, but "the *will* of the Lord" that they have to understand, as it touches their spirit and behaviour day by day. They must realise the practical demands of their religion, —how it is to make them fruitful, gracious, pure, and wise. They must translate creed into life and act. Such is the wisdom which their apostle strives to instil into the Asian Christians. Their first need was spiritual enlightenment; their second need was moral intelligence. Might they only have sense to understand and loyalty to obey the will of Christ.—And oh may we!

II. There were converted thieves in the Ephesian Church, who still needed to be warned against their old propensities (iv. 28); there were men who had been sorcerers and fortune-tellers (Acts xix. 18, 19). It appears that there were in this circle converted *drunkards* also, men to whom the apostle is obliged say: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot."

In view of the following context (vv. 19-21), and remembering how the Lord's table was defiled by excess at Corinth (1 Cor. xi. 17-34), it seems to us probable that the warning of verse 18 had special reference to the Christian assemblies. The institution of the common meal, the *Agapé* or Lovefeast accompanying the Lord's Supper, suited the manners of the early Christians, and was long continued. The cities of Asia Minor were full of trade guilds and clubs for various social and religious purposes, in which the common supper, or club-feast, furnished usually by each member bringing his contribution to the table, was a familiar bond of fellowship. This afforded to the Church a natural and pleasant means of intercourse; but it must be purified from sensual indulgence. *Wine* was its chief danger.

The eastern coast of the Ægean is an ancient home of the vine. And the Greeks of the Asian towns, on those bright shores and under their genial sky, were a lighthearted, sociable race. They sought the wine-cup, not for animal indulgence, but as a zest to good-fellowship and to give a freer flow to social joys. This was the influence that ruled their feasts, that loosened their tongues and inspired their gaiety. Hence their wit was prone to become ribaldry (ver. 4); and their songs were the opposite of the "spiritual songs" that gladden the feasts of the Church (ver. 19). The quick imagination and the social instincts of the Ionian Greeks, the aptness for speech and song native to the land of Homer and Sappho, were gifts not to be repressed, but sanctified. The lyre is to be tuned to other strains; and poetry must draw its inspiration from a higher source. Dionysus and his reeling Fauns give place to the pure Spirit of Jesus and the Father. "The Aonian mount" must now pay tribute to "Sion hill"; and the fountain of Castalia yields its honours to

> "Siloa's brook that flowed
> Fast by the oracle of God."

Our nature craves excitement,—some stimulus that shall set the pulse dancing and thrill the jaded frame, and lift the spirit above the task-work of life and the dreary and hard conditions which make up the daily lot of multitudes. It is this craving that gives to strong drink its cruel fascination. Alcohol is a mighty magician. The tired labouring man, the household drudge shut up in city courts refreshed by no pleasant sight or cheering voice, by its aid can leave fretted nerves and aching limbs and dull care behind, and taste, if it be only for a feverish moment, of the joy of bounding life. Can such cravings be hindered from seeking their relief? The removal of temptation will accomplish little, unless higher tastes are formed and springs of purer pleasure opened to the masses for whom our civilisation makes life so drab and colourless. "One finds traces of the primitive greatness of our nature even in its most deplorable errors. Just as impurity proceeds at the bottom from an abuse of the craving for love, so drunkenness betrays a certain demand for ardour and enthusiasm, which in itself is natural and even noble. . . . Man loves to *feel* himself alive; he would fain live twice his life at once; and he would rather draw excitement from horrible things than have no excitement at all" (Monod).

For the drunkards of Ephesus the apostle finds a cure in the joys of the Holy Ghost. The mightiest and most moving spring of feeling is in the spirit of man kindred to God. There is a deep excitement and refreshment, a "joy that human thought transcends," in the love of God shed abroad in the heart and the communion of true saints, which makes sensuous

delights cheap and poor. Toil and care are forgotten, sickness and trouble seem as nothing; we can glory in tribulation and laugh in the face of death, when the strong wine of God's consolation is poured into the soul.

"Be filled with the Spirit," says the apostle —or more strictly, "filled *in* the Spirit"; since the Holy Spirit of God is the element of the believer's life, surrounding while it penetrates his nature: it is the atmosphere that he breathes, the ocean in which he is immersed. As a flood fills up the river-banks, as the drunkard is filled with the wine that he drains without limit, so the apostle would have his readers yield themselves to the tide of the Spirit's coming and steep their nature in His influence. The Greek imperative, moreover, is present, and "describes this influence as ever going forth from the Spirit" (Beet). This is to be a continual replenishment. Paul has prayed that we may "be filled unto all the fulness of God" (iii. 19), and has bidden us grow "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (iv. 13) in whom we "are made full" (Col. ii. 9): in the replenishment of the Spirit the fulness of God in Christ is sensibly imparted. God's fulness is the hidden and eternal spring of all that can fill our nature; Christ's fulness is its revelation and renewed communication to the race; the Holy Spirit's fulness is its abiding energy within the soul and within the Church. Thus possessed, the Church is truly the body of Christ (iv. 4), and the habitation of God (ii. 21, 22).

The words of verses 19, 20 show that St. Paul is thinking of that presence of the Spirit in the Christian community, which is the spring of its affections and activities. The Spirit of Jesus, the Son of man, is a kindly gracious Spirit, the guardian of brotherhood and friendship, the inspirer of pure social joys and genial converse. The joy in the Holy Ghost that in its warmth and freshness filled the hearts of the first Christians, soared upward on the wings of song. Their very talk was music: they "spoke to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with their heart to the Lord." Love loves to sing. Its joys

> "from out our hearts arise,
> And speak and sparkle in our eyes,
> And vibrate on our tongue."

All exalted sentiment tends to rhythmical expression. There is a mystical alliance, which is amongst the most significant facts in our constitution, between emotion and art. The rudest natures, touched by high feeling, will shape themselves to some sort of beauty, to some grace and refinement of expression. Each new stirring of the pulse of man's common life has been marked by a re-birth of poetry and art. The songs of Mary and Zechariah were the parents and patterns of a multitude of holy canticles. In the Psalms of Scripture the New Testament Church found already an instrument of wide compass strung and tuned for her use. We can imagine the delight with which the Gentile Christians would take up the Psalter and draw out one and another of its pearls, and would in turn recite them at their meetings, and adapt them to their native measures and modes of song. After a while, they began to mix with the praise-songs of Israel newer strains —"hymns" to the glory of Christ and the Father, such as that with which this epistle opens, needing but little change in form to make it a true poem, and such as those which break in upon the dread visions of the Apocalypse; and added to these, "spiritual songs" of a more personal and incidental character, like Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* or Paul's swan-song in his last letter to Timothy. In verse 14 above we detected, as we thought, an early Church paraphrase of the Old Testament. In later epistles addressed to Ephesus, there are fragments of just such artless chants as the Asian Christians, exhorted and taught by their apostle, were wont to sing in their assemblies: see 1 Timothy iii. 16, and 2 Timothy ii. 11-13.

Upon this congenial soil, we trace the beginnings of Christian psalmody. The parallel text of Colossians (iii. 16) discloses in the songs of the Pauline Churches a didactic as well as a lyric character. The apostle bids his readers "*teach and admonish* one another by psalms, hymns, spiritual songs." The form of the sentence of chapter iv. 4-6 in this letter, and of 1 Timothy iii. 16, suggests that these passages were destined for use as a chanted rehearsal of Christian belief. Thus "the word of Christ dwelling richly" in the heart, poured itself freely from the lips, and added to its grave discourse the charms of gladdening and spirit-stirring song.

As in their heathen days they were used to "speak to each other," in festive or solemn hours, with hymns to Artemis of the Ephesians, or Dionysus giver of the vine, or to Persephone sad queen of the dead—in songs merry and gay, too often loose and wanton; in songs of the dark underworld and the grim Furies and inexorable Fate, that told how life fleets fast and we must pluck its pleasures while we may;—so now the Christians of Ephesus and Colossæ, of Pergamum and of Smyrna would sing of the universal Father whose presence fills earth and sky, of the Son of His love, His image amongst men, who died in sacrifice for their sins and asked grace for His murderers, of the joys of forgiveness and the cleansed heart, of life eternal and the treasure laid up for the just in the heavenly places, of Christ's return in glory and the judgment of the nations and the world quickly to dissolve and perish, of a brotherhood dearer than earthly kindred, of the saints who sleep in Jesus and in peace await His coming, of the Good Shepherd who feeds His sheep and leads them to fountains of living water calling each by his name, of creation redeemed and glorified by His love, of pain and sorrow sanctified and the trials that make perfect in Christ's discipline, of the joy that fills the heart in suffering for Him, and the vision of His face awaiting us beyond the grave. So reciting and chanting—now in single voice, now in full chorus —singing the Psalms of David to their Greek music, or hymns composed by their leaders, or sometimes improvised in the rapture of the moment, the Churches of Ephesus and of the Asian cities lauded and glorified "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and the counsels of redeeming love. So their worship and fellowship were filled with gladness. Thus in their great Church meetings, and in smaller companies, many a joyous hour passed; and all hearts were cheered and strengthened in the Lord.

"Singing and *playing*," says the apostle. For music aided song; voice and instrument blended in His praise whose glory claims the tribute

of all creatures. But it was "with the heart," even more than with voice or tuneful strings, that melody was made. For this inward music the Lord listens. Where other skill is wanting and neither voice nor hand can take its part in the concert of praise, He hears the silent gratitude, the humble joy that wells upward when the lips are still or the full heart cannot find expression.

But the Spirit who dwelt in the praises of the new Israel was not confined to its public assemblings. The people of Christ should be "*always giving thanks*, for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is one of St. Paul's commonest injunctions. "In *everything* give thanks," he wrote to the Thessalonians in his earliest extant letter (1 Thess. v. 18). "For all things," he says to the Ephesians,—"though fallen on evil days." Do we not "know that to them that love God all things work together for good"—evil days as well as good days? Nothing comes altogether amiss to the child of God. In the heaviest loss, the severest pain, the sharpest sting of injury—"in everything" the ingenuity of love and the sweetness of patience will find some token of mercy. If the evil is to our eyes all evil and we can see in it no reason for thanksgiving, then faith will give thanks for that which we "know not now, but shall know hereafter."

Always, the apostle says,—*for all things!* No room for a moment's discontent. In this perfecting of praise he had himself undergone a long schooling in his four years' imprisonment. Now, he tells us, he "has learnt the secret of contentment, in whatsoever state" (Phil. iv. 12). Let us try to learn it from him. These words, which we treat, almost unconsciously, as the exaggeration of homiletical appeal, state no more than the sober possibility, the experience attained by many a Christian in circumstances of the greatest suffering and deprivation. The love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord suffices for the life and joy of man's spirit.

The twenty-first verse, which seems to belong to a different line of thought, in reality completes the foregoing paragraph. In the Corinthian Church, as we remember, with its affluence of spiritual gifts, there were so many ready to prophesy, so many to sing and recite, that confusion arose and the Church meetings fell into disedifying uproar (1 Cor. xiv. 26-34). The apostle would not have such scenes occur again. Hence when he urges the Asian Christians to seek the full inspiration of the Spirit and to give free utterance in song to the impulses of their new life, he adds this word of caution: "being subject to one another in fear of Christ." He reminds them that "God is not the author of confusion." His Spirit is a Spirit of seemliness and reverence. "In fear of Christ," the unseen witness and president of its assemblies, the Church will comport herself with the decorum that befits His bride. The spirits of the prophets will be subject to the prophets. The voices of the singers and the hands of them that play upon the strings of the harp or the keys of the organ, will keep tune with the worship of Christ's congregation. Each must consider that it is his part to serve and not rule in the service of God's house.

In our common work and worship, in all the offices of life this is the Christian law. No man within Christ's Church, however commanding his powers, may set himself above the duty of submitting his judgment and will to that of his fellows. In mutual subjection lies our freedom, with our strength and peace.

ON FAMILY LIFE.

Ephesians v. 22-vi. 9.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE.

Ephesians v. 22-33.

In mutual subjection the Christian spirit has its sharpest trials and attains its finest temper. "Be subject one to another," was the last word of the apostle's instructions respecting the "walk" of the Asian Churches. By its order and subjection the gifts of all the members of Christ's body are made available for the upbuilding of God's temple. The inward fellowship of the Spirit becomes a constructive and organising force, reconstituting human life and framing the world into the kingdom of Christ and God. "In fear of Christ" the loyal Christian man submits himself to the community; not from the dread of human displeasure, but knowing that he must give account to the Head of the Church and the Judge of the last day, if his self-will should weaken the Church's strength and interrupt her holy work. "For the Lord's sake" His freemen submit to every ordinance of men. This is such a fear as the servant has of a good master (vi. 5), or the true wife for a loving husband (ver. 33),—not that which "perfect love casts out," but which it deepens and sanctifies.

Of this subjection to Christ the relationship of marriage furnishes an example and a mirror. St. Paul passes on to the new topic without any grammatical pause, verse 22 being simply an extension of the participial clause that forms ver. 21: "Being in subjection to one another in fear of Christ—ye wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The relation of the two verses is not that of the particular to the general, so much as that of image and object, of type and antitype. Submission to Christ in the Church suggests by analogy that of the wife to her husband in the house. Both have their origin in Christ, in whom all things were created, the Lord of life in its natural as well as in its spiritual and regenerate sphere (Col. i. 15-17). The bond that links husband and wife, lying at the basis of collective human existence, has in turn its ground in the relation of Christ to humanity.

The race springs not from a unit, but from a united pair. The history of mankind began in wedlock. The family is the first institution of society, and the mother of all the rest. It is the life-basis, the primitive cell of the aggregate of cities and bodies politic. In the health and purity of household life lies the moral wealth, the vigour and durability of all civil institutions. The mighty upgrowth of nations and the great achievements of history germinated in the nursery of home and at the mother's breast. Christian marriage is not an expedient—the last of

many that have been tried—for the satisfaction of desire and the continuance of the human species. The Institutor of human life laid down its principle in the first frame of things. Its establishment was a great prophetic mystery (ver. 32). Its law stands registered in the eternal statutes. And the Almighty Father watches over its observance with an awful jealousy. Is it not written: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge"; and again, "The Lord is an avenger concerning all these things"?

St. Paul rightly gives to this subject a conspicuous place in this epistle of Christ and the Church. The corner-stone of the new social order which the gospel was to establish in the world lies here. The entire influence of the Church upon society depends upon right views on the relationship of man and woman and on the ethics of marriage.

In wedlock there are blended most completely the two principles of association amongst moral beings,—viz., authority and love, submission and self-surrender.

I. On the one side, *submission to authority.*

"Wives, be in subjection, as to the Lord,"—as is fitting in the Lord (Col. iii. 18). Again, in 1 Timothy ii. 11, 12, the apostle writes: "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion," or (as the word may rather signify) "to act independently of the man." Were these directions temporary and occasional? Were they due, as one hears it suggested, to the uneducated and undeveloped condition of women in the apostle's time? Or do they not affirm a law that is deeply seated in nature and in the feminine constitution? The words of 1 Corinthians xi. 2-15 show that, in the apostle's view of life, this subordination is fundamental. "The head of woman is the man," as "the head of every man is the Christ" and "the head of Christ is God." "The woman," he says, "is of the man," and "was created because of the man." Whether these sentences square with our modern conceptions or not, there they stand, and their import is unmistakable. They teach that in the Divine order of things it is the man's part to lead and rule, and the woman's part to be ruled. But the Christian woman will not feel that there is any loss or hardship in this. For in the Christian order, ambition is sin. To obey is better than to rule. She remembers who has said: "I am amongst you as he that serveth." The children of the world strive for place and power; but "it shall not be so amongst you."

Such subordination implies no inferiority, rather the opposite. A free and sympathetic obedience—which is the true submission—can only subsist between equals. The apostle writes: "Children, obey; . . . Servants, obey" (vi. 1, 5); but "Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord." The same word denotes submission within the Church, and within the house. It is here that Christianity, in contrast with Paganism, and notably with Mohammedanism, raises the weaker sex to honour. In soul and destiny it declares the woman to be man, endowed with all rights and powers inherent in humanity. "In Christ Jesus there is no male and female," any more than there is "Jew and Greek" or "bond and free." The same sentence which broke down the barriers of Jewish caste, and in course of time abolished slavery, condemned the odious assumptions of masculine pride. It is one of the glories of our faith that it has enfranchised our sisters, and raises them in spiritual calling to the full level of their brothers and husbands. Both sexes are children of God by the same birthright; both receive the same Holy Spirit, according to the prediction quoted by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . Yea, on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour out my Spirit, saith the Lord" (Acts ii. 17, 18). This one point of headship, of public authority and guidance, is reserved. It is the point on which Christ forbids emulation amongst His people.

Christian courtesy treats the woman as "the glory of the man"; it surrounds her from girlhood to old age with protection and deference. This homage, duly rendered, is a full equivalent for the honour of visible command. When, as it happens not seldom in the partnership of life, the superior wisdom dwells with the weaker vessel, the golden gift of persuasion is not wanting, by which the official ruler is guided, to his own advantage, and his adviser accomplishes more than she could do by any overt leadership. The chivalry of the Middle Ages, from which the refinement of European society takes its rise, was a product of Christianity grafted on the Teutonic nature. Notwithstanding the folly and excess that were mixed with it, there was a beautiful reverence in the old knightly service and championship of women. It humanised the ferocity of barbarous times. It tamed the brute strength of warlike races and taught them honour and gentleness. Its prevalence marked a permanent advance in civilisation.

Shall we say that this law of St. Paul is that laid down specifically for *Christian* women? is it not rather a law of nature—the intrinsic propriety of sex, whose dictates are reinforced by the Christian revelation? The apostle takes us back to the creation of mankind for the basis of his principles in dealing with this subject (ver. 31). The new commandments are the old which were in the world from the beginning, though concealed and overgrown with corruption. Notwithstanding the debasement of marriage under the non-Christian systems, the instincts of natural religion taught the wife her place in the house and gave rise to many a graceful and appropriate custom expressive of the honour due from one sex to the other. So the apostle regarded the man's bared and cropped head and the woman's flowing tresses as symbols of their relative place in the Divine order (1 Cor. xi. 13-15). These and such distinctions—between the dignities of strength and of beauty—no artificial sentiment and no capricious revolt can set aside, while the world stands. St. Paul appeals to the common sense of mankind, to that which "nature itself teaches," in censuring the forwardness of some Corinthian women who appeared to think that the liberty of the gospel released them from the limitations of their nature.

Some earnest promoters of women's rights have fallen into the error that Christianity, to which they owe all that is best in their present status, is the obstacle in the way of their further progress. It is an obstacle to claims that are against nature and against the law of God,—claims only tolerable so long as they are exceptional. But the barriers imposed by Christianity, against which these people fret, are their main protection. "The moment Christianity

disappears, the law of strength revives; and under that law women can have no hope except that their slavery may be mild and pleasant." To escape from the "bondage of Christian law" means to go back to the bondage of paganism.

"As unto the Lord" gives the pattern and the principle of the Christian wife's submission. Not that, as Meyer seems to put it, the husband in virtue of marriage "represents Christ to the wife." Her relation to the Lord is as full, direct, and personal as his. Indeed, the clause inserted at the end of verse 23 seems expressly designed to guard against this exaggeration. The qualification that Christ is "Himself Saviour of the body," thrown in between the two sentences comparing the marital headship to that which Christ holds towards the Church, has the effect of limiting the former. The subjection of the Christian wife to her husband reserves for Christ the first place in the heart and the undiminished rights of Saviourship. St. Paul indicates a real, and not unfrequent danger. The husband may eclipse Christ in the wife's soul, and be counted as her all in all. Her absorption in him may be too complete. Hence the brief guarding clause: "He Himself [and no other] Saviour of the body [to which all believers alike belong]." As the Saviour of the Church, Christ holds an unrivalled and unqualified lordship over every member of the same.

Nevertheless, as the Church is subject to the Christ, so also wives [should be] to their husbands in everything" (ver. 24). Again in verse 33: "Let the wife see that she fear her husband" —with the reverent and confiding fear which love makes sweet. As the Christian wife obeys the Lord Christ in the spiritual sphere, in the sphere of marriage she is subject to her husband. The ties that bind her to Christ, bind her more closely to the duties of home. These duties illustrate for her the submissive love that Christ's people, and herself as one of them, owe to their Divine Head. Her service in the Church, in turn, will send her home with a quickened sense of the sacredness of her domestic calling. It will lighten the yoke of obedience; it will check the discontent that masculine exactions provoke; and will teach her to win by patience and gentleness the power within the house that is her queenly crown.

II. The apostle alludes to submission as the wife's duty; for she might, possibly, be tempted to think this superseded by the liberty of the children of God. Love he need not enjoin upon her, but he writes: "Husbands, *love your wives*, even as the Christ also loved the Church and gave up Himself for her" (comp. Col. iii. 18, 19).

The danger of selfishness lies on the masculine side. The man's nature is more exacting; and the self-forgetfulness and solicitous affection of the woman may blind him to his own want of the truest love. Full of business and with a hundred cares and attractions lying outside the domestic circle, he too readily forms habits of self-absorption and learns to make his wife and home a convenience, from which he takes as his right the comfort they have to give, imparting little of devotion and confidence in return. This lack of love denies the higher rights of marriage; it makes the wife's submission a joyless constraint. Along with this selfishness and the uneasy conscience attending it, there supervenes sometimes an irritability of temper that chafes over domestic troubles and makes a grievance of the most trifling mishap or inadvertence, ignoring the wife's patient affection and anxiety to please. Too often in this way husbands grow insensibly into family tyrants, forgetting the days of youth and the kindness of their espousals. "There are many," says Bengel (on this point unusually caustic), "who out of doors are civil and kind to all; when at home, toward their wives and children, whom they have no need to fear, they freely practise secret bitterness."

"Love your wives, *even as the Christ loved the Church*." What a glory this confers upon the husband's part in marriage! His devotion pictures as no other love can, the devotion of Christ to His Redeemed people. His love must therefore be a spiritual passion, the love of soul to soul, that partakes of God and of eternity. Of the three Greek words for love,—*eros*, familiar in Greek poetry and mythology, denoting the flame of sexual passion, is not named in the New Testament; *philia*, the love of friendship, is tolerably frequent, in its verb at least; but *agapé* absorbs the former and transcends both. This exquisite word denotes love in its spiritual purity and depth, the love of God and of Christ, and of souls to each other in God. This is the specific Christian affection. It is the attribute of God who "loved the world and gave His Son the Only-begotten," of "the Christ" who "loved the Church and gave up Himself for her." Self-devotion, not self-satisfaction, is its note. Its strength and authority it uses as material for sacrifice and instruments of service, not as prerogatives of pride or titles to enjoyment. Let this mind be in you, O husband, toward your wife, which was also in Christ Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart, counting it His honour to serve and His reward to save and bless.

From verse 26 we gather that Christ is the husband's model, not only in the rule of self-devotion, but in the end toward which that devotion is directed: "that He might sanctify the Church, —that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle,—*that she might be holy and without blemish*." The perfection of the wife's character will be to the religious husband one of the dearest objects in life. He will desire for her that which is highest and best, as for himself. He is put in charge of a soul more precious to him than any other, over which he has an influence incomparably great. This care he cannot delegate to any priest or father-confessor. The peril of such delegation and the grievous mischiefs that arise when there is no spiritual confidence between husband and wife, when through unbelief or superstition the head of the house hands over his priesthood to another man, are painfully shown by the experience of Roman Catholic countries. The irreligion of laymen, the carelessness and unworthiness of fathers and husbands, are responsible for the baneful influences of the confessional. The apostle bade the Corinthian wives, who were eager for religious knowledge, to "ask their husbands at home" (1 Cor. xiv. 35). Christian husbands should take more account of their office than they do; they should not be strangers to the spiritual trials and experiences of the heart so near to them. It might lead them to walk more worthily and to seek higher religious attainments, if they considered that the shepherding of at least one soul devolves upon themselves, that they are unworthy of the name of husband without such

care for the welfare of the soul linked to their own as Christ bears toward His bride the Church. Those who have no father or husband to look to, or who look in vain to this quarter for spiritual help, St. Paul refers, beside the light and comfort of Scripture and the public ministry and fellowship of the Church, to the "aged women" who are the natural guides and exemplars of the younger in their own sex (Titus ii. 3-5).

The selfishness of the stronger sex, supported by the force of habit and social usage, was hard to subdue in the Greek Christian Churches. Through some eight verses St. Paul labours this one point. In verse 28 he adduces another reason, added to the example of Christ, for the love enjoined. "So ought men indeed to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." The "So" gathers its force from the previous example. In loving us Christ does not love something foreign and, as it were, outside of Himself. "We are members of His body" (ver. 30). It is the love of the Head to the members, of the Son of man to the sons of men, whose race-life is founded in Him. Jesus Christ laid it down as the highest law, under that of love to God: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." His love to us followed this rule. His life was wrapped up in ours. By such community of life self-love is transfigured, and exalted into the purest self-forgetting.

Thus it is with true marriage. The wedding of a human pair makes each the other's property. They are "one flesh" (ver. 31); and so long as the flesh endures there remains this consciousness of union, whose violation is deadly sin. As the Church is not her own, nor Christ His own since He became man with men, so the husband and wife are no longer independent and self-complete personalities, but incorporated into a new existence common to both. Their love must correspond to this fact. If the man loves himself, if he values his own limbs and tends and guards from injury his bodily frame (ver. 29), he must do the same equally by his wife; for her life and limbs are as a part of his own. This the apostle lays down as an obvious duty. Nature teaches the obligation, by every manly instinct.

The saying the apostle quotes in verse 31 dates from the origin of the human family; it is taken from the lips of the first husband and father of the race, while as yet unstained by sin (Gen. ii. 23, 24). Christ infers from it the singleness and indelibility of the marriage covenant. But this doctrine, natural as it is, was not inferred by natural religion. The cultivated Greek took a wife for the production of children. Her rights put no restriction upon his appetite. Love was not in the marriage contract. If she received the maintenance due to her rank and the mistressship of the house, and was the mother of his lawful children, she had all that a free-born woman could demand. The slave-woman had no rights. Her body was at her owner's disposal. Nothing in Christianity appeared more novel and more severe, in comparison with the dissolute morals of the time, than the Christian view of marriage. Even Christ's Jewish disciples seemed to think the state of wedlock intolerable under the condition He imposed. This want of reverence and constancy between the sexes was the main cause of the degeneracy of the age. All virtues disappear with this one. Roman manliness and uprightness, Greek courtesy and courage, filial piety, civic worth, loyalty in friendship—the qualities that once in a high degree adorned the classic nations, were now rare amongst men. In the most exalted ranks infamous vices flourished; and purity of life was a cause for odium and suspicion.

Amidst this seething mass of corruption the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus created new hearts and new homes. It kindled a pure fire on the desecrated hearth. It taught man and woman a chaste love; and their alliances were formed "in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust as it is with the Gentiles who know not God" (1 Thess. iv. 3-6). Every Christian house, thus based on an honourable and religious union, became the centre of a leaven that wrought upon the corrupt society around. It held forth an example of wedded loyalty and domestic joy beautiful and strange in that loveless Pagan world. Children grew up trained in pure and gentle manners. From that hour the hope of a better day began. The influence of the new ideal, filtrating everywhere into the surrounding heathenism and assimilating even before it converted the hostile world, raised society, though gradually and with many relapses, from the extreme debasement of the age of the Cæsars. Never subsequently have the morals of civilised mankind sunk to a level quite so low. The Christian conception of love and marriage opened a new era for mankind.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE.

Ephesians v. 23-32.

We have extracted from the apostle's homily upon marriage the sentences referring to Christ and His Church, in order to gather up their collective import. The main topic of the epistle here again asserts itself; and under the figure of marriage St. Paul brings to its conclusion his doctrine on the subject of the Church. This passage answers, theologically, a purpose similar to that of the allegory of Hagar and Sarah in the epistle to the Galatians: it lights up for the imagination the teaching and argument of the former part of the epistle; it shows how the doctrine of Christ and the Church has its counterpart in nature, as the struggle between the legal and evangelical spirit had its counterpart in the patriarchal history.

The three detached paragraphs present us three considerations, of which we shall treat the second first in order of exposition: Christ's love to the Church; His authority over the Church; and the mystery of the Church's origin in Him.

I. "Husbands, love your wives, even as the Christ also loved the Church, and gave up Himself for her." This is parallel to the declaration of Galatians ii. 20: "He loved me; He gave up Himself for me." The sacrifice of the cross has at once its personal and its collective purpose. Both are to be kept in mind.

On the one hand, we must value infinitely and joyfully assert our individual part in the redeeming love of the Son of God; but we must equally admit the sovereign rights of the Church in the Redeemer's passion. Our souls bow down before the glory of the love with which He has

from eternity sought her for His own. There is in some Christians an absorption in the work of grace within their own hearts, an individualistic salvation-seeking that, like all selfishness, defeats its end; for it narrows and impoverishes the inner life thus sedulously cherished. The Church does not exist simply for the benefit of individual souls; it is an eternal institution, with an affiance to Christ, a calling and destiny of its own; within that universal sphere our personal destiny holds its particular place.

It is "the Christ" who stands, throughout this context (vv. 23-29), over against "the Church" as her Lover and Husband; whereas in the context of Galatians ii. 20 we read "Christ"—the bare personal name—repeated again and again without the distinguishing article. *Christ* is the Person whom the soul knows and loves, with whom it holds communion in the Spirit. *The Christ* is the same regarded in the wide scope of His nature and office,—the Christ of humanity and of the ages. "The Christ" of this epistle expands the Saviour's title to its boundless significance, and gives breadth and length to that which in "Christ" is gathered up into a single point.

This Christ "gave Himself up for the Church," —yielded Himself to the death which the sins of His people merited and brought upon Him. Under the same verb, the apostle says in Romans iv. 25: He "*was delivered* because of our trespasses, and raised up because of our justification"—the sacrifice being there regarded on its passive side. Here, as in Galatians ii. 20, the act is made His own,—a voluntary surrender. "No man taketh my life from me," He said (John x. 18). In His case alone amongst the sons of men, death was neither natural nor inevitable. His surrender of life was an absolute sacrifice. He "laid down His life for His friends," as no other friend of man could do—the One who died for all. The love measured by this sacrifice is proportionately great.

The sayings of verses 25-27 set the glory of the vicarious death in a vivid light. Of such worth was the person of the Christ, of such significance and moral value His sacrificial death, that it weighed against the trespass, not of a man—Paul or any other—but of a world of men. He "purchased through His own blood," said Paul to the Ephesian elders, "the Church of God" (Acts xx. 28)—the whole flock that feeds in the pastures of the Great Shepherd, that has passed or will pass through the gates of His fold. Great were the honour and glory with which He was crowned, when led as a victim to the altar of the world's atonement (Heb. ii. 9). Who will not say, as the meek Son of man treads so willingly His mournful path to Calvary, "Worthy is the Lamb!" Is not the heavenly Bridegroom worthy of the bride, that He consents to win by the sacrifice of Himself!

He is worthy; and she must be made worthy. "He gave up Himself that He might sanctify her,—that He might Himself present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind,—that she may be holy and without blemish." The sanctification of the Church is the grand purpose of redeeming grace. This was the design of God for His sons in Christ before the world's foundation, "that we should be holy and unblemished before Him" (i. 4). This, therefore, was the end of Christ's mission upon earth; this was the intention of His sacrificial death. "For their sakes," said Jesus, concerning His disciples, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John xvii. 19). His purchase of the Church is no selfish act. To God His Father Christ devotes every spirit of man that is yielded to Him. As the Priest of mankind it was His office thus to consecrate humanity, which is already in purpose and in essence "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. x. 10).

Only in this passage, where the apostle is thinking of the preparation of the Church for its perfect union with its Head, does he name Christ as our *Sanctifier;* in 1 Corinthians i. 2 he comes near this expression, addressing his readers as men "sanctified in Christ Jesus." In the epistle to the Hebrews this character is largely ascribed to Him, being the function of His priesthood. One in nature with the sanctified, Jesus our Great Priest "sanctifies us through His own blood," so that with cleansed consciences we may draw near to the living God. As Christ the Priest stands towards His people, so Christ the Husband towards His Church. He devotes her with Himself to God. He cleanses her that she may dwell with Him for ever, a spotless bride, dead unto sin and living unto God through Him.

"That He might sanctify her, *having cleansed her* in the laver of water by the word." The Church's purification is antecedent in thought to her sanctification through the sacrifice of Christ; and it is a means thereto. "Ye were washed, ye were sanctified," writes the apostle in 1 Corinthians vi. 11, putting the two things in the same order. It is the order of doctrine which he has laid down in the epistle to the Romans, where sanctification is built on the foundation laid in justification through the blood of Christ. Through the virtue of the sacrificial death the Church in all her members was washed from the defilements of sin, that she might enter upon God's service. Of the same initial purification of the heart St. John writes in his first epistle (i. 7-9): "The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin. . . . He is faithful and just, that He should forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is "the redemption through Christ's blood," for which St. Paul in his first words of praise called upon us to bless God (i. 7). It is the special distinction of the New Covenant, which renders possible its other gifts of grace, that "the worshippers once cleansed" need have "no further consciousness of sins" (Heb. x. 2, 14-18). In the theological use here made of the idea of *cleansing*, St. Paul comes into line with St. John and the epistle to the Hebrews. The purification is nothing else than that which he has elsewhere styled *justification.* He employs the terms synonymously in the later epistle to Titus (ii. 14; iii. 7).

"Having cleansed" is a phrase congruous with the figure of *the laver*, or *bath* (comp. again Titus iii. 5-7),—an image suggested, as one would think, by the bride-bath of the wedding-day in the ancient marriage customs. To this St. Paul sees a counterpart in baptism, "the laver of water in the word." The cleansing and withal refreshing virtues of water made it an obvious symbol of regeneration. The emblem is twofold; it pictures at once the removal of guilt, and the imparting of new strength. One goes into the bath exhausted, and covered with dust; one comes out

clean and fresh. Hence the baptism of the new believer in Christ had, in St. Paul's view, a double aspect. It looked backward to the old life of sin abandoned, and forward to the new life of holiness commenced. Thus it corresponded to the burial of Jesus (Rom. vi. 4), the point of juncture between death and resurrection. Baptism served as the visible and formal expression of the soul's passage through the gate of forgiveness into the sanctified life.

Along with this older teaching, a further and kindred significance is now given to the baptismal rite. It denotes the soul's affiance to its Lord. As the maiden's bath on the morning of her marriage betokened the purity in which she united herself to her betrothed, so the baptismal laver summons the Church to present herself "a chaste virgin unto Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2). It signifies and seals her forgiveness, and pledges her in all her members to await the Bridegroom in garments unspotted from the world, with the pure and faithful love which will not be ashamed before Him at His coming. For this end Christ set up the baptismal laver. Upon our construction of the text, the words "that He might sanctify her" express a purpose complete in itself—viz., that of the Church's consecration to God. Then follow the means to this sanctification: "Having cleansed her in the water-bath through the word,"—which washing, at the same time, has its purpose on the part of the Lord who appointed it—viz., "that He might present her to Himself" a glorious and spotless Church.

At the end of verse 27 the sentence doubles back upon itself, in Paul's characteristic fashion. The twofold aim of Christ's sacrifice of love on the Church's behalf—viz., her consecration to God, and her spotless purity fitting her for perfect union with her Lord—is restated in the final clause, by way of contrast with the "spots and wrinkles and such like things" that are washed out: "but that she may be holy and without blemish."

We passed by, for the moment, the concluding phrase of verse 26, with which the apostle qualifies his reference to the baptismal cleansing; we are by no means forgetting it. "Having cleansed her," he writes, "by the laver of water *in* [*the*] *word*." This adjunct is deeply significant. It impresses on baptism a spiritual character, and excludes every theurgic conception of the rite, every doctrine that gives to it in the least degree a mechanical efficacy. "Without the word the sacrament could only influence man by magic, outward or inward" (Dorner). The "word" of which the apostle speaks, is that of chapter vi. 17, "God's word—the Spirit's sword"; of Romans x. 8, "the word of faith which we proclaim"; of Luke i. 37, "the word from God which shall not be powerless"; of John xvii. 8, etc., "the words" that the Father had given to the Son, and the Son in turn to men. It is the Divine utterance, spoken and believed. In this accompaniment lies the power of the laver. The baptismal affusion is the outward seal of an inward transaction, that takes place in the spirit of believing utterers and hearers of the gospel word. This saving word receives in baptism its concrete expression; it becomes the *verbum visibile*.

The "word" in question is defined in Romans x. 8, 9: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved!" Let the hearer respond, "I do so confess and believe," on the strength of this confession he is baptised, and in the conjoint act of faith and baptism—in the *obedience* of faith signified by his baptism—he is saved from his past sins and made an heir of life eternal. The rite is the simplest and most universal in application one can conceive. In heathen countries baptism recovers its primitive significance, as the decisive act of rupture with idolatry and acceptance of Christ as Lord, which in our usage is often overlaid and forgotten.

This interpretation gives a key to the obscure text of St. Peter upon the same subject (1 Pet. iii. 21): "Baptism saves you—not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the questioning with regard to God of a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The vital constituent of the rite is not the application of water to the body, but the challenge which the word makes therein to the conscience respecting the things of God,—the inquiry thus conveyed, to which a sincere believer in the resurrection of Christ makes joyful and ready answer. It is, in fine, *the appeal to faith* contained in baptism that gives to the latter its saving worth.

The "word" that makes Christian ordinances valid is not the past utterance of God alone, which may remain a dead letter, preserved in the oracles of Scripture or the official forms of the Church, but that word alive and active, re-spoken and transmitted from soul to soul by the breath of the Holy Spirit. Without this animating word of faith, baptism is but the pouring or sprinkling of so much water on the body; the Lord's supper is only the consumption of so much bread and wine.

All the nations will at last, in obedience to Christ's command, be baptised into the thrice-holy Name; and the work of baptism will be complete. Then the Church will issue from her bath, cleansed more effectually than the old world that emerged with Noah from the deluge. Every "spot and wrinkle" will pass from her face; the worldly passions that stained her features, the fears and anxieties that knit her brow or furrowed her cheek, will vanish away. In her radiant beauty, in her chaste and spotless love, Christ will lead forth His Church before His Father and the holy angels, "as a bride adorned before her husband." From eternity He set His love upon her; on the cross He won her back from her infidelity at the price of His blood. Through the ages He has been wooing her to Himself, and schooling her in wise and manifold ways that she might be fit for her heavenly calling. Now the end of this long task of redemption has arrived. The message goes forth to Christ's friends in all the worlds: "Come, gather yourselves to the great supper of God! The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready! He hath given her fine linen bright and pure, that she may array herself. Let us rejoice and exult, and give to Him the glory!" Through what cleansing fires, through what baptisms even of blood she has still to pass ere the consummation is reached, He only knows who loved her and gave Himself for her. He will spare to His Church nothing, either of bounty or of trial, that her perfection needs.

II. Concerning Christ's lordly *authority* over His Church we have had occasion to speak already in other places. A word or two may be added here.

We acknowledge the Church to be "subject to Christ in everything." We proclaim ourselves, like the apostle, "slaves of Christ Jesus." But this subjection is too often a form rather than a fact. In protesting our independence of Popish and priestly lords of God's heritage, we are sometimes in danger of ignoring our dependence upon Him, and of dethroning, in effect, the one Lord Jesus Christ. Christian communities act and speak too much in the style of political republics. They assume the attitude of self-directing and self-responsible bodies.

The Church is no democracy, any more than it is an aristocracy or a sacerdotal absolutism: it is a *Christocracy*. The people are not rulers in the house of God; they are the ruled, laity and ministers alike. "One is your Master, even the Christ; and all ye are brethren." We acknowledge this in theory; but our language and spirit would oftentimes be other than they are, if we were penetrated by the sense of the continual presence and majesty of the Lord Christ in our assemblies. Royalties and nobilities, and the holders of popular power—all whose "names are named in this world," along with the principalities in heavenly places, when they come into the precincts of the Church must lay aside their robes and forget their titles, and speak humbly as in the Master's presence. What is it to the glorious Church of Jesus Christ that Lord So-and-so wears a coronet and owns half a county? or that Midas can fill her coffers, if he is pleased and humoured? or that this or that orator guides at his will the fierce democracy? He is no more than a man who will die and appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The Church's protection from human tyranny, from schemes of ambition, from the intrusion of political methods and designs, lies in her sense of the splendour and reality of Christ's dominion, and of her own eternal life in Him.

III. We come now to the profound mystery disclosed, or half-disclosed at the end of this section, that of the origination of the Church from Christ, which accounts for His love to the Church and His authority over her. He nourishes and cherishes the Church, we are told in verses 29, 30, "because we are members of His body."

Now this membership is, in its origin, as old as creation. God "chose us in Christ before the world's foundation" (i. 4). We were created in the Son of God's love, antecedently to our redemption by Him. Such is the teaching of this and the companion epistle (Col. i. 14-18). Christ recovers through the cross that which pertains inherently to Him, which belonged to Him by nature and is as a part of Himself. From this standpoint the connection of verses 30 and 31 becomes intelligible. It is not, strictly speaking, "on account of this"; but "in correspondence with this" says the apostle, suiting the original phrase to his purpose. The derivation of Eve from the body of Adam, as that is affirmed in the mysterious words of Genesis, is analogous to the derivation of the Church from Christ. The latter relationship existed in its ideal, and as conceived in the purpose of God, prior to the appearance of the human race. In St. Paul's theory, the origin of woman in man which forms the basis of marriage in Scripture, looked further back to the origin of humanity in Christ Himself.

The train of thought that the apostle resumes here he followed in 1 Corinthians xi. 3-12: "I would have you know that the head of every man is the Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. . . . Man is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." So it is with Christ and His bride the Church.

"The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man, made He a woman, and brought her to the man. And the man said,

> "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
> She shall be called Woman [*Isshah*], because she was taken out of Man [*Ish*].
> Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:
> And they shall be one flesh" (Gen. ii. 21-24).

Thus the first father of our race prophesied, and sang his wedding song. In some mystical, but real sense, marriage is a *reunion*, the reincorporation of what had been sundered. Seeking his other self, the complement of his nature, the man breaks the ties of birth and founds a new home. So the inspired author of the passage in Genesis explains the origin of marriage, and the instinct which draws the bridegroom to his bride.

But our apostle sees within this declaration a deeper truth, kept secret from the foundation of the world. When he speaks of "this great *mystery*," he means thereby not marriage itself, but *the saying of Adam about it*. This text was a standing problem to the Jewish interpreters. "But for my part," says the apostle, "I refer it to Christ and to the Church." St. Paul, who has so often before drawn the parallel between Adam and Christ, by the light of this analogy perceives a new and rich meaning in the old dark sentence. It helps him to see how believers in Christ, forming collectively His body, are not only grafted into Him (as he puts it in the epistle to the Romans), but were derived from Him and formed in the very mould of His nature.

What is affirmed in Colossians i. 16, 17, concerning the universe in general, is true in its perfect degree of redeemed humanity: "*In Him* were created all things," as well as "through Him and for Him." Eve was created in Adam; and Adam in Christ. We are "partakers of a Divine nature," by our spiritual origin in Him who is the image of God and the root of humanity. The union of the first human pair and every true marriage since, being in effect, as Adam puts it, a restoration and redintegration, symbolises the fellowship of Christ with mankind. This intention was in the mind of God at the institution of human life; it took expression in the prophetic words of the Book of Genesis, whose deeper sense St. Paul is now able for the first time to unfold.

In our union through grace and faith with Christ crucified, we realise again the original design of our being. Christ has purchased by His blood no new or foreign bride, but her who was His from eternity,—the child who had wandered from the Father's house, the betrothed who had left her Lord and Spouse. In regard to this "mystery of our coherence in Christ," Richard Hooker says, in words that suggest

many aspects of this doctrine: "The Church is in Christ, as Eve was in Adam. Yea, by grace we are every one of us in Christ and in His Church, as by nature we are in our first parents. God made Eve of the rib of Adam. And His Church He frameth out of the very flesh, the very wounded and bleeding side of the Son of man. His body crucified and His blood shed for the life of the world are the true elements of that heavenly being which maketh us such as Himself is of whom we come. For which cause the words of Adam may be fitly the words of Christ concerning His Church, 'flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones—a true native extract out of mine own body.' So that in Him, even according to His manhood, we according to our heavenly being are as branches in that root out of which they grow."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN HOUSEHOLD.

EPHESIANS vi. 1-9.

THE Christian family is the cradle and the fortress of the Christian faith. Here its virtues shine most brightly; and by this channel its influence spreads through society and the course of generations. Marriage has been placed under the guardianship of God; it is made single, chaste, and enduring, according to the law of creation and the pattern of Christ's union with His Church. With parents thus united, family honour is secure; and a basis is laid for reverence and discipline within the house.

I. Thus the apostle turns, in the opening words of chapter vi., from the husband and wife to the *children* of the household. He addresses them as present in the assembly where his letter is read. St. Paul accounted the children "holy," if but one parent belonged to the Church (1 Cor. vii. 14). They were baptised, as we presume, with their fathers or mothers, and admitted, under due precautions,* to the fellowship of the Church so far as their age allowed. We cannot limit this exhortation to children of adult age. The "discipline and admonition of the Lord," prescribed in verse 4, belong to children of tender years and under parental control.

Obedience is the law of childhood. It is, in great part, the child's religion, to be practised "in the Lord." The reverence and love, full of a sweet mystery, which the Christian child feels towards its Saviour and heavenly King, add new sacredness to the claims of father and mother. Jesus Christ, the Head over all things, is the orderer of the life of boys and girls. His love and His might guard the little one in the tendance of its parents. The wonderful love of parents to their offspring, and the awful authority with which they are invested, come from the source of human life in God.

The Latin *pietas* impressed a religious character upon filial duty. This word signifies at once dutifulness towards the gods, and towards parents and kindred. In the strength of its family ties and its deep filial reverence lay the secret of the moral vigour and the unmatched discipline of the Roman commonwealth. The history of ancient Rome affords a splendid illustration of the fifth commandment.

For this is right, says the apostle, appealing to the instincts of natural religion. The child's conscience begins here. Filial obedience is the primary form of duty. The loyalties of after-life take their colour from the lessons learnt at home, in the time of dawning reason and incipient will. Hard indeed is the evil to remove, where in the plastic years of childhood obedience has been associated with base fear, with distrust or deceit, where it has grown sullen or obsequious in habit. From this root of bitterness there spring rank growths of hatred toward authority, jealousies, treacheries, and stubbornness. Obedience rendered "in the Lord" will be frank and willing, careful and constant, such as that which Jesus rendered to the Father.

St. Paul reminds the children of the law of the Ten Words, taught to them in their earliest lessons from Scripture. He calls the command in question "*a first* [or *chief*] commandment"—just as the great rule, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," is *the* first commandment; for this is no secondary rule or minor precept, but one on which the continuance of the Church and the welfare of society depend. It is a law fundamental as birth itself, written not on the statute-book alone, but on the tables of the heart.

Moreover, it is a "command *in promise*"—that takes the form of promise, and holds out to obedience a bright future. The two predicates—"first" and "in promise"—as we take it, are distinct. To merge them into one blunts their meaning. This commandment is primary in its importance, and promissory in its import. The promise is quoted from Exodus xx. 12, as it stands in the Septuagint, where the Greek Christian children would read it. But the last clause is abbreviated; St. Paul writes "upon *the earth*" in place of "the good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This blessing is the heritage of dutiful children in every land. Those who have watched the history of godly families of their acquaintance, will have seen the promise verified. The obedience of childhood and youth rendered to a wise Christian rule forms in the young nature the habits of self-control and self-respect, of diligence and promptitude and faithfulness and kindliness of heart, which are the best guarantees for happiness and success in life. Through parental nurture "godliness" secures its "promise of the life that now is."

Children are exhorted to submission: fathers to *gentleness*. "Do not," the apostle says, "anger your children"; in the corresponding place in Colossians, "Do not irritate your children, lest they be disheartened" (ch. iii. 21). In these parallel texts two distinct verbs are rendered by the one English word "provoke." The Colossian passage warns against the chafing effect of parental exactions and fretfulness, that tend to break the child's spirit and spoil its temper. Our text warns the father against angering his child by unfair or oppressive treatment. From this verb comes the noun "wrath" (or "provocation") used in chapter iv. 26, denoting that stirring of anger which gives peculiar occasion to the devil.

Not that the father is forbidden to cross his

* We cannot absolutely *prove* infant baptism from the New Testament texts adduced on its behalf; but they afford a strong presumption in its favour, which is confirmed on the one hand by the analogy of circumcision, and on the other by the immemorial usage of the early Church. Titus i. 6 shows that stress was laid on the faith of children, and that discrimination was used in their recognition as Church members.

child's wishes, or to do anything or refuse anything that may excite its anger. Nothing is worse for a child than to find that parents fear its displeasure, and that it will gain its ends by passion. But the father must not be exasperating, must not needlessly thwart the child's inclinations and excite in order to subdue its anger, as some will do even of set purpose, thinking that in this way obedience is learnt. This policy may secure submission; but it is gained at the cost of a rankling sense of injustice.

Household rule should be equally firm and kind, neither provoking nor avoiding the displeasure of its subjects, inflicting no severity for severity's sake, but shrinking from none that fidelity demands. With much parental fondness, there is sometimes in family government a want of seriousness and steady principle, an absence in father or mother of the sense that they are dealing with moral and responsible beings in their little ones, and not with toys, which is reflected in the caprice and self-indulgence of the children's maturer life. Such parents will give account hereafter of their stewardship with an inconsolable grief.

It is almost superfluous to insist on the apostle's exhortation to treat children kindly. For them these are days of Paradise, compared with times not far distant. Never were the wants and the fancies of these small mortals catered for as they are now. In some households the danger lies in the opposite extreme from that of over-strictness. The children are idolised. Not their comfort and welfare only, but their humours and caprices become the law of the house. They are "nourished" indeed, but not "in the discipline and admonition of the Lord." It is a great unkindness to treat our children so that they shall be strangers to hardship and restriction, so that they shall not know what real obedience means, and have no reverence for age, no habits of deference and self-denial. It is the way to breed monsters of selfishness, pampered creatures who will be useless and miserable in adult life.

"Discipline and admonition" are distinguished as positive and negative terms. The first is the "training up of the child in the way that he should go"; the second checks and holds him back from the ways in which he should not go. The former word (*paideia*)—denoting primarily *treating-as-a-boy*—signifies very often "chastisement"; but it has a wider sense, embracing instruction besides. It includes the whole course of training by which the boy is reared into a man.—*Admonition* is a still more familiar word with St. Paul. It may be reproof bearing upon errors in the past; or it may be warning, that points out dangers lying in the future. Both these services parents owe to their children. Admonition implies faults in the nature of the child, and wisdom in the father to see and correct them.

"Foolishness," says the Hebrew proverb, "is bound up in the heart of a child." In the Old Testament discipline there was something overstern. The "hardness of heart" censured by the Lord Jesus, which allowed of two mothers in the house, put barriers between the father and his offspring that rendered "the rod of correction" more needful than it is under the rule of Christ. But correction, in gentler or severer sort, there must be, so long as children spring from sinful parents. The child's conscience responds to the kindly and searching word of reproof, to the admonition of love. This faithful dealing with his children wins for the father in the end a deep gratitude, and makes his memory a guard in days of temptation and an object of tender reverence.

The child's "obedience *in the Lord*" is its response to "the discipline and admonition *of the Lord*" exercised by its parents. The discipline which wise Christian fathers give their children, is the Lord's discipline applied through them. "Correction and instruction should proceed from the Lord and be directed by the Spirit of the Lord, in such a way that it is not so much the father who corrects his children and teaches them, as the Lord through him" (Monod). Thus the Father of whom every family on earth is named, within each Christian house works all in all. Thus the chief Shepherd, through His under-shepherds, guides and feeds the lambs of His flock. By the gate of His fold fathers and mothers themselves have entered; and the little ones follow with them. In the pastures of His word they nourish them, and rule them with His rod and staff. To their offspring they become an image of the Good Shepherd and the Father in heaven. Their office teaches them more of God's fatherly ways with themselves. From their children's humbleness and confidence, from their simple wisdom, their hopes and fears and ignorances, the elders learn deep and affecting lessons concerning their own relations to the heavenly Father.

St. Paul's instruction to fathers applies to all who have the charge of children: to schoolmasters of every degree, whose work, secular as it may be called, touches the springs of moral life and character; to teachers in the Sunday school, successors to the work that Christ assigned to Peter, of shepherding His lambs. These instructors supply the Lord's nurture to multitudes of children, in whose homes Christian faith and example are wanting. The ideas which children form of Christ and His religion are gathered from what they see and hear in the school. Many a child receives its bias for life from the influence of the teacher before whom it sits on Sunday. The love and meekness of wisdom, or the coldness or carelessness of the one who thus stands between Christ and the infant soul, will make or mar its spiritual future.

II. From the children of the house the apostle proceeds to address the *servants*—slaves as they were, until the gospel unbound their chains. The juxtaposition of children and slaves is full of significance; it is a tacit prophecy of emancipation. It brings the slave within the household, and gives a new dignity to domestic service.

The Greek philosophers regarded slavery as a fundamental institution, indispensable to the existence of civilised society. That the few might enjoy freedom and culture, the many were doomed to bondage. Aristotle defines the slave as an "animated tool," and the tool as an "inanimate slave." Two or three facts will suffice to show how utterly slaves were deprived of human rights in the brilliant times of the classic humanism. In Athens it was the legal rule to admit the evidence of a slave only upon torture, as that of a freeman was received upon oath. Amongst the Romans, if a master had been murdered in his house, the whole of his domestic servants, amounting sometimes to hundreds, were put to death without inquiry. It was a

common mark of hospitality to assign to a guest a female slave for the night, like any other convenience. Let it be remembered that the slave population outnumbered the free citizens of the Roman and Greek cities by many times; that they were frequently of the same race, and might be even superior in education to their masters. Indeed, it was a lucrative trade to rear young slaves and train them in literary and other accomplishments, and then to let them out in these capacities for hire. Let any one consider the condition of society which all this involved, and he will have some conception of the degradation in which the masses of mankind were plunged, and of the crushing tyranny that the world laboured under in the boasted days of republican liberty and Hellenic art.

No wonder that the new religion was welcome to the slaves of the Pagan cities, and that they flocked into the Church. Welcome to them was the voice that said: "Come unto me, all ye that are burdened and heavy laden"; welcome the proclamation that made them Christ's freedmen, "brethren beloved" where they had been "animated tools" (Philem. 16). In the light of such teaching, slavery was doomed. Its readoption by Christian nations, and the imposition of its yoke upon the negro race, is amongst the great crimes of history,—a crime for which the white man has had to pay rivers of his blood.

The social fabric, as it then existed, was so entirely based upon slavery, that for Christ and the apostles to have proclaimed its abolition would have meant universal anarchy. In writing to Philemon about his converted slave Onesimus, the apostle does not say, "Release him," though the word seems to be trembling on his lips. In 1 Corinthians vii. 20-24 he even advises the slave who has the chance of manumission to remain where he is, content to be "the Lord's freedman." To the Christian slave what mattered it who ruled over his perishing body! his spirit was free, death would be his discharge and enfranchisement. No decree is issued to abolish bond-service between man and man; but it was destroyed in its essence by the spirit of Christian brotherhood. It melted away in the spread of the gospel, as snow and winter melt before the face of spring.

"Ye slaves, obey your lords according to the flesh." The apostle does not disguise the slave's subservience; nor does he speak in the language of pity or of condescension. He appeals as a man to men and equals, on the ground of a common faith and service to Christ. He awakens in these degraded tools of society the sense of spiritual manhood, of conscience and loyalty, of love and faith and hope. As in Colossians iii. 22-iv. 1, the apostle designates the earthly master not by his common title (*despotes*), but by the very word (*kyrios*) that is the title of the *Lord* Christ, giving the slave in this way to understand that he has, in common with his master (ver. 9), a higher Lord in the spirit. "Ye are slaves to the Lord Christ!" (Col. iii. 24). St. Paul is accustomed to call himself "a slave of Christ Jesus." Nay, it is even said, in Philippians ii. 7, that Christ Jesus "took the form of a slave"!

How much there was, then, to console the Christian bondman for his lot. In self-abnegation, in the willing forfeiture of personal rights, in his menial and unrequited tasks, in submission to insult and injustice, he found a holy joy. His was a path in which he might closely follow the steps of the great Servant of mankind. His position enabled him to "adorn the Saviour's doctrine" above other men (Tit. ii. 9, 10). Affectionate, gentle, bearing injury with joyful courage, the Christian slave held up to that hardened and jaded Pagan age the example which it most required. God chose the base things of the world to bring to nought the mighty.

The relations of servant and master will endure, in one shape or other, while the world stands. And the apostle's injunctions bear upon servants of every order. We are all, in our various capacities, servants of the community. The moral worth of our service and its blessing to ourselves depend on the conditions that are here laid down.

I. There must be *a genuine care for our work.*

"Obey," he says, "with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto the Christ." The fear enjoined is no dread of human displeasure, of the master's whip or tongue. It is the same "fear and trembling" with which we are bidden to "work out our own salvation" (Phil. ii. 12). The inward work of the soul's salvation and the outward work of the busy hands labouring in the mine or at the loom, or in the lowliest domestic duties,—all alike are to be performed under a solemn responsibility to God and in the presence of Christ, the Lord of nature and of men, who understands every sort of work, and will render to each of His servants a just and exact reward. No man, whether he be minister of state or stable-groom, will dare to do heedless work, who lives and acts in that august Presence,—

> "As ever in the great Task-master's eye."

II. The sense of Christ's Lordship ensures *honesty in work.*

So the apostle continues: "Not with *eye-service*, as *men-pleasers*." Both these are rare compound words,—the former indeed occurring only here and in the companion letter, being coined, probably, by the writer for this use. It is the common fault and temptation of servants in all degrees to observe the master's eye, and to work busily or slackly as they are watched or not. Such workmen act as they do, because they look to men and not to God. Their work is without conscience and self-respect. The visible master says "Well done!" But there is another Master looking on, who says "Ill done!" to all pretentious doings and works of eye-service,—who sees not as man sees, but judges with the act the motive and intent.

> "Not on the vulgar mass
> Called 'work' must sentence pass,
> Things done, which took the eye and had the price."

In His book of accounts there is a stern reckoning in store for deceitful dealers and the makers-up of unsound goods, in whatever handicraft or headcraft they are engaged.

Let us all adopt St. Paul's maxim; it will be an immense economy. What armies of overlookers and inspectors we shall be able to dismiss, when every servant works as well behind his master's back as to his face, when every manufacturer and shopkeeper puts himself in the purchaser's place and deals as he would have others deal with him. It was for the Christian slaves

of the Greek trading cities to rebuke the Greek spirit of fraud and trickery, by which the common dealings of life in all directions were vitiated.

III. To the carefulness and honesty of the slave's daily labour he must even add *heartiness:* "as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul, with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men."

They must do *the will of God* in the service of men, as Jesus Christ Himself did it,—and with His meekness and fortitude and unwearied love. Their work will thus be rendered from inner principle, with thought and affection and resolution spent upon it. That alone is the work of a man, whether he preaches or ploughs, which comes from the soul behind the hands and the tongue, into which the workman puts as much of his soul, of himself, as the work is capable of holding.

IV. Add to all this the servant's *anticipation of the final reward.* In each case, "whatsoever one may do that is good, this he will receive from the Lord, whether he be a bondman or a freeman." The complementary truth is given in the Colossian letter: "He who does wrong, will receive back the wrong that he did."

The doctrine of equal retribution at the judgment-seat of Christ matches that of equal salvation at the cross of Christ. How trifling and evanescent the differences of earthly rank appear, in view of these sublime realities. There is a "Lord in heaven," alike for servant and for master, "with whom is no respect of persons" (ver. 9). This grand conviction beats down all caste-pride. It teaches justice to the mighty and the proud; it exalts the humble, and assures the down-trodden of redress. No bribery or privilege, no sophistry or legal cunning will avail, no concealment or distortion of the facts will be possible in that Court of final appeal. The servant and the master, the monarch and his meanest subject will stand before the bar of Jesus Christ upon the same footing. And the poor slave, wonderful to think, who was faithful in the "few things" of his drudging earthly lot, will receive the "many things" of a son of God and a joint-heir with Christ!

"*And, ye lords,* do the same things towards them"—be as good to your slaves as they are required to be towards you. A bold application this of Christ's great rule: "What you would that men should do to you, do even so to them." In many instances this rule suggested *liberation,* where the slave was prepared for freedom. In any case, the master is to put himself in his dependent's place, and to act by him as he would desire himself to be treated if their positions were reversed.

Slaves were held to be scarcely human. Deceit and sensuality were regarded as their chief characteristics. They must be ruled, the moralists said, by the fear of punishment. This was the only way to keep them in their place. The Christian master adopts a different policy. He "desists from threatening"; he treats his servants with even-handed justice, with fit courtesy and consideration. The recollection is ever present to his mind, that he must give account of his charge over each one of them to his Lord and theirs. So he will make, as far as in him lies, his own domain an image of the kingdom of Christ.

ON THE APPROACHING CONFLICT.

EPHESIANS vi. 10-20.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FOES OF THE CHURCH.

EPHESIANS vi. 10-12.

WE follow the Revised reading of the opening word of this paragraph, and the preferable rendering given by the Revisers in their margin. The adverb is the same that is found in Galatians vi. 17 ("*Henceforth* let no man trouble me"); not that used in Philippians iii. 1 and elsewhere ("*Finally,* my brethren," etc.). The copyists have conformed our text, seemingly, to the latter passage. We are recalled to the circumstances and occasion of the epistle. High as St. Paul soars in meditation, he does not forget the situation of his readers. The words of chapter iv. 14 showed us how well aware he is of the dangers looming before the Asian Churches.

The epistle to the Colossians is altogether a letter of conflict (see ch. ii. 1 ff.). In writing that letter St. Paul was wrestling with spiritual powers, mighty for evil, which had commenced their attack upon this outlying post of the Ephesian province. He sees in the sky the cloud portending a desolating storm. The clash of hostile arms is heard approaching. This is no time for sloth or fear, for a faith half-hearted or half-equipped. "You have need of your best manhood and of all the weapons of the spiritual armoury, to hold your ground in the conflict that is coming upon you. *Henceforth be strong in the Lord, and in the might of His strength.*"

It is the apostle's call to arms!—"Be strengthened in the Lord," he says (to render the imperative literally: so in 2 Timothy ii. 1). *Make His strength your own.* The strength he bids them assume is *power, ability,* strength adequate to its end. "The might of His strength" repeats the combination of terms we found in chapter i. 19. That sovereign power of the Almighty which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, belongs to the Lord Christ Himself. From its resources He will clothe and arm His people. "In the Lord," says Israel evermore, "is righteousness and strength. The rock of my salvation and my refuge is in God." The Church's strength lies in the almightiness of her risen Lord, the Captain of her warfare.

"The *panoply* of God" (ver. 11) reminds us of the saying of Jesus in reference to His casting out of demons, recorded in Luke xi. 21, 22—the only other instance in the New Testament of this somewhat rare Greek word. The Lord Jesus describes Himself in conflict with Satan, who as "the strong one armed keeps his possessions in peace,"—until there "come upon him the stronger than he," who "conquers him and takes away his panoply wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils." In this text the situation is reversed; and the "full armour" belongs to Christ's servants, who are equipped to meet the counter-attack of Satan and the powers of evil. There is a Divine and a Satanic panoply—arms tempered in heaven and in hell, to

be wielded by the sons of light and of darkness respectively (comp. Rom. xiii. 12). The weapons of warfare on the two sides are even as the two leaders that furnish them—"the strong one armed" and the "Stronger than he." Mightier are faith and love than unbelief and hate; "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

Let us review the forces marshalled against us,—their *nature*, their *mode of assault*, and *the arena of the contest*.

I. The Asian Christians had to "stand against *the wiles* [*schemes*, or *methods*] *of the devil*."

Unquestionably, the New Testament assumes the personality of Satan. This belief runs counter to modern thought, governed as it is by the tendency to depersonalise existence. The conception of evil spirits given us in the Bible is treated as an obsolete superstition; and the name of the Evil One, with multitudes serves only to point a profane or careless jest. To Jesus Christ, it is very certain, Satan was no figure of speech; but a thinking and active being, of whose presence and influence He saw tokens everywhere in this evil world (comp. ii. 2). If the Lord Jesus "speaks what He knows, and testifies what He has seen" concerning the mysteries of the other world, there can be no question of the existence of a personal devil. If in any matter He was bound, as a teacher of spiritual truth, to disavow Jewish superstition, surely Christ was so bound in this matter. Yet instead of repudiating the current belief in Satan and the demons, He earnestly accepts it; and it entered into His own deepest experiences. In the visible forms of sin Jesus saw the shadow of His great antagonist. "From the Evil One" He taught His disciples to pray that they might be delivered. The victims of disease and madness whom He healed, were so many captives rescued from the malignant power of Satan. And when Jesus went to meet His death, He viewed it as the supreme conflict with the usurper and oppressor who claimed to be "the prince of this world."

Satan is the consummate form of depraved and untruthful intellect. We read of his "thoughts," his "schemes," his subtlety and deceit and impostures; of his slanders against God and man, from which, indeed, the name devil (*diabolus*) is given him. Falsehood and hatred are his chief qualities. Hence Jesus called him "the manslayer" and "the father of falsehood" (John viii. 44). He was the first sinner, and the fountain of sin (1 John iii. 8). All who do unrighteousness or hate their brethren are, so far, his offspring (1 John iii. 10). With a realm so wide, Satan might well be called not only "the prince," but very "god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4). Plausibly he said to Jesus, in showing Him the kingdoms of the world, at the time when Tiberius Cæsar occupied the imperial throne: "All this authority and glory are delivered unto me. To whomsoever I will, I give it." His power is exercised with an intelligence perhaps as great as any can be that is morally corrupt; but it is limited on all sides. In dealing with Jesus Christ he showed conspicuous ignorance.

Chief amongst the wiles of the devil at this time was the "scheme of error," the cunningly woven net of the Gnostical delusion, in which the apostle feared that the Asian Churches would be entangled. Satan's empire is ruled with a settled policy, and his warfare carried on with a system of strategy which takes advantage of every opening for attack. The manifold combinations of error, the various arts of seduction and temptation, the ten thousand forms of the deceit of unrighteousness constitute "the wiles of the devil."

Such is the gigantic opponent with whom Christ and the Church have been in conflict through all ages. But Satan does not stand alone. In verse 12 there is called up before us an imposing array of spiritual powers. They are "the angels of the devil," whom Jesus set in contrast with the angels of God that surround and serve the Son of man (Matt. xxv. 41). These unhappy beings are, again, identified with the "demons," or "unclean spirits," having Satan for their "prince," whom our Lord expelled wherever He found them infesting the bodies of men. They are represented in the New Testament as fallen beings, expelled from a "principality" and "habitation of their own" (Jude 6) which they once enjoyed, and reserved for the dreadful punishment which Christ calls "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." They are here entitled *principalities* and *powers* (or *dominions*), after the same style as the angels of God, to whose ranks, as we are almost compelled to suppose, these apostates once belonged.

In contrast with the "angels of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14) and "ministering spirits" of the kingdom of God (Heb. i. 14), the angels of Satan have constituted themselves *the world-rulers of this darkness*. We find the compound expression *cosmo-krator* (world-ruler) in later rabbinical usage, borrowed from the Greek and applied to "the angel of death," before whom all mortal things must bow. Possibly, St. Paul brought the term with him from the school of Gamaliel. Satan being the god of this world and swaying "the dominion of darkness," according to the same vocabulary his angels are "the rulers of the world's darkness"; and the provinces of the empire of evil fall under their direction.

The darkness surrounding the apostle in Rome and the Churches in Asia—"this darkness," he says—was dense and foul. With Nero and his satellites the masters of empire, the world seemed to be ruled by demons rather than by men. The frightful wish of one of the Psalmists was fulfilled for the heathen world: "Set the wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand."

The last of St. Paul's synonyms for the satanic forces, "the spiritual [powers] of wickedness," may have served to warn the Church against reading a political sense into the passage and regarding the civil constitution of society and the visible world-rulers as objects for their hatred. Pilate was a specimen, by no means amongst the worst, of the men in power. Jesus regarded him with pity. His real antagonist lurked behind these human instruments. The above phrase, "spirituals of wickedness," is Hebraistic, like "judge" and "steward of unrighteousness," and is equivalent to "wicked spirits." The adjective "spiritual," which does duty for a substantive—"the spiritual [forces, or elements] of wickedness"—brings out the collective character of these hostile powers.

St. Paul's demonology is identical with that of Jesus Christ. The two doctrines stand or fall together. The advent of Christ appears to have stirred to extraordinary activity the satanic

powers. They asserted themselves in Palestine at this particular time in the most open and terrifying manner. In an age of scepticism and science like our own, it belongs to "the wiles of the devil" to work obscurely. This is dictated by obvious policy. Moreover, his power is greatly reduced. Satan is no longer the god of this world, since Christianity rose to its ascendant. The manifestations of demonism are, at least in Christian lands, vastly less conspicuous than in the first age of the Church. But those are more bold than wise who deny their existence, and who profess to explain all occult phenomena and phrenetic moral aberrations by physical causes. The popular idolatries of his own day, with their horrible rites and inhuman orgies, St. Paul ascribed to devilry. He declared that those who sat at the feast of the idol and gave sanction to its worship, were partaking of "the cup and the table of demons" (1 Cor. x. 20, 21). Heathen idolatries at the present time are, in many instances, equally diabolical; and those who witness them cannot easily doubt the truth of the representations of Scripture upon this subject.

II. The conflict against these spiritual enemies is essentially a *spiritual* conflict. "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh."

They are not human antagonists whom the Church has to fear,—mortal men whom we can look in the face and meet with equal courage, in the contest where hot blood and straining muscle do their part. The fight needs mettle of another kind. The foes of our faith are untouched by carnal weapons. They come upon us without sound or footfall. They assail the will and conscience; they follow us into the regions of spiritual thought, of prayer and meditation. Hence the weapons of our warfare, like those which the apostle wielded (2 Cor. x. 2-5), "are not carnal," but spiritual and "mighty toward God."

It is true that the Asian Churches had visible enemies arrayed against them. There were the "wild beasts" with whom St. Paul "fought at Ephesus," the heathen mob of the city, sworn foes of every despiser of their great goddess Artemis. There was Alexander the coppersmith, ready to do the apostle evil, and "the Jews from Asia," a party of whom all but murdered him in Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 27-36); there was Demetrius the silversmith, instigator of the tumult which drove him from Ephesus, and "the craftsmen of like occupation," whose trade was damaged by the progress of the new religion. These were formidable opponents, strong in everything that brings terror to flesh and blood. But after all, these were of small account in St. Paul's view; and the Church need never dread material antagonism. The centre of the struggle lies elsewhere. The apostle looks beyond the ranks of his earthly foes to the power of Satan by which they are animated and directed,—"impotent pieces of the game he plays." From this hidden region he sees impending an attack more perilous than all the violence of persecution, a conflict urged with weapons of finer proof than the sharp steel of sword and axe, and with darts tipped with a fiercer fire than that which burns the flesh or devours the goods.

Even in outward struggles against worldly power, our wrestling is not simply against blood and flesh. Calvin makes a bold application of the passage when he says: "This sentence we should remember so often as we are tempted to revengefulness, under the smart of injuries from men. For when nature prompts us to fling ourselves upon them with all our might, this unreasonable passion will be checked and reined in suddenly, when we consider that these men who trouble us are nothing more than darts cast by the hand of Satan; and that while we stoop to pick up these, we shall expose ourselves to the full force of his blows." *Vasa sunt*, says Augustine of human troublers, *alius utitur; organa sunt, alius tangit.*

The crucial assaults of evil, in many instances, come in no outward and palpable guise. There are sinister influences that affect the spirit more directly, fires that search its inmost fibres, a darkness that sweeps down upon the very light that is in us, threatening its extinction. "Doubts, the spectres of the mind," haunt it; clouds brood over the interior sky and fierce storms sweep down on the soul, that rise from beyond the seen horizon. "Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Away from the tracks of men and the seductions of flesh and blood the choicest spirits have been tested and schooled. So they are tempered in the spiritual furnace to a fineness which turns the edge of the sharpest weapons the world may use against them.

Some men are constitutionally more exposed than others to these interior assaults. There are conditions of the brain and nerves, tendencies lying deep in the organism, that give points of vantage to the enemy of souls. These are the opportunities of the tempter; they do not constitute the temptation itself, which comes from a hidden and objective source. Similarly in the trials of the Church, in the great assaults made upon her vital truths, historical conditions and the external movements of the age furnish the material for the conflicts through which it has to pass; but the spring and moving agent, the master will that dominates these hostile forces is that of Satan.

The Church was engaged in a double conflict—of the flesh and of the spirit. On the one hand, it was assailed by the material seductions of heathenism and the terrors of ruthless persecution. On the other hand, it underwent a severe intellectual conflict with the systems of error that were rooted in the mind of the age. These forces opposed the Christian truth from without; but they became much more dangerous when they found their way within the Church, vitiating her teaching and practice, and growing like tares among the wheat. It is of heresy more than persecution that the apostle is thinking, when he writes these ominous words. Not blood and flesh, but the mind and spirit of the Asian believers will bear the brunt of the attack that the craft of the devil is preparing for the apostolic Church.

III. The last clause of verse 12, *in the heavenly places*, refuses to combine with the above description of the powers hostile to the Church. The heavenly places are the abode of God and the blessed angels. This is the region where the Father has blessed us in Christ (i. 3); where He seated the Christ at His own right hand (i. 20), and has in some sense seated us with Christ (ii. 6); and where the angelic princedoms dwell who follow with keen and studious sympathy the Church's fortunes (iii. 10). To locate the devil and his angels *there* seems to us highly incon-

gruous; the juxtaposition is out of the question with St. Paul. Chapter ii. 2 gives no real support to this view: supposing "the air" to be literally intended in that passage, it belongs to *earth* and not to heaven. Nor do the parallels from other Scriptures adduced supply any but the most precarious basis for an interpretation against which the use of the exalted phrase in our epistle revolts.

No; Satan and his hosts do not dwell with Christ and the holy angels "in the heavenly places." But the Church dwells there already, by her faith; and it is in the heavenly places of her faith and hope that she is assailed by the powers of hell. This final prepositional clause should be separated by a comma from the words immediately foregoing; it forms a distinct predicate to the sentence contained in verse 12. It specifies the *locality* of the struggle; it marks out the battlefield. "Our wrestling is . . . in the heavenly places." So we construe the sentence, following the ancient Greek commentators.

The life of the Church "is hid with Christ in God"; her treasure is laid up in heaven. She is assailed by a philosophy and vain deceit that perverts her highest doctrines, that clouds her vision of Christ and limits His glory, and threatens to drag her down from the high places where she sits with her ascended Lord. Such was, in effect, the aim of the Colossian heresy, and of the great Gnostical movement to which this speculation was a prelude, that for a century and more entangled Christian faith in its metaphysical subtleties and false mysticism. The epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians strike the leading note of the controversies of the Church in this region during its first ages. Their character was thoroughly transcendental. "The heavenly things" were the subject-matter of the great conflicts of this epoch.

The questions of religious controversy characteristic of our own times, though not identical with those of Colossæ or Ephesus, concern matters equally high and vital. It is not this or that doctrine that is now at stake—the nature or extent of the atonement, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son with the Father, the verbal or plenary inspiration of Scripture; but the personal being of God, the historical truth of Christianity, the reality of the supernatural,—these and the like questions, which formed the accepted basis and the common assumptions of former theological discussions, are now brought into dispute. Religion has to justify its very existence. Christianity must answer for its life, as at the beginning. God is denied. Worship is openly renounced. Our treasures in heaven are proclaimed to be worthless and illusive. The entire spiritual and celestial order of things is relegated to the region of obsolete fable and fairy tales. The difficulties of modern religious thought lie at the foundation of things, and touch the core of the spiritual life. Unbelief appears, in some quarters, to be more serious and earnest than faith. While we quarrel over rubrics and ritual, thoughtful men are despairing of God and immortality. The Churches are engaged in trivial contentions with each other, while the enemy pushes his way through our broken ranks to seize the citadel.

"The apostle incites the readers," says Chrysostom, "by the thought of the prize at stake. When he has said that our enemies are powerful, he adds thereto that these are great possessions which they seek to wrest from us. When he says *in the heavenly places*, this implies *for the heavenly things*. How it must rouse and sober us to know that the hazard is for great things, and great will be the prize of victory. Our foe strives to take *heaven* from us." Let the Church be stripped of all her temporalities, and driven naked as at first into the wilderness. She carries with her the crown jewels; and her treasure is unimpaired, so long as faith in Christ and the hope of heaven remain firm in her heart. But let these be lost; let heaven and the Father in heaven fade with our childhood's dreams; let Christ go back to His grave—then we are utterly undone. We have lost our all in all!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DIVINE PANOPLY.

EPHESIANS vi. 13-18.

"STAND" is the watchword for this battle, the apostle's order of the day: that you may be able to *stand* against the stratagems of the devil, . . . that you may be able to *withstand* in the evil day, and mastering all your enemies to *stand*. . . . . *Stand* therefore, girding your loins about with truth." The apostle is fond of this martial style, and such appeals are frequent in the letters of this period. The Gentile believers are raised to the heavenly places of fellowship with Christ, and invested with the lofty character of sons and heirs of God: let them hold their ground; let them maintain the honour of their calling and the wealth of their high estate, standing fast in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. *Pro aris et focis* the patriot draws his sword, and manfully repels the invader. Even so the good soldier of Christ Jesus contends for his heavenly city and the household of faith. He defends the dearest interests and hopes of human life.

This defence is needed, for an "evil day" is at hand! This emphatic reference points to something more definite than the general day of temptation that is co-extensive with our earthly life. St. Paul foresaw a crisis of extreme danger impending over the young Church of Christ. The prophecies of Jesus taught His disciples, from the first, that His kingdom could only prevail by means of a severe conflict, and that some desperate struggle would precede the final Messianic triumph. This prospect looms before the minds of the New Testament writers, as "the day of Jehovah" dominated the imagination of the Hebrew prophets. Paul's apocalypse in 1 and 2 Thessalonians is full of reminiscences of Christ's visions of judgment. It culminates in the prediction of the evil day of Antichrist, which is to usher in the second, glorious coming of the Lord Jesus. The consummation, as the apostle was then inclined to think, might arrive within that generation (1 Thess. iv. 15, 17), although he declares its times and seasons wholly unknown. In his later epistles, and in this especially, it is clear that he anticipated a longer duration for the existing order of things; and "the evil day" for which the Asian Churches are to prepare can scarcely have denoted, to the apostle's mind, the final day of Antichrist, though it may well be an epoch of similar nature and a token and shadow of the last things.

In point of fact a great secular crisis was now

approaching. The six years (64-70 after Christ) extending from the fire of Rome to the fall of Jerusalem, were amongst the most fateful and calamitous recorded in history. This period was, in a very real sense, the day of judgment for Israel and the ancient world. It was a foretaste of the ultimate doom of the kingdom of evil amongst men; and through it Christ appears to have looked forward to the end of the world. Already "the days are evil" (v. 16); and "the evil day" is at hand—a time of terror and despair for all who have not a firm faith in the kingdom of God.

Two chief characteristics marked this crisis, as it affected the people of Christ: *persecution from without*, and *apostasy within the Church* (Matt. xxiv. 5, 8-12). To the latter feature St. Paul refers elsewhere. Of persecution he took less account, for this was indeed his ordinary lot, and had already visited his Churches; but it was afterwards to assume a more violent and appalling form.

When we turn to the epistle to the Seven Churches (Rev. ii., iii.) written in the next ensuing period, we find a fierce battle raging, resembling that for which this letter warns the Asian Churches to prepare. The storm which our apostle foresees had then burst. The message addressed to each Church concludes with a promise to "him that overcometh." To the faithful it is said: "I know thy endurance." The angel of the Church of Pergamum dwells where is "the throne of Satan," and where "Antipas the faithful martyr was killed." There also, says the Lord Jesus, "are those who hold the teaching of Balaam, and the teaching of the Nicolaitans," with whom "I will make war with the sword of my mouth" (comp. Eph. vi. 17). Laodicea has shrunk from the trial, and grown rich by the world's friendship. Thyatira "suffers the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce" the servants of Christ. Sardis has but "a few names that have not defiled their garments." Even Ephesus, though she had tried the false teachers and found them wanting (surely Paul's epistles to Timothy had helped her in this examination), has yet "left her first love." The day of trial has proved an evil day to these Churches. Satan has been allowed to sift them; and while some good wheat remains, much of the faith of the numerous and prosperous communities of the province of Asia has turned out to be faulty and vain. The presentiments that weighed on St. Paul's mind when four years ago he took leave of the Ephesian elders at Miletus, and which reappear in this passage, were only too well justified by the course of events. Indeed, the history of the Church in this region has been altogether mournful and admonitory.

But it is time to look at the armour in which St. Paul bids his readers equip themselves against the evil day. It consists of seven weapons, offensive or defensive—if we count prayer amongst them: the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of readiness to bear the message of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the word, and the continual cry of prayer.

1. In girding himself for the field, the first thing the soldier does is to fasten round his waist the military *belt*. With this he binds in his undergarments, that there may be nothing loose or trailing about him, and braces up his limbs for action. Peace admits of relaxation. The girdle is unclasped; the muscles are unstrung. But everything about the warrior is tense and firm; his dress, his figure and movements, speak of decision and concentrated energy. He stands before us an image of resolute conviction, of a mind made up. Such a picture the words "girt about with truth" convey to us.

The epistle is pervaded by the sense of the Church's need of intellectual conviction. Many of the Asian believers were children, half-enlightened and irresolute, ready to be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (iv. 14). They had "heard the truth as it is in Jesus," but had an imperfect comprehension of its meaning. They required to add to their faith knowledge,—the knowledge won by searching thought respecting the great truths of religion, by a thorough mental appropriation of the things revealed to us in Christ. Only by such a process can truth brace the mind and knit its powers together in "the full assurance of the understanding in the knowledge of the mystery of God, which is Christ" (Col. ii. 2, 3).

Such is the faith needed by the Church, now, as then, the faith of an intelligent, firm, and manly assurance. There is in such faith a security and vigour of action that the faith of mere sentiment and emotional impression, with its nerveless grasp, its hectic and impulsive fervours, cannot impart. The luxury of agnosticism, the languors of doubt, the vague sympathies and hesitant eclecticism in which delicate and cultured minds are apt to indulge; the lofty critical attitude, as of some intellectual god sitting above the strife of creeds, which others find congenial—these are conditions of mind unfit for the soldier of Christ Jesus. He must have sure knowledge, definite and decided purposes—a soul girdled with truth.

2. Having girt his loins, the soldier next fastens on his *breastplate*, or cuirass.

This is the chief piece of his defensive armour; it protects the vital organs. In the picture drawn in 1 Thessalonians v. 8, the breastplate is made "of faith and love." In this more detailed representation, faith becomes the outlying defensive "shield," while righteousness serves for the innermost defence, the rampart of the heart. But, in truth, the Christian righteousness is compounded of faith and love.

This attribute must be understood in its full Pauline meaning. It is the state of one who is right with God and with God's law. It is the righteousness both of standing and of character, of imputation and of impartation, which begins with justification and continues in the new, obedient life of the believer. These are never separate, in the true doctrine of grace. "The righteousness that is of God by faith" is the soul's main defence against the shafts of Satan. It wards off deadly blows, both from this side and from that. Does the enemy bring up against me my old sins? I can say: "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" Am I tempted to presume on my forgiveness, and to fall into transgression once more? From this breastplate the arrow of temptation falls pointless, as it resounds: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous. He that is born of God doth not commit sin." The completeness of pardon for past offence and the integrity of character that belong to the justified life, are woven together in an impenetrable mail.

3. Now the soldier, having girt his loins and guarded his breast, must look well to his feet. There are lying ready for him *shoes* of wondrous make.

What is the quality most needed in the soldier's shoes? Some say it is *firmness;* and they so translate the Greek word employed by the apostle, occurring only here in the New Testament, which in certain passages of the Septuagint seems to acquire this sense, under the influence of Hebrew idiom. But firmness was embodied in the girdle. *Expedition* belongs to the shoes. The soldier is so shod that he may move with alertness over all sorts of ground.

Thus shod with speed and willingness were "the beautiful feet" of those that brought over desert and mountain "the good tidings of peace," the news of Israel's return to Zion (Isaiah lii. 7-9). With such swift strength were the feet of our apostle shod, when "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum" he had "fulfilled the gospel of Christ," and is "ready," as he says, "to preach the glad tidings to you also that are in Rome" (Rom. i. 15). This readiness belonged to His own holy feet, who "came and preached peace to the far off and the near" (ii. 17), when, for example, sitting a weary traveller by the well-side at Sychar, He found refreshment in revealing to the woman of Samaria the fountain of living water. Such readiness befits His servants, who have heard from Him the message of salvation and are sent to proclaim it everywhere.

The girdle and the breastplate look to one's own safety. They must be supplemented by the evangelic zeal inseparable from the Spirit of Christ. This is, moreover, a safeguard of Church life. Von Hofmann says admirably upon this point: "The objection [brought against the above interpretation] that the apostle is addressing the faithful at large, who are not all of them called to preach the gospel, is mistaken. Every believer should be prepared to witness for Christ so often as opportunity affords, and needs a *readiness* thereto. The knowledge of Christ's peace qualifies him to convey its message. He brings it with him into the strife of the world. And it is the consciousness that he possesses himself such peace and has it to communicate to others, which enables him to walk firmly and with a sure step in the way of faith." When we are bidden to "*stand* in the evil day," that does not mean to stand idle or content to hold our ground. Attack is often the best mode of defence. We keep our faith by spreading it. We defend ourselves from our opponents by converting them to the gospel, which breathes everywhere reconciliation and fraternity. Our Foreign Missions are our grand modern apologetic; and God's peacemakers are His mightiest warriors.

4. With his body girt and fenced and his feet clad with the gospel shoes, the soldier reaches out his left hand to "take up withal the *shield*," while his right hand grasps first the helmet which he places on his head, and then the sword that is offered to him in the word of God.

The shield signified is not the small round buckler, or target, of the light-armed man; but the door-like shield, measuring four feet by two-and-a-half and rounded to the shape of the body, that the Greek hoplite and the Roman legionary carried. Joined together these large shields formed a wall, behind which a body of troops could hide themselves from the rain of the enemy's missiles. Such is the office of faith in the conflicts of life: it is the soldier's main defence, the common bulwark of the Church. Like the city's outer wall, faith bears the brunt and onset of all hostility. On this shield of faith the darts of Satan are caught, their point broken, and their fire quenched. These military shields were made of wood, covered on the outside with thick leather, which not only deadened the shock of the missile, but protected the frame of the shield from the "fire-tipped darts" that were used in the artillery of the ancients. These flaming arrows, armed with some quickly burning and light combustible, if they failed to pierce the warrior's shield, fell in a moment extinguished at his feet.

St. Paul can scarcely mean by his "fiery darts" incitements to passion in ourselves, inflammatory temptations that seek to rouse the inward fires of anger or lust. For these missiles are "fire-pointed darts *of the Evil One.*" The fire belongs to the enemy who shoots the dart. It signifies the malignant hate with which Satan hurls slanders and threats against the people of God through his human instruments. A bold faith wards off and quenches this fire even at a distance, so that the soul never feels its heat. The heart's confidence is unmoved and the Church's songs of praise are undisturbed, while persecution rages and the enemies of Christ gnash their teeth against her. Such a shield to him was the faith of Stephen the proto-martyr.

"I heard the defaming of many; there was terror on every side.
But I trusted in Thee, O Jehovah: I said, Thou art my God!"

To "take up the shield of faith," is it not, like the Psalmist, to meet injuries and threats, the boasts of unbelief and of worldly power, the poisoned arrows of the deceitful and the bitter words of unjust reproach, with faith's quiet counter-assertion? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" says the apostle in the midst of tribulation. "God is my witness, whom I serve in the gospel of His Son," he answers when his fidelity is questioned. No shaft of malice, no arrow of fear can pierce the soul that holds such a shield.

5. At this point (ver. 17), when the sentence beginning at verse 14 has drawn itself out to such length, and the relative clause of verse 16*b* makes a break and eddy in the current of thought, the writer pauses for a moment. He resumes the exhortation in a form slightly changed and with rising emphasis, passing from the participle to the finite verb: "And take *the helmet of salvation.*"

The word *take*, in the original, differs from the *taking up* of verses 13 and 16. It signifies the *accepting* of something offered by the hand of another. So the Thessalonians "*accepted* the word" brought them by St. Paul (1 Thess. i. 6) and Titus "*accepted* the consolation" given him by the Corinthians (2 Cor. viii. 17)—in each case a welcome gift. God's hand is stretched out to bestow on His chosen warrior the helmet of salvation and the sword of His word, to complete his equipment for the perilous field. We accept these gifts with devout gratitude, knowing from what source they come and where the heavenly arms were fashioned.

The "helmet of salvation" is worn by the Lord Himself, as He is depicted by the prophet

coming to the succour of His people (Isa. lix. 17). This helmet, on the head of Jehovah, is the crest and badge of their Divine champion. Given to the human warrior, it becomes the sign of his protection by God. The apostle does not call it "the *hope* of salvation," as he does in 1 Thessalonians v. 8, thinking of the believer's assurance of victory in the last struggle. Nor is it the sense and assurance of past salvation that here guards the Christian soldier. The presence of his Saviour and God in itself constitutes his highest safeguard.

> "O Jehovah my Lord, the strength of my salvation,
> Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

The warrior's head, rising above his shield, was frequently open to attack. The arrow might shoot over the shield's edge, and inflict a mortal blow. Our faith, at the best, has its deficiencies and its limits; but God's salvation reaches beyond our highest confidence in Him. His overshadowing presence is the crown of our salvation, His love its shining crest.

Thus the equipment of Christ's soldier is complete; and he is arrayed in the full armour of light. His loins girt with truth, his breast clad with righteousness, his feet shod with zeal, his head crowned with safety, while faith's all-encompassing shield is cast about him, he steps forth to do battle with the powers of darkness, "strong in the Lord, and in the might of His strength."

6. It only remains that "the *sword* of the Spirit" be put into his right hand, while his lips are open in continual prayer to the God of his strength.

The "cleansing word" of chapter v. 26, by whose virtue we passed through the gate of baptism into the flock of Christ, now becomes the guarding and smiting word, to be used in conflict with our spiritual foes. Of the Messiah it was said, in language quoted by the apostle against Antichrist (2 Thess. ii. 8): "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked" (Isa. xi. 4). Similarly, in Hosea, the Lord tells how He has "hewed" the unfaithful "by His prophets, and slain them by the words of His mouth" (Hos. vi. 5). From such sayings of the Old Testament the idea of the sword of the Divine word is derived. We find it again in Hebrews vi. 12: "The word of God, living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword"; and in the "sword, two-edged, sharp," which John in the Revelation saw "coming out of the mouth of the Son of man": it belongs to Him whose name is "the word of God," and with it "He shall smite the nations."

This sword of the inspired word Paul himself wielded with supernatural effect, as when he rebuked Elymas the sorcerer, or when he defended his gospel against the Judaisers of Galatia and Corinth. In his hand it was even as

> "The sword
> Of Michael, from the armoury of God,
> . . . tempered so that neither keen
> Nor solid might resist that edge."

With what piercing reproofs, what keen thrusts of argument, what double-edged irony and dexterous sword-play did this mighty combatant smite the enemies of the cross of Christ! In times of conflict never may such leaders be wanting to the Church, men using weapons of warfare not carnal, but mighty to "cast down strongholds," to "bring down every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and make captive every thought to Christ's obedience."

In her struggle with the world's gigantic lusts and tyrannies, the Israel of God must be armed with this lofty and lightning-like power, with the flaming sword of the Spirit. No less in the secret, internal conflicts of the religious life, the sword of the word is the decisive weapon. The Son of man put it to proof in His combat in the wilderness. Satan himself sought to wrest this instrument to his purpose. With pious texts in his mouth he addressed our Lord, like an angel of light, fain to deceive Him by the very Scripture He had Himself inspired! until, with the last thrust of quotation, Jesus unmasked the tempter and drove him from the field, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

7. We have surveyed the Christian soldier with his harness on. From head to foot he is clothed in arms supernatural. No weapon of defence or offence is lacking, that the spiritual combat needs. Nothing seems to be wanting: yet everything is wanting, if this be all. Our text began: "Be strong in the Lord." It is *prayer* that links the believer with the strength of God.

What avails Michael's sword, if the hand that holds it is slack and listless? what the panoply of God, if behind it beats a craven heart? He is but a soldier in semblance who wears arms without the courage and the strength to use them. The life that is to animate that armed figure, to beat with high resolve beneath the corslet, to nerve the arm as it lifts the strong shield and plies the sharp sword, to set the swift feet moving on their gospel errands, to weld the Church together into one army of the living God, comes from the inspiration of God's Spirit received in answer to believing prayer. So the apostle adds: "With all prayer and supplication praying at every time in the Spirit."

There is here no needless repetition. "Prayer" is the universal word for reverent address to God; and "supplication" the entreaty for such help as "on every occasion"—at each turn of the battle, in each emergency of life—we find ourselves to need. And Christian prayer is always "in the Spirit,"—being offered in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, who is the element of the believer's life in Christ, who helps our infirmities and, virtually, intercedes for us (Rom. viii. 26, 27). When the apostle continues, "*watching* [or *keeping awake*] thereunto," he reminds us, as perhaps he was thinking himself, of our Lord's warning to the disciples sleeping in Gethsemane: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The "perseverance" he requires in this wakeful attention to prayer is the resolute persistence of the suppliant, who will neither be daunted by opposition nor wearied by delay.

The word "supplication" is resumed at the end of verse 18, in order to enlist the prayers of the readers for the service of the Church at large: "with wakeful heed thereto, in all the persistence and *supplication for all the saints*." Prayer for ourselves must broaden out into a catholic intercession for all the servants of our Master, for all the children of the household of faith. By the bands of prayer we are knit together,—a vast multitude of saints throughout the earth, unknown by face or name to our fel-

lows, but one in the love of Christ and in our heavenly calling, and all engaged in the same perilous conflict.

"All the saints," St. Paul said (i. 15), were interested in the faith of the Asian believers; they were called "with all the saints" to share in the comprehension of the immense designs of God's kingdom (iii.18). The dangers and temptations of the Church are equally far-reaching; they have a common origin and character in all Christian communities. Let our prayers, at least, be catholic. At the throne of grace, let us forget our sectarian divisions. Having access in one Spirit to the Father, let us realise in His presence our communion with all His children.

THE CONCLUSION.

EPHESIANS vi. 19-24.

CHAPTER XXX.

REQUEST: COMMENDATION: BENEDICTION.

EPHESIANS vi. 19-22.

THE apostle has bidden his readers apply themselves with wakeful and incessant earnestness to prayer (ver. 18). For this is, after all, the chief arm of the spiritual combat. By this means the soul draws reinforcements of mercy and hope from the eternal sources (ver. 10). By this means the Asian Christians will be able not only to carry on their own conflict with vigour, but to help all the saints (ver. 18); and through their aid the whole Church of God will be sustained in its war with the prince of this world.

The apostle Paul himself stood in the forefront of this battle. He was suffering for the cause of common Christendom; he was a mark for the attack of the enemies of the gospel. On him, more than on any other man, the safety and progress of the Church depended (Phil. i. 25). In this position he naturally says: "Watching unto prayer in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*and for me.*" If his heart should fail him, or his mouth be closed, if the word of inspiration ceased to be given him and the great teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth no longer spoke as he ought to speak, it would be a heavy blow and sore discouragement to the friends of Christ throughout the world. "My afflictions are your glory (iii. 13). My unworthy testimony to Christ is showing forth His praise to all men and angels. Pray for me then, that I may speak and act in this hour of trial in a manner worthy of the dispensation given to me."

Strong and confident as the apostle Paul was, he felt himself to be nothing without prayer. It is his habit to expect the support of the intercessions of all who love him in Christ. He knew that he was helped by this means, on numberless occasions and in wonderful ways. He asks his present readers to entreat that "the word may be given me when I open my mouth, so that I may freely make known the mystery of the gospel, on which behalf I serve as ambassador in bonds, that in it I may speak freely, as I ought to speak." This sentence hangs upon the verb "may-be-given." Jesus said to His apostles: "It shall be *given* you in that hour what you shall speak, when brought before rulers and kings" (Matt. x. 18-20). The apostle stands now before the Roman world. He has appealed to Cæsar, and awaits his trial. If he has not yet appeared at the Emperor's tribunal, he will shortly have to do so. Christ's ambassador is about to plead in chains before the highest of human courts. It is not his own life or freedom that he is concerned about; the ambassador has only to consider how he shall represent his Sovereign's interests. The importance which Paul attached to this occasion is manifest from the words written to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 17) referring to his later trial. St. Paul has this special need in his thoughts, in addition to the help from above continually required in the discharge of his ministry, under the hampering conditions of his imprisonment (comp. Col. iv. 3, 4).

The Church must entreat on Paul's behalf that the word he utters may be God's, and not his own. It is in vain to "open the mouth," unless there is this higher prompting and through the gates of speech there issues a Divine message, unless the speaker is the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit rather than of his individual thought and will. "The words that I speak unto you," Jesus said, "I speak not of myself." The bold apostle intends to open his mouth; but he must have the true "word given" him to say. We should pray for Christ's ambassadors, and especially for the more public and eloquent pleaders of the Christian cause, that it may be thus with them. Rash and vain words, that bear the stamp of the mere man who utters them and not of the Spirit of his Master, do a hurt to the cause of the gospel proportioned to the blessing that comes from such lips when they speak the word given to them.

Such inspiration would enable the apostle to "make known the mystery of the gospel *with freedom and confidence of speech*": the expression rendered "with boldness" means all this. Before the emperor Nero, or the slave Onesimus, he will be able with the same aptness and dignity and self-command to declare his message and to vindicate his Master's name. "The mystery of the gospel" is no other secret than that which this epistle unfolds (iii. 3-9), the great fact that Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the Lord of the whole world. Jesus proclaimed Himself to Pilate, who represented at Jerusalem the imperial rule, as the King of all who are of the truth; and the apostle Paul has the like message to convey to the head of the Empire. It needed the greatest boldness and the greatest wisdom in the ambassador of the Messianic King to play his part at Rome; an unwise word might make his own life forfeit, and bring incalculable dangers on the Church.

St. Paul's trial, we suppose, passed off successfully, as he at this time anticipated. The Roman government was perfectly aware that the political charge against their prisoner was frivolous; and Nero, if he personally gave Paul a hearing on this earlier trial, in all probability viewed his spiritual pretensions on his Master's behalf with contemptuous tolerance. If he did so, the toleration was not due to any want of courage or clearness on the defendant's part. It is possible even that the courage and address of the advocate of the "new superstition" pleased the tyrant,

who was not without his moments of good humour nor without the instincts of a man of taste. The apostle, we may well believe, made an impression on the supreme court at Rome similar to that made on his judges in Cæsarea.

St. Paul's bonds in Christ have now become widely "manifest" in Rome (Phil. i. 13). He pleads in circumstances of disgrace. But God brings good for His servants out of evil. As he said at a later time, so he could say now: "They have bound me; but they cannot bind the word of God." He was "not ashamed of the gospel" in the prospect of coming to Rome years before (Rom. i. 16); and he is not ashamed now, though he has come in chains as an evil-doer. Through the intercessions of Christ's people all these injuries of Satan are turning to his salvation and to the "furtherance of the gospel"; and Paul rejoices and triumphs in them, well assured that Christ will be magnified whether by his life or death, whether by his freedom or his chains (Phil. i. 12-26). The prayers which the imprisoned apostle asks from the Church were fulfilled. For we read in the last verses of the Acts of the Apostles, which put into a sentence the history of this period: "He received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, *with all boldness*, none forbidding him."

The paragraph relating to Tychicus is almost identical with that of Colossians iv. 7, 8. It begins with a "But" connecting what follows with the statement the apostle has just made respecting his position at Rome. As much as to say: "I want your prayers, set as I am for the defence of the gospel and in circumstances of difficulty and peril. But Tychicus will tell you more about me than I can convey by letter. I am sending him, in fact, for this very purpose."

St. Paul knew the great anxiety of the Christians of Asia on his account. Epaphras of Colossæ had "shown him the love in the Spirit" that was felt towards him even by those in this region who had never seen him in the flesh (Col. i. 8). The tender heart of the apostle is touched by this assurance. So he sends Tychicus to visit as many of the Asian Churches as he may be able to reach, bringing news that will cheer their hearts and relieve their discouragement (iii. 13). The note sent at this time to Philemon indicates the hopeful tidings that Tychicus was able to convey to Paul's friends in the East: "I trust that through your prayers I shall be given to you" (Philem. 22). To the Philippians he writes, perhaps a little later, in the same strain: "I trust in the Lord that I myself shall come shortly" (Phil. ii. 24). He anticipates, with some confidence, his speedy acquittal and release: it is not likely that this expectation, on the part of such a man as St. Paul, was disappointed. The good news went round the Asian and Macedonian Churches: "Paul is likely soon to be free, and we shall see and hear him again!"

In the parallel epistle he writes, "that you may know" (Col. iv. 8); here it is, "that you *also* may know my affairs." The added word is significant. The writer is imagining his letter read in the various assemblies which it will reach. He has the other epistle in his mind, and remembering that he there introduced Tychicus in similar terms, he says to this wider circle of Asian disciples: "That you also, as well as the Churches of the Lycus valley, may know how things are with me, I send Tychicus to give you a full report." It is not necessary, however, to look beyond the last two verses for the reference of the *also* of verse 21: "I have asked your prayers on my behalf; and I wish you in turn to know how things go with me." Possibly, there were some matters connected with St. Paul's trial at Rome that could not be fitly or safely communicated by letter. Hence he adds: "He shall make known unto you all things." When he writes "that ye may know my affairs, how I do," we gather that Tychicus was to communicate to those he visited everything about the beloved apostle that would be of interest to his Asian brethren.

The apostle commends Tychicus in language identical in the two letters, except that in Colossians "fellow-servant" is added to the honourable designations of "beloved brother and faithful minister," under which he is here introduced. We find him first associated with St. Paul in Acts xx. 4, where "Tychicus and Trophimus" represent Asia in the number of those who accompanied the apostle on his voyage to Jerusalem, when he carried the contributions of his Gentile Churches to the relief of the Christian poor in Jerusalem. Trophimus, his companion, is called a "Greek" and an "Ephesian" (Acts xxi. 28, 29). Whether Tychicus belonged to the same city or not, we cannot tell. He was almost certainly a Greek. The Pastoral epistles show Tychicus still in the apostle's service in his last years. He appears to have joined St. Paul's staff and remained with him from the time that he accompanied him to Jerusalem in the year 59. From 2 Timothy iv. 9-12 we gather that Tychicus was sent to Ephesus to relieve Timothy, when St. Paul desired the presence of the latter at Rome. It is evident that he was a man greatly valued by the apostle and endeared to him.

Tychicus was well known in the Asian Churches, and suitable therefore to be sent upon this errand. And the commendation given to him would be very welcome to the circle to which he belonged. The apostle has great tact in these personal matters, the tact which belongs to delicate feeling and a generous mind. He calls his messenger "the beloved brother" in his relation to the Church in general, and "faithful minister in the Lord" in his special relation to himself. So he describes Epaphroditus to the Philippians as "your apostle and minister of my need." In conveying these letters and messages, this worthy man was Paul's apostle and minister of his need in regard to the Asian Churches. He is a "minister *in the Lord*," inasmuch as this office lies within the range of his service to the Lord Christ.

We observe that in writing to the Colossians the apostle applies to Onesimus, the converted slave, the honourable epithets applied here to this long-tried friend: "the faithful and beloved brother" (Col. iv. 9). Every Christian believer should be in the eyes of his fellows a "beloved brother." And every true servant of Christ and His people is a "faithful minister in the Lord," be his rank high or low, and whether official hands have been laid upon his head or not. We are apt, by a trick of words, to limit to the order which we suitably call "the ministry" expressions that the New Testament applies to the common ministry of Christ's saints (comp. iv. 12). This devoted servant of Christ is employed

just now as a newsman and letter-carrier. But what a high responsibility it was, to be the bearer to the Asian cities, and to the Church for all time, of the epistles of Paul the apostle to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. Had Tychicus been careless or dishonest, had he lost these precious documents or tampered with them, how great the loss to mankind! We cannot read them without feeling our debt to this beloved brother and faithful servant of the Church. Those who travel upon Christ's business, who link distant communities to each other and convey from one to another the Holy Spirit's fellowship and grace, are "the messengers of the Churches and the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. viii. 23).

The Benediction.

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith,
From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ
In incorruption" (vv. 23, 24).

Grace and Peace were the first words of the epistle,—the apostle's salutation to all his Churches. In *Peace and Grace* he breathes out his final blessing. The benediction is fuller than in most of the epistles, and exhibits several peculiar features.

To the Thessalonians (2 Thess. iii. 16) St. Paul wished: "Peace continually, in all ways, from the Lord of peace Himself"; and he commends the Romans twice to "the God of peace" (ch. xv. 33, xvi. 20): the Corinthians he bids to "live in peace," so that "the God of love and peace" may be with them (2 Cor. xiii. 11). There is nothing in the least degree strange or un-Pauline in the wishes here expressed, except the fact that they are put in the third person—"Peace *to the brethren*," etc.—instead of being addressed directly to the readers in the second person, as in all other of the apostle's extant closing benedictions. This peculiarity, as we observed in the first chapter, is in accordance with the encyclical and impersonal stamp of the epistle. It is Paul's most catholic benediction, his blessing upon "all the Israel of God" (comp. Gal. vi. 16).

"With faith," that "love" is desired whereby, according to the Pauline ethics of salvation, faith works (Gal. v. 6), the love which as a vitalising organic force creates the new man, formed in all his doings and dispositions after the image of Jesus Christ. From chapter iv. 1-3 we have learnt how "peace" and "love" attend each other. Love is the source of the forbearance, the mutual consideration and self-sacrifice, without which there is no peace within the Church. Peace springs from love: love waits on faith. Amongst brethren in Christ, members of the same household of faith, peace and love have their home. These are the sons of peace: with good will and good hope, entering or quitting their abode, we say, "Peace be to this house!"

The peace that the apostle looks for amongst Christian brethren is the fruit of peace with God through Christ. Such "peace guarding the thoughts and heart" of each Christian man, nothing contrary thereto will rise amongst them. Calm and quiet hearts make a peaceful Church. There are no clashing interests, no selfish competitions, no strife as to who shall be greatest. Differences of opinion and taste are kept within the bounds of mutual submission. The awe of God's presence with His people, the remembrance of the dear price at which His Church was purchased, the sense of Christ's Lordship in the Spirit and of the sacredness of our brotherhood in Him, check all turbulence and rivalry and teach us to seek the things that make for peace.

"Peace *and love*," the apostle desires. Love includes peace, and more; for it labours not to prevent contention only, but to help and enrich in all ways the body of Christ. By such "toil of love" faith is made complete. We are bidden, indeed, in certain matters to "have faith to ourselves before God" (Rom. xiv. 22). This maxim holds where one has a special faith in regard to such things as eating flesh or drinking wine, in which any one of us may without offence differ from his brethren. But it is a poor faith that dwells upon questions of this nature, and makes its religion of them. The essentials of faith, as we saw them delineated in chapter iv. 1-6, are things that unite and not distinguish us.

As faith grows and deepens, it makes new channels in which love may flow. "We are bound to thank God always for you," writes St. Paul to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. i. 3), "for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another multiplieth." This is the sound and true growth of faith. Where an intenser faith makes men disputatious and exclusive; where it fails to breed meekness and courtesy, we cannot but suspect its quality. Such faith may be sincere; but it is mixed with a lamentable ignorance, and a resistance to the Holy Spirit that is likely to end in grave offence. "Contending earnestly for the faith" does not mean contending angrily, with the weapons of satire and censoriousness. It is well to remember that we are not the judges of our brethren. There are many questions raised and discussed amongst us, which we may safely leave to the judgment of the last day. It is too easy to fill the air with matters of contention, and to excite a sore and suspicious temper destructive of peace, and in which nothing but fault-finding will flourish. If we must contend, we may surely debate quietly on secondary matters, while we are one in Christ. If we have not *love with faith*, our faith is worthless (1 Cor. xiii. 2).

Deep beneath the peace that dwells in the Church and the love that fills each believer's heart, is the eternal fountain of *grace*. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ," says the apostle. Grace is theirs already; and they desire nothing so much as its increase. Their love to Christ is the fruit of the grace of God that is with them. This wish includes all good wishes; it surpasses both our deservings and desires. All that God prepared for us in His eternal counsels, and that Christ purchased by His redeeming love, all of good that our nature can receive now and for ever, is embraced in this one word: Grace be with you.

"With all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ," Paul says, for it is to lovers of Christ that God gives the continuance of His grace. If our love to Christ fails, grace leaves us. God cannot look with favour upon the man who has no love for His Son Jesus Christ. In giving his blessing to the Corinthians, St. Paul was compelled to write with his own hand: "If any man love not the Lord, let him be anathema." The

blessing involves the anathema. God's love is not a love of indifference, an indiscriminate, immoral affection. It is a love of choice and predilection—"If any man love me," said Jesus, "my Father will love him." Is not the condition reasonable,—and the inference inevitable? The Father cannot grant His grace to those who have seen and hated Him in His Son and image. By that hatred they refuse His grace, and cast it from them.

On the other hand, a sincere love to the Lord Jesus Christ opens the heart to all the rich and purifying influences of Divine grace. The sinful woman, stained with false and foul love, who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears, attained in that act to a height of purity undreamed of by the virtuous Pharisee. This new and holy flame burns out impure passion from the soul: it kindles lofty thoughts; it makes crooked natures straight, and timid and weak natures brave and strong. "To them that love God, we know, all things work together for good." To them that love Christ, all things contribute blessing; all conditions and events of life become means of grace. If we love Christ, we shall love His people,—the Church, the bride of Christ from whom He will never be parted in our thoughts. If we love Christ, we shall love the work He has laid upon us, and the word He has taught us, and the sacramental pledges He has given us in remembrance of Him and assurance of His coming. If we love Him, we shall "keep His commandments," and He will keep His promise to send us the "other Helper to be with us for ever, even the Spirit of truth." The gift of the Holy Spirit is the all-sufficiency of grace. Here is the innermost sanctuary of our religion, the fountain and beginning of the soul's eternal life,—in the love which joins it to the Lord in one spirit.

In incorruption is the last and sealing word of this letter, which we have been so long studying together. It "stands as the crown and climax of this glorious epistle" (Alford). Like so many other words of the epistle, at first sight its interpretation is not clear. The apostle has used the term in several other passages, as synonymous with *immortality* and denoting the state of the blessed after the resurrection, when they will stand before God complete in body and in spirit, with all that is mortal in them swallowed up of life—"raised in incorruption." But there is nothing in this context to lead up to the idea of personal, bodily immortality. Those who construe the apostle's words in this sense place a comma before the final clause and treat it as a qualification of the main predicate of the sentence: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord,—grace [culminating] in incorruption"—or in other words, "grace crowned with glory!" But it must be admitted that this is somewhat strained.

The rendering of our ordinary version, "in sincerity" (in the Revised rendering "uncorruptness"), gives an ethical sense to the word that is scarcely borne out by usage. It is a different, though kindred expression that St. Paul employs to express "uncorruptness" in Titus ii. 7.

It appears to us that the term "incorruption," in its ordinary significance, applies fitly to the believer's love for the Lord when the word is read in accordance with the symbolism of the epistle. This love is the life of the body of Christ. In it lies the Church's immortality. The gates of death prevail not against her, rooted and grounded as she is in love to the risen and immortal Christ. "May that love be maintained," the apostle says, "in its deathless power. Let it be an unspoilt and an unwasting love."

Of earthly love we often say with sadness:—

> "Space is against thee: it can part!
> Time is against thee: it can chill!"

Not so with the love of Christ. Neither death nor life parts the soul from Him. Our love to the Lord Jesus Christ seats us with Him in the heavenly places,—above the realm of decay, above this wasting flesh and perishing world.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PREFATORY NOTE.

NOT much need be said by way of preface, in addition to what is suggested in the introductory chapter.

It may be observed, however, that the Apostle's teaching repeatedly touches on the question, How the problem of practical human life on this earth is to be conceived and dealt with under the light and the influences of Christianity. The thought occurred that some expository passages might be superseded by an appendix summing up in one view the principles conceived to underlie the Apostle's way of dealing with such topics, which could be referred to on each separate occasion; and such a statement was prepared. It was, however, finally judged more suitable to the nature of an exposition to keep as close as possible to the Apostle's turn of thought in each of the cases in which he approaches the subject, rather than to try to secure brevity by a more summary treatment.

A few sentences have been transferred from a lecture on the Apostle Paul, published some years ago.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

BY THE REV. ROBERT RAINY, D. D.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY; THE SALUTATION.

THE sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles contains the account of the Apostle Paul's first intercourse with the Philippians, and of the "beginning of the gospel" there. The date may be fixed as A. D. 51. After the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv.), and after the dissension between Paul and Barnabas (ver. 39), the Apostle of the Gentiles, accompanied by Silas, took his journey through Syria and Cilicia. "Confirming the Churches," he went over a good deal of ground which he had traversed before. At Lystra he assumed Timothy as an additional companion and assistant; and he passed on, guided in a very special manner by the Holy Spirit, until he arrived at Troas. Here a Divine warning, in a dream, determined him to break ground in a new field. The little company, to which Luke was now added, passed on to Macedonia, and, having landed at Neapolis, where they do not seem to have made any stay or found any opportunity of preaching, they came to Philippi. This, therefore, was the first city in Europe in which, so far as we have any distinct intimation, the gospel of the grace of God was declared.

Philippi was a city of some importance, and had the position and privileges of a Roman colony. It was situated in a fruitful district, was near to gold mines, and was also near enough to the sea to serve as a depôt for a good deal of Asiatic commerce.

It is hardly necessary to remind readers of the Scripture how Lydia and others received the word; how the preachers were followed by the damsel with the spirit of divination; how, when that damsel had been silenced by Paul, her masters raised a tumult against Paul and Silas, and got them scourged and cast into prison; how the earthquake, which followed during the night, resulted in the conversion of the jailor, and in Paul and Silas being sent forth from the city with honour. Perhaps Luke and Timothy remained behind at Philippi, and continued to edify the believers. At any rate, Paul himself had by this time continued there "many days." Two short visits of the Apostle to Philippi at a subsequent time are known to us (Acts xx. 2, 6).

The Church thus founded proved to be an interesting one, for it possessed much of the simplicity and earnestness of true Christianity. Both in the Epistles to the Corinthians and in this Epistle, the Philippians are singled out, above all Churches, for their cordiality of feeling towards the Apostle who had brought to them the knowledge of the truth. They made liberal contributions for the furtherance of his work in other regions, beginning shortly after he left Philippi, and repeating them from time to time afterwards. They seem to have been remarkably free from some of the defects incidental to those early Churches, and to the churches at all periods. The Apostle's commendations of them are peculiarly warm and glowing; and scarcely anything had to be noticed in the way of special warning, except a tendency to disagreement among some of their members. It does not appear that there was any great number of Jews at Philippi, and we find no trace of a synagogue. This may account in some measure for their freedom from the Judaising tendency: for we find the Philippians exhorted, indeed, to beware of that evil, but not reprehended as if it had taken any strong hold among them. On the other hand, they seem to have remained in a good measure free from evils to which Gentile Churches were most exposed, and which, at Corinth for example, produced much that was disheartening and perplexing.

Eleven years, probably, had now passed since Paul had brought to Philippi the knowledge of Christ Jesus. During that time he had undergone many vicissitudes, and now he had been for some time a prisoner at Rome. Probably he had already written the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and to Philemon. Comparing these with our Epistle, we may conclude that his prospects as a prisoner had not improved, but rather darkened, since the date of those letters. At this time, then, Epaphroditus arrived, apparently after a dangerous journey, bearing with him a supply for the Apostle's wants, bringing tidings of the state of the Philippian Church, and assuring him of their sympathy and their prayers on his behalf. It is no wonder that, in these circumstances, the Epistle bears marks of having been written by the Apostle with a special flow of tenderness and of affection.

The scope of the letter may be briefly stated. After the usual inscription and salutation, the Apostle expresses (as he does so often in his Epistles) his thankfulness for what the Philippians had attained, and his desire that they might grow to yet higher things. He goes on to tell them how matters stood with himself, and opens up, as to those whom he reckons trusted friends, the manner in which his mind was exercised under these providences. Returning to the Philippians, and aiming at this, that they and he might have growing fellowship in all Christian grace, he goes on to set before them Christ, specially in His lowliness and self-sacrifice. This is the grand end; attainment to His likeness is work for all their lives. Paul sets forth how earnestly his heart is set on this object, and what means he is taking to advance it. After a brief digression relating to his circumstances and theirs, he returns again to the same point. In order that defects may be removed, dangers avoided, progress made, Christ must be their joy, their trust, their aim, their very life. They, like the Apostle himself, must press on, never content till the consummate salvation is attained (iii. 21). If this should be so, his desires for them would be fulfilled. So he closes (iv. 2) with directions rising out of this central view, and with renewed expression of the comfort he had derived from their affectionate remembrance. Their good will to the cause in which his life was spent, and to himself, had cheered his heart. And he took it as God's blessing to him and to them.

Such is a brief outline of the course of thought. But the Epistle, while perfect in the unity of its feeling and of its point of view, is remarkable for the way in which it alternates between matters proper to the Philippians, including the instruction Paul saw fit to impress upon them, and matters personal to himself. The Apostle seems to feel sure of affectionate sympathy in both regions, and in both equally; therefore in both his heart utters itself without difficulty and without restraint. Chaps. i. 3-11, i. 27-ii. 16, iii. 1-iv. 9, are occupied with the one theme, and i. 12-26, ii. 17-30, iv. 10-21, with the other. In short, more than any other Epistle, if we except, perhaps, that to Philemon, the Epistle to the Philippians has the character of an outpouring. The official aims and obligations of the Christian instructor are fused, as it were, in the glowing affection of the personal friend. He is sure of his place in the hearts of his correspondents, and he knows how glad they will be to be assured of the place they hold in his.

Let us now attend to the inscription and salutation. Those who send the Epistle are Paul and Timothy. Yet plainly we are not to regard it as a joint Epistle proceeding from both equally; for it is Paul who speaks throughout, in his own name and by his own authority. Timothy only joins, as Sosthenes and Silas do in other cases, in heartily commending to the Church at Philippi whatever the Epistle contains. As there was harmony between the two labourers when they laid the foundation at Philippi, so there is also in the building up. Timothy is joined in the love and care; but the authority is Paul's. Both alike are called "servants of Jesus Christ"; for to this Church no further commendation and no rehearsal of a special right to speak and teach are needed. And yet, to understanding hearts, what commendation could be more weighty? If these two men are called, and allowed by Christ to be His servants, if they are loyal and faithful servants, if they come on an errand on which Christ has sent them, if they deliver His message and do His work, what more need be said? This is honour and authority enough—to be, in our degree, Christ's servants. But the word is stronger: it means bondservants, or slaves,—such as are the master's property, or are at his absolute disposal. So Paul felt; for we are not to reckon this to be, on his part, a mere phrase. Already, in this word, we recognise the sense of entire consecration to his Master and Lord; in which, as we shall see, he felt he could count upon the hearty sympathy of his Philippian friends.

Those who are addressed are, in the first place, "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi." The saints, or holy ones, is a common expression in the Scriptures. The word "sanctify" is applied both to persons and to things. Bible-readers will have noticed that the term seems to vibrate or vacillate between two meanings,—signifying on the one hand the production of personal intrinsic holiness, and on the other merely consecration, or setting apart of anything to God's service. Now the connection of both meanings will appear, if we mark how both meet in the word as it is applied to the children of God. For such are separated, set apart for God from sin and from the world; not, however, by a mere outward destination, devoting them to a certain use and service, but by an internal hallowing, which makes the man really in his inward nature holy, fit for God's service and God's fellowship. This is done by the regeneration of the Spirit, and by His indwelling thereafter. Hence, to distinguish this consecration from the mere outward ceremonial sanctification, which was so temporary and shadowy, we find the Apostle Peter (i. 2) saying that God's children are chosen "by sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus." For the ancient Israel was sanctified to obedience in another manner (Exodus xxiv. 6).

Now because this real consecration takes place when we are grafted into Christ by faith, because the Spirit comes to us and abides in us as the Spirit of Christ, because whatever the Spirit does, as our Sanctifier, has its rise from Christ's redeeming work, because He unites us to Christ and enables us to cleave to Christ and hold fellowship with Him, therefore those who are thus sanctified are called saints *in* Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit who sanctifies; but He does so inasmuch as he roots us *in* Christ and builds us up in Christ. Therefore saints are sanctified *by*, or *of*, the Spirit; but they are sanctified (or holy) *in* Christ Jesus.

This expression, "saints," or some phrase that is equivalent, occurs commonly in the Epistles as the designation of the parties addressed. And two things are to be observed in connection with it. First, when the Apostle addresses "all the saints," in any Epistle, he is not shutting out any professed members of the Church, any professed believers in the Lord. He never speaks at the outset of an Epistle as if he meant to make deliberate distinction between two several classes of members of the Church: as who should say, "I write now to some part of the Church, viz., the saints; as for the rest, I do not now address them." Hence we find the term used as equivalent to the Church—"to the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia," and again "to them . . . that are called to be saints." We shall see presently the lesson which this is fitted to teach. But, secondly, on the other hand, the Apostle's use of the word makes it clear that he uses it in the full sense which we have explained, of a real saintship. He does not restrain the sense to some merely external saintship, as if his meaning were "professing Christians whether they are real or not." The word stands, in the inscriptions, as equivalent to "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "faithful in Christ Jesus," "beloved of God"; or as in 2 Peter i., "them that have obtained like precious faith with us," and in 1 Peter, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God unto obedience." Thus then we are to take it:—The Apostle wrote to the visible, or the professed and accepted followers of the Lord, on the understanding that they were what they professed to be. He was not to question it: he assumed that they were saints of God, for to profess the faith of Christ is to claim that character. He rejoiced to hope that it would prove to be so, and gladly took note of everything which tended to assure him that their holiness was real. He proclaims to them, in the character of saints, the privileges and the obligations that pertain to saints. It was the business of every man to look well to the reality of his faith, and to try the grounds on which he took his place with those addressed as beloved of God and called to be saints. There might be some who had but a name to live (2 Cor. xiii. 5). If so, it was not the Apostle's part,

writing to the Church, to allow that possibility to confuse or lower the style of his address to Christ's Church. He wrote to all the saints in Christ Jesus who were at Philippi.

This is evident from the strain of all the Pauline Epistles, and it is important to observe it and apply it. Otherwise we shall readily fall into this way of reasoning,—"Since there must have been some in these Churches who were only nominally and not really believers, the word *saints* must include such; therefore it can imply only an outward separation of men, apart from any determination of their inward state." If we do so, then everything the Apostle says to saints, their standing, their privileges, their obligations, and their hopes, will come to be strained and lowered in the interpretation, so as to mean only that such privileges and blessings are somehow attainable, and if attained may also on certain terms be secured. The interpretation of the Apostle's teaching on these subjects will, in short, be what it *must* be, if it is taken to apply at once, in his intention, to those who are indeed saints and to those who are not. This line, in point of fact, has been taken, in the interpretation of the Epistles, so as to resolve everything the Apostle says about the eternal life of saved men, as actually theirs, from their election downwards, into a mere matter of outward privileges. This view, no doubt, involves a straining of plain words. Yet it will always seem to force itself upon us, unless we hold fast (what is indeed demonstrably true) that when the Apostle speaks to saints, he says what should be said to those who are indeed saints, and on the understanding that those whom he addresses are such.

In like manner, on the other side, we have a lesson to learn from the unhesitating way in which the Apostle writes to the saints and sends the letter to the members of a Christian Church as the parties intended. He may have some things to reprehend; he may even have to express fears, when things have gone amiss, that some in the Church may yet prove to be no saints. Yet writing to the Church, he writes to saints. Let us learn from this what those lay claim to who become members of Christ's Church, and what responsibilities they take on. They claim, in Christ, the salvation which makes men saints—*i. e.*, persons set apart under the influence of the Holy Spirit to enjoy Christ's forgiveness and to walk in His ways. Christ does this for us, if He does a Saviour's work. It is a thing incongruous, a thing, in the Apostle's view, not to be taken for granted, that any one shall hold his place in Christ's Church who is worldly, earthly, unholy. There may be such, but Paul will not assume it; he will not measure the Christianity of Christ's Church by any such standard. Neither will he go about to determine whether perhaps it is so or not in the case of any who are professing Christ in the ordinary way. *If* any have entered Christ's Church who are content to continue in worldliness and sin, not seeking in Christ the grace which saves, that is solely their own personal sin, and in it they lie unto the Lord. But not for that will the Apostle come down to speak to Christ's Church as if it should be thought of as a company to which holy and unholy may equally well belong. If any be there who are in no vital sense saints, their intrusion will not hinder Paul from speaking to the Church of God in its own proper character and according to its calling.

But let it be remarked at the same time, that this same fact shows us that the Apostle was wont to judge of men and Churches charitably; yes, with a very large charity. We may be very sure that there was a good deal in all those Churches, and a great deal in some, that needed to be judged charitably. They were not all clear, eminent, conspicuous saints; so far from that, there might well be some whole Churches in which saintship was, so far as man's inspection could perceive, faint and questionable. But the Apostle was far from thinking of shutting out the man whose faith was weak, whose attainments were small, whose regard to Christ was but a struggling and germinating thing. Far from being disposed to shut him out, no doubt the Apostle's whole desire was to shut such an one in, among the saints in Jesus Christ.

To be accepted in the Beloved, to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, is a very great thing. No less than this great thing Christ offers, and no less we humbly claim in faith. Also it is no less than this that Christ bestows on those who come to Him. Let Christians, on the one hand, look to Christ, as able and willing to do no less than this even for them; on the other hand, let them look to themselves, that they neither deceive themselves with false pretences, nor trifle idly with so great a gospel. And in the case of others, let hasty and needless adverse judgments be avoided. Let us be glad to think that Christ may see His own, where our dim sight can find but scanty tokens of His work.

Along with the saints the letter specifies, in particular, the bishops and deacons. The former were the officers who took the oversight, as the word implies; the deacons those who rendered service, especially in the Church's outward and pecuniary concerns. These two standing orders are recognised by the Apostle. It is obvious that this does not suggest diocesan Episcopacy, for that implies three orders, the highest being a single bishop, to the exclusion of others assuming the office in that place.

It is more important to observe that the Epistle is not directed to the bishops primarily, or as if they were entitled to come between the people and the message. It is directed to all the saints. To them the Epistle, to them all the Scriptures belong, as their own inheritance, which no man may take from them. In so far as the bishops and deacons are distinguished from other saints, the Scriptures pertain to them that they may learn their own duty, and also may help the people in the use and enjoyment of that which is already theirs.

Now follows the salutation—Grace be unto you and peace. This is the ordinary salutation, varied and amplified in a few of the Epistles. It may be said to express the sum of all Christian well-being in this life.

Grace is, first of all, the word which expresses the free favour of God, manifested towards the unworthy in Christ Jesus. But it is further extended in meaning to that which is the fruit of this favour, to the principles and dispositions in the mind which result from grace, which recognise grace, which in their nature correspond to the nature of grace. In this sense it is said "grow in grace." Peace is the well-grounded tranquillity and sense of well-being which arise from the sight of God's grace in Christ, from faith in it and experience of it. Grace and peace are the forerunners of glory. That is a blessed

company to which so great a fulness of good is commended, as ordinarily theirs.

And from whom is this good expected to proceed? From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father who loved us, the Son who charged Himself with the burden of our salvation, impart a grace and a peace fragrant with that Divine love and charged with the efficacy of that blessed mediation. If any one wonders why the Holy Spirit is left out, a reason may be given for it. For if we look to the substance of the blessings, what are this grace and peace but the Holy Spirit Himself dwelling in us, revealing to us the Father and the Son from whom He comes, and enabling us to continue in the Son and in the Father?

CHAPTER II.

THE APOSTLE'S MIND ABOUT THE PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPIANS i. 3-11 (R. V.).

AFTER the salutation, the first thing in the Epistle is a warm utterance of the feelings and the desires which Paul habitually cherishes in relation to his converts at Philippi. This is expressed in vv. 3-11.

Note the course of thought. In ver. 3 he declares his thankfulness and in ver. 4 his prayerfulness on their behalf; and he puts these two together, without as yet saying why he thanks and what he prays for. He puts them together, because he would mark that with him these are not two separate things; but his prayer is thankful, and his thankfulness is prayerful; and then, having so much to be thankful for, his prayers became, also, joyful. The reason why, he presently explains more particularly. For, ver. 5, he had to thank God, joyfully, for their fellowship in the gospel in the past; and then, ver. 6, knowing to what this pointed forward, he could pray joyfully—that is, with joyful expectation for the future. And thus he prepares the way for telling what special things he was led to pray for; but first he interposes vv. 7 and 8, to vindicate, as it were, the right he had to feel so warm and deep an interest in his Philippian friends. The matter of his prayer follows in vv. 9-11.

First he thanks God for grace bestowed upon the Philippians. As often as he remembered them, as often as he lifted up his heart in prayer to make request for them, he was cheered with the feeling that he could make request joyfully—*i. e.*, he could rejoice over mercies already given. We know that the Apostle, in his letters to the Churches, is found always ready to evince the same spirit; he is prompt to pour out his thanks for anything attained by those Churches, either in gifts or grace. We find it so in his letters to the Churches of Corinth and Ephesus and Colossæ and Thessalonica. He does this, always, in a full and hearty way. He evidently counted it both duty and privilege to take note of what God had wrought, and to show that he prized it. Like John, he had no greater joy than to hear that his children walked in the truth; and he gave the glory of it to God in thanksgiving. In the case of this Church, however, the ground of thanksgiving was something that bound them to Paul in a peculiar manner, and touched his heart with a glow of tenderer love and gladness. It was, ver. 5, "their fellowship in the gospel (or rather, unto the gospel) from the first day until now." He means, that from their first acquaintance with the gospel, the Philippian Christians had, with unusual heartiness and sincerity, committed themselves to the cause of the gospel. They had made it their own cause. They had embarked in it as a fellowship to which they gave themselves heart and soul. There might be Churches, more distinguished for gifts than that of Philippi was, where less of this magnanimous spirit appeared. There might be Churches, where men seemed to be occupied with their own advantage by the gospel, their individual and separate advantage, but withheld themselves from the fellowship unto it,—did not readily commit themselves to it and to each other, as embarking wholly and for ever in the common cause. This misconception, this servility of spirit, is but too easy. You may have whole Churches, in which men are full of self-congratulation about attainments they make in the gospel, and gifts they receive by the gospel, and doctrines they build up about it—but the loving "fellowship unto it" fails. A large measure of a better spirit had been given to the Philippians from the first. They were a part of those Macedonian Churches, who "first gave their own selves" to the Lord and His Apostles, and then also their help and service. It was an inward fellowship before it was an outward one. They first gave their own selves, so that their hearts were mastered by the desire to see the ends of the gospel achieved, and then came service and sacrifice. Trials and losses had befallen them in this course of service; but still they are found caring for the gospel, for their brethren in the gospel, for their father in the gospel, for the cause of the gospel. This fellowship—this readiness to make common cause with the gospel, out and out, had begun at the first day; and after trouble and trial it continued even until now.

The disposition here commended has its importance, very much because it implies so just a conception of the genius of the gospel, and so hearty a consent to it. He whose Christianity leads him to band himself with his fellow-Christians, to get good by their help, and to help them to get good, and along with them to do good as opportunity arises, is a man who believes in the work of the gospel as a vital social force; he believes that Christ is in his members; he believes that there are attainments to be made, victories won, benefits laid hold of and appropriated. He is in sympathy with Christ, for he is attracted by the expectation of great results coming in the line of the gospel; and he is one who looks not merely on his own things, but rejoices to feel that his own hope is bound up with a great hope for many and for the world. Such a man is near the heart of things. He has, in important respects, got the right notion of Christianity, and Christianity has got the right hold of him.

Now if we consider that the Apostle Paul, "the slave of Jesus Christ," was himself a marvellous embodiment of the spirit he is here commending to the Philippians, we shall easily understand with what satisfaction he thought upon this Church, and rejoiced over them, and gave thanks. Was there ever a man who, more than Paul, evinced "the fellowship of the gospel" from

the first hour to the last? Was there ever one whose personal self was more swallowed up and lost, in his zeal to be spent for the cause,—doing all things for the gospel's sake that he might have part therein? Did ever man, more than he, welcome sufferings, sacrifices, toils, if they were for Christ, for the gospel? Was man ever possessed more absolutely than he with a sense of the worthiness of the gospel to be proclaimed everywhere, to every man—and with a sense of the right the gospel had to himself, as Jesus Christ's man, the man that should be used and expended on nothing else but upholding this cause, and proclaiming this message to all kinds of sinners? The one great object with him was that Christ should be magnified in him, whether by life or by death (ver. 20). His heart, therefore, grew glad and thankful over a Church that had so much of this same spirit, and, for one thing, showed this by cleaving to him in their hearts through all the vicissitudes of his work, and following him everywhere with their sympathy and their prayers. Some Churches were so much occupied with themselves, and had so little understanding of him, that he was obliged to write to them at large, setting forth the true spirit and manner of his own life and service; he had, as it were, to open their eyes by force to see him as he was. This was not needed here: the Philippians understood him already: they did so, because, in a degree, they had caught the contagion of his own spirit. They had given themselves, in their measure, in a fellowship unto the gospel, from the first day until now. They had claimed, and they still claimed, to have a share in all that befell the gospel, and in all that befell the Apostle.

Paul ascribed all this to God's grace in them, and thanked God for it. True, indeed, much activity about the gospel, and much that looks like interest in its progress, may proceed from other causes besides a living fellowship with Jesus, and a true disposition to forsake all for Him. The outward activity may be resorted to as a substitute for the inward life; or it may express the spirit of sectarian selfishness. But when it appears as a consistent interest in the gospel, when it is accompanied by the tokens of frank good will and free self-surrender to the Church's evangelical life, when it endures through vicissitudes of time, under trial, persecution, and reproach, it must arise, in the main, from a real persuasion of the Divine excellence and power of the gospel and the Saviour. Not without the grace of God does any Church manifest this spirit.

Now to the Apostle who had this cause of gladness in the past, there opened (ver. 6) a gladdening prospect for the future, which at once deepened his thankfulness and gave expectancy to his prayers. "Being confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "Being confident of this very thing" is equivalent to "Having no less confidence than this"; for he desires to express that his confidence is emphatic and great.

The confidence so expressed assumes a principle, and makes application of that principle to the Philippian saints.

The principle is that the work of saving grace clearly begun by the Spirit of God shall not be destroyed and come to nothing, but shall be carried on to complete salvation. This principle is not received by all Christians as part of the teaching of Scripture; but without entering now into any large discussion, it may be pointed out that it seems to be recognised, not merely in a few, but in many passages of Holy Writ. Not to recite Old Testament indications, we have our Lord's word (John x. 28): "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." And there is hardly an Epistle of our Apostle in which the same principle is not presented to us, stated in express terms, or assumed in stating other doctrines, and applied to the comfort of believers (1 Thess. v. 23, 24; 1 Cor. i. 8; Rom. viii. 30). The ultimate salvation of those in whom a good work is begun, is, in this view, conceived to be connected with the stability of God's purposes, the efficacy of the Son's mediation, the permanence and power of the Holy Spirit's influence, and the nature of the covenant under which believers are placed. And the perseverance thus provided for is supposed to be made good through the faith, patience, fear, and diligence of those who persevere, and by no means without these. As to the place before us, whatever exceptions and whatever distinctions may be taken on the subject, it must be owned that, gladly recognising Christian character and attainment as a fact, he finds therein a warrant for emphatic confidence about the future, even to the day of Christ.

As to the application of this principle to the Philippians, the method in which the Apostle proceeds is plain. He certainly does not speak as by immediate insight into Divine counsels about the Philippians. He is directed to utter a conclusion at which he had arrived by a process which he explains. From the evidence of the reality of their Christian calling, he drew the conclusion that Christ was at work in them, and the further conclusion that his work would be completed. It may be asked how so confident an application of the principle now in view could be reached on these terms? How could the Apostle be sure enough of the inward state of his Philippian friends, to enable him to reason on it, as here he seems to do? In answer, we grant it to be impossible for any one, without immediate revelation on the point, to reach absolute assurance about the spiritual state of other people. And therefore we are to keep in view, what has already been suggested, that the Apostle, speaking to "saints," really remits to themselves and to their Lord the final question as to the reality of that apparent saintship. But then, we are taught by the Apostle's example that where ordinary tokens, and especially where more than ordinary tokens of Christian character appear, we are frankly and gladly to give effect to those signs in our practical judgments. There may be an error no doubt there is, in unbounded charity; but there is error also when we make a grudging estimate of Christian brethren; when, on the ground of some failing, we allow suspicion to obliterate the impressions which their Christian faith and service might fairly have made upon us. We are to cherish the thought that a wonderful future is before those in whom Christ is carrying on His work of grace; and we are to make a loving application of that hope in the case of those whose Christian dispositions have become specially manifest to us in the intercourse of Christian friendship.

However, the Apostle felt that he had a special right to feel thus in reference to the Philippians —more, perhaps, than in regard to others; and

instead of going on at once to specify the objects of his prayers for them, he interposes a vindication, as it were, of the right he claimed (ver. 7): "Even as it is meet for me to be thus minded with respect to all of you, because I have you in my heart, you who are all partakers of my grace, not only in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, but also in my bonds." As if he would say,—There are special ties between us, which justify on my part special tenderness and vigilance of appreciation and approbation, when I think of you. A father has a special right to take note of what is hopeful in his son, and to dwell with satisfaction on his virtues and his promise; and friends who have toiled and suffered together have a special right to cherish a deep trust in one another's well-tried fidelity and nobleness. Let strangers, in such cases, set, if they will, a slight value on characters which they hardly know; but let them not dispute the right which love has to scrutinise with delight the nobler qualities of those who are beloved.

The Philippians were sharers of Paul's grace, as sharing his enthusiasm for the successful advocacy and confirmation of the gospel. So they had their share in the grace that was so mighty in him. But besides that, the Apostle's heart had been cheered and warmed by the manifestation of their sympathy, their loving thoughtfulness in reference to his bonds. So he joyfully owned them as partakers in spirit in those bonds, and in the grace by which he endured them. They remembered him in his bonds, "as bound with him." Every way their fellowship with him expressed itself as full and true. No jarring element broke in to mar the happy sense of this. He could feel that though far away their hearts beat pulse for pulse with his, partakers not only of his toil but of his bonds. So he "had them in his heart": his heart embraced them with no common warmth and yielded to them no common friendship. And what then? Why, then, "it is meet that I should be thus minded," "should use love's happy right to think very well of you, and should let the evidence of your Christian feeling come home to my heart, warm and glowing." It was meet that Paul should joyfully *repute them to be sincere*—to be men cleaving to the gospel in a genuine love of it. It was meet that he should *thank* God in their behalf, seeing these happy attainments of theirs were so truly a concern of his. It was meet he should *pray* for them with joyful importunity, counting their growth in grace to be a benefit also to himself.

It would be a helpful thing if Christian friends cherished, and if they sometimes expressed, warm hopes and expectations in behalf of one another. Only, let this be the outcome of truly spiritual affection. Paul was persuaded that his feelings arose from no mere human impulse. The grace of God it was which had given the Philippians this place in his heart. God was his record that his longing after them was great, and also that it was in the mercies of Christ. He loved them as a man in Christ, and with Christ-like affections. Otherwise, words like these assume a canting character and are undefying.

Now at last comes the tenor of his prayer (ver. 9): "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent," and so on.

Let this first be noted, that it is a prayer for growth. All that grace has wrought in the Philippian believers, everything in their state that filled his heart with thankfulness, he regards as the beginning of something better still. For this he longs; and therefore his heart is set on progress. So we find it in all his Epistles. "As ye have received how ye ought to walk and to please God—so abound more" (1 Thess. iv. 1). This is a very familiar thought, yet let us spend a sentence or two upon it. The spiritual prosperity of believers should be measured not so much by the point they have reached, but by the fact and measure of the progress they are making. Progress in likeness to Christ, progress in following Him; progress in understanding His mind and learning His lessons; progress ever from the performance and the failures of yesterday to the new discipline of to-day,—this is Paul's Christianity. In this world our condition is such that the business of every believer is to go forward. There is room for it, need of it, call to it, blessedness in it. For any Christian, at any stage of attainment, to presume to stand still is perilous and sinful. A beginner that is pressing forward is a happier and a more helpful Christian than he is who has come to a stand, though the latter may seem to be on the borders of the land of Beulah. The first may have his life marred by much darkness and many mistakes; but the second is for the present practically denying the Christian truth and the Christian call, as these bear on himself. Therefore the Apostle is bent upon progress. And here we have his account of that which suggested itself to him as the best kind of progress for these converts of his.

The life of their souls, as he conceived it, depended on the operation of one great principle, and he prays for the increase of that in strength and efficacy. He desires that their love may abound more and more. He was glad to think they had shown, all along, a loving Christian spirit. He wished it to grow to its proper strength and nobleness.

No one doubts that, according to the Scriptures, love is the practical principle by which the fruits of faith are brought forth. The Christian character peculiarly consists in a Christlike love. The sum of the law from which we fell is, Thou shalt love; and, being redeemed in Christ, we find the end of the commandment to be love, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Redemption itself is a process of love, setting forth from heaven to earth to create and kindle love, and make it triumph in human hearts and lives. Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. No point is so well settled. Nobody doubts it.

Yet, alas! how many of us are truly aware of the great meaning which apostolic words, which Christ's words, carry, when this is spoken of? or how shall it be made inwardly and vividly present to us? In the heart of Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, was a great purpose to awaken in human hearts a deep and strong affection, kindred to His own—true, tender, steadfast, all-prevailing, all-transforming. Apostles, catching the fire in their degree, were full of the wonder of it, of the glad surprise and yet the sober reality of it; and they carried about the gospel everywhere, looking to see men thrill into this new life, and become instances of its strength and gladness. And we? Let each man answer for himself. He is a happy man who can answer

clearly. What is it to have love for the inspiration of the heart and the life: love submerging the lower cravings, love ennobling and expanding all that is best and highest, love consecrating life into a glad and endless offering? Which of us has that within him which could break into a song, like the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians, rejoicing in the goodness and nobleness of love? "That your love may abound." In our tongue it is but one syllable. So much the easier for our perversity to slide over the meaning as we read. But all our earthly life is too short a space for learning how deep and how pertinent to ourselves this business of love is.

No doubt, the kindness the Philippians had shown to the Apostle, of which he had been speaking, naturally prepares the way for speaking of their love, as the verse before us does. But we are not to take the word as referring only to the love they might bear to other believers, or, in particular, to the Apostle. That is in the Apostle's mind; but his reference is wider, namely, to love as a principle which operates universally—which first holds lowly fellowship with the love of God, and then also flows out in Christian affection towards men. The Apostle does not distinguish these, because he will not have us to separate them. The believer has been brought back in love to God, and having his life quickened from that source he loves men. The manward aspect of it is made prominent in the Bible for this reason, that in love towards men the exercise of this affection finds the most various scope, and in this way also it is most practically tested. The Apostle would not grant to any of us that our profession of love to God could be genuine, if love did not exert itself towards men. But neither would he suffer it to be restricted in any other direction. In the present case he gladly owned the love which his Philippian friends bore to himself. But he sees in this the existence of a principle which may signalise its energy in all directions, and is able to bear all kinds of good fruit. Therefore his prayer fixes on this, "that your love may abound."

Now here we must look narrowly into the drift of the prayer. For the Apostle desires that love may abound and work in a certain manner, and if it shall, he assures himself of excellent effects to follow. Perhaps we may best see the reason which guided his prayer, if we begin with the result or achievement he aimed at for his Philippian friends. If we can understand that, we may the better understand the road by which he hoped they might be carried forward to it.

The result aimed at is this (vv. 10, 11): "that ye may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." The last end is the glory and praise of God. This, let us be assured, is no mere phrase with the Apostle. All these things are real and vivid to him. If he were to come among us, knowing us to be professed believers, then, strange as some of us may think it, he would actually expect that a great degree of praise and glory to God should accrue out of our lives. The time he fixes on for the manifestation of this, the time when it should be seen how this has come to pass, is the day of Christ. The great day of revealing shall witness, in particular, the consummate glory of Christ's salvation in His redeemed. And he prays that unto that day and at that day they may be sincere, without offence, filled with fruits of righteousness.

First, sincere: that signifies simplicity of purpose, and singleness of heart in following out that purpose. Sincere Christians cherish in their hearts no views, no principles, adverse to the Christian calling. The test of this sincerity is that a man shall be honestly willing to let light shine through him, to evince the true character of his principles and motives. Such a man is on the road to the final, victorious, and eternal sincerity. For the present there may be within him too much of that which hinders him, and mars his life. But if he is set on expelling this and welcomes the light which exposes it, in order that he may expel it, then he has a real, present sincerity, and his course is brightening towards the perfect day.

Second, without offence. This is the character of the man who walks without stumbling. For there are obstacles in the way, and they are often unexpected. Grant a man to be in a measure sincere—the call of the gospel has really won his heart. Yet as he goes, there fall in trials, temptations, difficulties, that seem to come upon him from without, as it were, and he stumbles; he fails to preserve the uprightness of his life, and to keep his eye fixed with due steadiness on the end of his faith. Suddenly, before he is well aware, he is almost down. So he brings confusion into his mind, and guilt upon his conscience; and in his bewilderment he is too likely to make worse stumbles ere long. He who would be a prosperous Christian has not only to watch against duplicity in the heart: he must give diligence also to deal wisely with the various outward influences which strike into our lives, which seem often to do so cruelly and unreasonably, and which wear some false guise that we had not foreseen. Paul knew this in his own case; and therefore he "studied to keep a conscience void of offence." We may have wisdom enough for our own practice as to this, if we know where to go for it.

Third, filled with fruits of righteousness—which is the positive result, associated with the absence of guile and the freedom from stumbling. A tree that bears any fruit is alive. But one that is filled with fruit glorifies the gardener's care. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Distinct and manifold acts of faith and patience are the proper testimonies of the soul that is sincere and without offence.

This is the line of things which the Apostle desires to see running its course towards the day of Christ. Now let us ask, In what circumstances is the believer placed for whom Paul desires it?

He is placed in a world that is full of adverse influences, and is apt to stir adverse forces in his own heart. If he allows these influences to have their way—if he yields to the tendencies that operate around him, he will be carried off in a direction quite different from that which Paul contemplates. Instead of sincerity, there will be the tainted, corrupt, divided heart; instead of freedom from offence, there will be many a fall, or even a complete forsaking of the way; instead of fruits of righteousness filling the life, there will be "wild grapes." On the other hand, if, in spite of these influences, the Christian is enabled to hold his course, then the discipline of conflict

and trial will prove full of blessing. Here also shall the promise be fulfilled that all things work together for good to them that love God. Strong temptations are not overcome without sorrow and pain; but being overcome, they turn out ministers of good. In this experience sincerity clears and deepens; and the bearing of the Christian acquires a firmness and directness not otherwise attainable; and the fruits of righteousness acquire a flavour which no other climate could have developed so well. This hard road turns out to be the best road towards the day of Christ.

The effect, then, of the circumstances in which the believer is thus placed will be according to the way in which he deals with them. But plainly, to deal rightly with them, implies a constant effort of *judging* the things within him and without him, the world within and the world without, that he may "approve what is more excellent"—that he may choose the good and refuse the evil. Discerning, distinguishing, as to opinions, influences, feelings, habits, courses of conduct, and so forth, so as to separate right and wrong, spiritual and carnal, true and false, must be the work in hand. There must be the prevailing practical mind to elect and to abide by the proper objects of choice, to cleave to the one and to put away the other.

So we can understand very well, if the Philippians were to be sincere, without offence, filled with fruits of righteousness, that they must, and ever more and more searchingly and successfully, "approve the things that are more excellent." The phrase is also rendered "try the things which differ"; for the expression implies both. It implies such a putting to proof of that which is presented to us, as to make just distinctions and give to each its proper place—silver on the one side, dross on the other. What is the whole life and business of the Philippians, of any Christians, as Christians, but that of following out perpetually a choice, on given principles, among the multitude of objects that claim their regard? The fundamental choice, arrived at in believing, has to be reiterated continually, in a just application of it to a world of varying and sometimes perplexing cases.

When we have all this in view it is easy to understand the scope of the Apostle's prayer about the growth and education of their love. *Out of love this needed discrimination must come.* For

1. No practical discriminations or determinations are of any worth in God's sight except as they are animated by love, and, indeed, determined by it. If a Christian should choose anything, or reject anything, yet not in love, his choice as to the matter of fact may be right, but for all that the man himself is wrong.

2. Love alone will practically carry through such habitual discrimination, such faithful and patient choice. Love becomes the new instinct which gives life, spring, and promptitude to the process. When this fails, the life of approving the things that are more excellent will fail: the task will be repudiated as a burden that cannot be endured. It may still be professed, but it must inwardly die.

3. Nothing but love can enable us to see and to affirm the true distinctions. Under the influence of that pure love (that arises in the heart which God's love has won and quickened) the things which differ are truly seen. So, and only so, we shall make distinctions according to the real differences as these appear in God's sight. Let us consider this a little.

Evidently among the things that differ there are some whose characteristics are so plainly written in conscience or in Scripture, that to determine what should be said of them is matter of no difficulty at all. It is no matter of difficulty to decide that murder and theft are wrong, or that meekness, benevolence, justice are right. A man who has never been awakened to spiritual life, or a Christian whose love has decayed, can make determinations about such things, and can be sure, as he does so, that as to the thing itself he is judging right. Yet in this case there is no just apprehension of the real difference in God's sight of the things that differ, nor a right mind and heart to choose or to reject so as to be in harmony with God's judgment.

And if so, then in that large class of cases where there is room for some degree of doubt or diversity, where some mist obscures the view, so that it is not plain at once into what class things should be reckoned—in cases where we are not driven to a decision by a blaze of light from Scripture or conscience—in such cases we need the impulse of the love which cleaves to God, which delights in righteousness, which gives to others, even to the undeserving, the brother's place in the heart. Without this there can be no detection of the real difference, and no assurance of the rectitude of the discrimination we make.

Now it is in such matters that the especial proof and exercise of religious life goes on. Here, for example, Lot failed. The beauty of the fair and prosperous valley so filled his soul with admiration and desire that it chilled and all but killed the affections that should have steadied and raised his mind. Had the love of the eternal and supreme maintained its power, then in that day when God on the one hand and Lot on the other looked down on the plain, they would have seen the same sight and judged it with the same mind. But it was otherwise. So the Lord lifted up His eyes and saw that the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and Lot lifted up his eyes and saw only that the plain was well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, as the land of Egypt.

But the love of which the Apostle speaks is the breath of the upper world and of the new life. It cleaves to God, it embraces the things which God loves, it enters into the views which God reveals,—and it takes the right view of men, and of men's interest and welfare. The man that has it, or has known it, is therein aware of what is most material. He has a notion of the conduct that is congruous to love's nature. What love knows, it is the nature of love to practise, for it knows lovingly; and at every step the practice confirms, establishes, and enlarges the knowledge. So the genuine growth of love is a growth in knowledge (ver. 9)—the word implies the kind of knowledge that goes with intently looking into things: love, as it grows, becomes more quick to see and mark how things really are when tried by the true standard. Conversing practically with the mind of God in the practice of life, love incorporates that mind and judges in the light of it. This prepares a man to detect the false and counterfeit, and to try the things that differ.

Not only in knowledge shall love grow, but "in all discernment," or perception, as it might be rendered. There may be instances in which, with our best wisdom, we find it hard to dis-

entangle clear principles, or state plain grounds which rule the case; yet love, growing and exercised, has its percipiency: it has that accomplished tact, that quick experienced taste, that fine sensibility to what befriends and what opposes truth and right, which will lead to right distinctions in practice. So you discriminate by the sense of taste things that differ, though you can give no reason to another, but can say only, "I perceive it." In this sense "he that is spiritual judgeth all things."

For all this the aid of the Holy Spirit is held out to us, as we may see in 1 John ii. He makes love to grow, and under that master influence unfolds the needed wisdom also. So comes the wisdom "from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James iii. 17). It is hidden from many wise and prudent, but God has often revealed it unto babes.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE PHILIPPIANS SHOULD THINK OF PAUL AT ROME.

PHILIPPIANS i. 12-20 (R. V.).

HAVING poured out his feelings about those dear friends and children in the Lord at Philippi, the Apostle recognises corresponding feelings on their part towards him. These must naturally be feelings of anxiety to know how it was with him in body and spirit and how far he had been protected and sustained amid the dangers and sorrows of a prisoner's lot. On this then he is glad to be able to give them good tidings. He can do so, because he is in the hands of a wonder-working Lord, who turns the shadow of death into the morning. Hence his history as well as theirs (ver. 11) is moving towards the glory and praise of God.

The Apostle's affairs had seemed to be full of trial to himself, all the more that they bore so discouraging an aspect towards the cause to which he was devoted. He had been for years a prisoner. The work of preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ had been stopped, except as the narrow opportunities of a prisoner's life offered scant outlets for it. He had, no doubt, his own share of experiences tending to depress and embitter: for in his day philanthropy had not yet done much to secure good treatment for men situated as he was. Still more depressing to an eager soul was the discipline of delay: the slow, monotonous months passing on, consuming the remainder of his life, while the great harvest he longed to reap lay outside, uncared for, with few to bring it in. Meanwhile even the work done in Christ's name was largely taking a wrong direction: those who under the Christian name preached another gospel, and perverted the gospel of Christ, had a freer hand to do their work. Paul, at least, had no longer the power to cross their path. Ground on which he might have worked, minds which he might have approached, seemed to be falling under their perverting influence. All this seemed adverse—adverse to Paul, and adverse to the cause for which he lived—fitted therefore to awaken legitimate concern: fitted to raise the question why God's providence should thus depress the heart and waste the life of an agent so carefully prepared and so incomparably efficient.

Most likely these things had tried the faith of Paul himself, and they might distress and perplex his loving friends at Philippi. It was right to feel that these providences were trying; but one might be tempted also to conclude that they were in every sense to be lamented. So much the better it was, therefore, that the Apostle could testify how here also all things were working for good, and in particular were turning out to be for the furtherance of the gospel. This was taking place in two ways at least.

First, Paul's imprisonment had become the means of bringing to the knowledge of the gospel many who were not likely ever to hear of it in any other way; for his bonds had become manifest in Christ in the Prætorium, and in all other places. The precise meaning of the several words here used has become matter of discussion; but the general result is much the same whatever view is taken of the matters debated. The word translated "palace" in the Authorised Version (Marg. Cæsar's Court) may perhaps refer to the quarters of the guard, in the immediate neighbourhood of the palace. Prisoners whose cases were in a special manner reserved to the Emperor were sometimes confined there. And Paul, whether actually confined there or not, must have come into contact with the troops stationed there, for we know he had been delivered to the captain of the guard (Acts xxviii. 16*). Then the "all others" (Marg. of A. V.) may probably mean the rest of the Emperor's household (comp. ch. iv. 22), and would naturally be connected with it in the minds of men, so that a mere indication like this was enough. For, in a military system such as that of the Empire was, the soldiers and officers of the guard formed an important part of the household. That household, however, was an immense affair, including hundreds or even thousands of persons—mostly freedmen or slaves, performing all sorts of functions.

Paul, then, in charge of the guard, coming in contact with individuals belonging to the various reliefs which successively had him in custody, spoken of as one reserved to the judgment of the Emperor himself, became known throughout the quarters of the guard, and to persons of the household of every rank and class. In point of fact we know and can prove from evidence external to the Bible that a few years later than this (perhaps even earlier than this) there were members of the household who were Christians. Before the end of the century a branch of the family which then occupied the imperial throne seems to have joined the Church, perhaps through the influence of a Christian nurse, who is commemorated in an inscription still preserved.

But how did his bonds "become manifest in Christ"? The words no doubt mean that he became known extensively as a man whose bonds, whose imprisonment, was for his adherence to the name and doctrine of Jesus Christ. Let us consider how this would come about.

There might, at first, be universal indifference with reference to the cause of this prisoner's confinement. When his character and statements led to some curiosity about him, men might find it difficult to understand what the real nature of this mysterious case could be. For

* This, however, is omitted in critical editions.

while the charge, whatever form it took, was not yet a common one, we may be very sure that the man struck people as profoundly different from ordinary prisoners. For ordinary prisoners the one thing desirable was release; and they employed every artifice, and exhausted every form of influence and intrigue, and were prepared to sacrifice every scruple, if only they could get free. Here was a man who pleaded for truth; his own freedom seemed to be quite secondary and subordinate. So at last men came to an understanding, more or less, of the real cause of his bonds. They were bonds for Christ. They were the result of his adherence to the faith of Christ's resurrection, and to the truths which that great event sealed. They were connected with a testifying for Christ which had brought him into collision with the authorities of his own nation, which had set on Jews "everywhere" to "speak against" him (Acts xxviii. 22). And in his imprisonment he did not lay down his testimony, but preached with all his heart to every man who would hear him. This state of things dawned upon men's minds, so far as they thought about him at all; it became clear; it was "manifest in the Prætorium, and to all the others."

One influence was at work which would at least direct attention to the case. There were certain Jews in the household; there were also Jews in Rome who made it their business, for their worldly interest, to establish connections in the household; and about this time Jewish influence rose to the person nearest to Nero himself. There was therefore a class of persons in the household likely to feel an interest in the case. And on these most likely the influence of Jewish religious authorities would be exerted to produce an unfavourable opinion of Paul. It would be felt desirable that the Jews of the household should think of Paul as no loyal Jew, as a seditious person, and of his opinions as not legitimately pertaining to Jewish religion—as a religious belief and practice which Judaism repudiated and denounced. Thus, while Paul's case might begin to influence the guard, because members of it were personally in contact with him, in the rest of the household there was a class of persons who would feel an interest in discussing his case. One way or another, some impression as to the peculiar character of it was acquired.

Now think how much was done when some view of the real nature of Paul's bonds had been lodged in the minds of these men. Think what an event that was in the mental history of some of these heathens of the old world. Paul was, in the first place, a man very unlike the ordinary type of movers of sedition. It seemed that his offence stood only in religious opinions or persuasions; and that itself, precisely in Nero's days, was a little singular to figure as the ground of political imprisonment. He was persecuted and endangered for his faith, and he neither denied nor disguised that faith, but spent all possible pains in proclaiming it. This was new. He had a faith, resting professedly on recent facts, which he proclaimed as indispensably necessary to be received by all men. This was new. He seriously told men, any man and every man, that their welfare must be attained through their being individually transformed to a type of character of the unworldliest type; he could press that alike on sordid Jews and gay young officers. This was new. He was a man who, in place of the ordinary anxieties and importunities of a prisoner, was ever ready to speak and plead in behalf of Christ, that singular young Jew who had died thirty years before, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And in all this, however it might strike one as foolish or odd, there were tokens of an honesty, a sanity, and a purity that could not be explained away. All this struck men who stood near the centre of a world falling many ways into moral ruin, as something strange and new. Paul's own explanation of it was in the one word "Christ." So his bonds were manifest in Christ.

A few of them might have heard previously of Christianity as a new and a malignant superstition. But another conception of it reached them through the bonds of Paul. This imprisoned man was a fact to be accounted for, and a problem to be solved. In him was an influence not wholly to be escaped, an instance that needed a new interpretation. Many of them did not obey the truth, some did; but at least something had become manifest that could not easily be got rid of again,—the beginning, in their case, of that leaven which was eventually to revolutionise the thinking and feeling of the world. Remember also that most of these were men to whom Paul at liberty, speaking in synagogues and the like, would have found no access, nor would he have come near the circles to which their influence extended. But now, being imprisoned, his bonds became manifest in Christ.

Thus does it often come to pass that what seems adverse proves to be on our side. Fruit is not always borne most freely when the visible opportunities of labouring are most plentiful. Rather the question is, how the opportunities given are employed, and how far the life of the labourer bears witness of the presence and power of Christ.

But besides the direct impression on those who were outside, arising from the fact of Paul's imprisonment, it became the means of stimulating and reinforcing the labours of other Christians (ver. 14). It is not hard to see how this might be. From Paul's bonds, and from the manner and spirit in which they were borne, these brethren received a new impression as to what should be done and what should be borne in the service of Christ. They were infected with the contagion of Paul's heroism. The sources of Paul's consecration and of his comfort became more real to them; and no discouragement arising from pain or danger could hold its ground against these forces. So they waxed confident. While dangers that threaten Christians are still only impending, are still only looming out of the unknown future, men are apt to tremble at them, to look with a shrinking eye, to approach with a reluctant step. Now here in the midst of those Roman Christians was Paul, in whom were embodied the trouble accepted and the danger defied. At once Christian hearts became inspired with a more magnanimous and generous spirit. Wherever dangers and hardships are endured, even apart from Christianity, we know how prompt the impulse is to rush in, to give help, and to share burdens. How much more might it be so here.

Not that the impulse to evangelistic earnestness, arising from Paul's presence in Rome, was all of this kind. It was not so. Some preached out of good will, in full sympathy with the spirit

that animated Paul's own labours and sustained him in his trials. But some preached Christ out of envy and spite, and supposed to add affliction to his bonds. How are we to fit this into our notions of the Primitive Church?

The truth is that, ever since the gospel began to be preached, unworthy motives have combined with worthier in the administration and professed service of it. Mixture of motive has haunted the work even of those who strove to keep their motives pure. And men in whom lower motive and worse motive had a strong influence have struck into the work alongside of the nobler and purer labourers. So it has pleased God to permit; that even in this sacred field men might be tried and manifested before the judgment of the great day; and that it might be the more plain that the effectual blessing and the true increase come from Himself.

More especially have these influences become apparent in connection with the divisions of judgment about Christian doctrine and practice, and with the formation of parties. The personal and the party feelings have readily allied themselves, in too many men, with a self-regarding zeal and with envy or spite. And where these feelings exist they come out in other forms besides their own proper colours and their direct manifestation. More often they find vent in the way of becoming the motive power of work that claims to be Christian—of work that ought to be inspired by a purer aim.

There were, as we all know, in the Church of those days powerful sections of professed believers, who contested Paul's apostleship, questioned his teaching, and wholly disliked the effects of his work. Perhaps by this time the strain of that conflict had become a little less severe, but it had not wholly passed away. We call these persons the Judaisers. They were men who looked to Jesus Christ as the Messiah, who owned the authority of His teaching, and claimed interest in His promises. But they insisted on linking Christianity to Jewish forms, and rules, and conditions of law-keeping, which were on various grounds dear and sacred to them. They apprehended feebly the spirituality and Divineness of Christ's religion; and what they did apprehend they wished to enslave, for themselves and others, in a carnal system of rules and ritual that tended to stifle and to bury the truth. With this there went a feeling towards Paul of wrath, fear, and antipathy. Such men there were in Rome. Possibly there might even be a Christian congregation in the city in which this type prevailed. At any rate, they were found there. Before Paul's coming no very remarkable nor very successful efforts to spread abroad the gospel in that great community had been going on. But Paul's arrival made men solicitous and watchful. And when it was seen that his presence and the enthusiasm that gathered round him were beginning to give impulse and effect to the speaking of the word, then this party too bestirred itself. It would not—could not—oppose the carrying of the message of Christ to men. But it could try to be first in the field; it could become active, energetic, dexterous, in laying hold of inquiring and susceptible persons, before the other side could do so; it could subject Paul to the mortification, *the deserved mortification*, of failure or defeat, so far as these would be implied in his seeing the converts going to the side which was not his side. Evangelistic zeal awoke on these terms, and bestirred itself. And sheaves that in other circumstances might have lain untended long enough, were gathered now.

This very same spirit, this poor and questionable zeal for Christ, still works, and does so plentifully. The activities of Churches, the alertness of mission societies and agencies, still partake, in far too many instances, of this sinister inspiration. We ought to watch against it in ourselves, that we may overcome the evil and grow into a nobler temper. As regards others, we may, in special cases, see the working of such motives clearly enough, as Paul saw them at Rome. But usually we shall do well, when we can, to impute the work of others to the better side of their character: and we may do so reasonably; for as Christian work is far from being all of it so pure and high as we might desire, on the other hand, the lowly and loving temper of Christ's true followers is very often present and operative when it is not easy for us to see it. Let us believe it, because we believe in Him who worketh all in all.

Now the Apostle, looking at this, is glad of it. He is not glad that any men, professing Christ, give way to evil and unchristian tempers. But he is glad that Christ is preached. There were cases in which he vehemently contended with such persons—when they strove to poison and pervert Christians who had learned the better way. But now he is thinking of the outside world; and it was good that the making known of Christ should gather strength, and volume, and extension. And the Apostle knew that the Lord could bless His own message, imperfectly delivered perhaps, to bring thirsty souls to Himself, and would not fail in His unsearchable wisdom to care for those who came, and to lead them in the ways He thought best. Let Christ be preached. The converts do not belong to the denominations, but first of all to Christ. Neither is it appointed that the denominations shall permanently hold those whom they bring in; but Christ can hold them, and can order their future in ways we cannot foretell.

It is not true that the preaching of Christ serves no purpose and yields no fruits, in cases where it is not carried on in the right or the best spirit. Indeed, God honours the pure, loving, lowly hearts, which He has Himself cleansed; they are appropriate agents for His work, and often receive a special blessing in connection with it. But God is not tied up to give no success to men acting under wrong motives: at least, if we are not to say He gives the success to them, yet in connection with them He is well able to take success to Himself. Through strange channels He can send blessings to souls, whatever He gives or denies to the unworthy workmen. But perhaps the success which attends such preachers is not remarkable nor very long continued. Souls truly gathered in will soon get beyond their teaching. At any rate, it is a poor business to be serving Christ upon the devil's principles. It cannot be good for us—whatever good may sometimes come thereby to others. Let us purge ourselves from such filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.

"Christ is preached." How glad the Apostle was to think of it! How he longed to see more of it, and rejoiced in all of it that he saw! One wonders how far the thoughts and feelings associated with these words in Paul's mind find

any echo in ours. Christ is preached. The meaning for men of that message, as Paul conceived it, grew out of the anguish and the wonder of those early days at Damascus, and had been growing ever since. What might Christ be for men?—Christ their righteousness, Christ their life, Christ their hope; God in Christ, peace in Christ, inheritance in Christ; a new creature, a new world; joy, victory—above all, the love of Christ, the love which passes knowledge and fills us with the fulness of God. Therefore also this was the burning conviction in Paul's soul—that Christ must be preached; by all means, on all accounts, Christ must be preached. The unsearchable riches of Christ must be proclaimed. Certainly, whoever might do or not do, *he* must do it. He was to live for nothing else. "I Paul am made a minister of it." "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel."

Lastly, as to this, not only does he rejoice that Christ is announced to men, but he has an assurance that this shall have a happy issue and influence towards himself also. What is so good for others shall also be found to contribute an added element of good to his own salvation; so good and rich is God, who, in working wide results of Divine beneficence, does not overlook the special case and interest of His own servant. This work, from which the workmen would shut Paul out, shall prove to pertain to him in spite of them; and he, as reaper, shall receive here also his wages, gathering fruit unto life eternal.

For it is characteristic of this Epistle (ii. 17; iv. 10, 18) that the Apostle reveals to his Philippian friends not only his thoughts concerning the great objects of the gospel, but also the desires and hopes he had about his own experience of deliverance and well-being in connection with the turns and changes of progressive providences. Here, it is as if he said: "I confess I am covetous, not a little covetous, to have many children in Christ: I would fain be a link in many a chain of influences, by which all sorts of persons are reached and blessed in Christ. And here where I sit confined, and am also the object of envy and strife that are solicitous to baffle me, I can descry ties forming between my influence in my prison and results elsewhere with which I seem to have little to do. I can claim a something of mine, granted me by my Lord, in the Christianity of those who are kept far from me, and taught perhaps to doubt and dislike me. If I in my prison experience can but live Christ, then all sorts of effects and reactions, upon all sorts of minds, will have something in them that accrues as fruit to Christ—and something also that accrues as my Lord's loving recognition of me. Only do you pray—for this is a great and high calling—pray, you who love me, and let the Lord in answer plentifully give His Spirit; and then, while I lie here in the imprisonment which my Lord has assigned to me, and in which He vitalises me, oh how fruitful and successful shall my life be; what gain and wealth of salvation shall be mine! There shall be fruit for an Apostle still, coming in ways I cannot follow; and in it, and with it, the confirmation and deepening of my own eternal life. It shall turn to my salvation."

So the eager Apostle, caged and cabined, triumphed still in Christ, assured that there was a way of dealing with his Lord's will, discouraging as that might seem, in which it would reveal both enlargement for the Kingdom and the most loving enrichment also for himself.

This is a commonplace of Christianity. Christians trust in Christ to cause all to work for good. They know He can impart His most precious gifts through what seem adverse providences. But it is a memorable embodiment of this conviction that meets us in the Apostle's confidence, that when Christ's providence outwardly stops his work, it not the less pertains to Christ's wisdom to continue and extend his usefulness. The applications of the same principle to various cases in which Christians are trained through disappointment are inumerable. But mostly, even when, in a way, we are open to the lesson, we take it too easily. We forget that here also it is Christlike life and life in Christ that proves so fruitful and so happy. We do not apprehend how great a thing it is—what prayer it asks—what supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. For the Apostle, as we learn from what presently follows, this blessing came in the line of "earnest expectation and hope." It was not an exceptional effort of faith which awoke in him so firm a confidence about his circumstances at Rome, and was rewarded so manifestly. His whole life was set on the same key. He applied to that Roman experience the same mode of view which he strove to apply to every experience. This was his expectation—he was on the outlook for it—and this his hope, that not only in one great crisis, but all along his pilgrimage, his life should *eventuate* one way—should shape into glory to Christ. His whole life must turn out to be a loving, believing, effectual manifestation of the greatness and goodness of Christ. This was what rose before his mind as Success in Life. His thoughts, his prayers turned this way. As some men's minds turn spontaneously to money, and some to family prosperity, and some to fame, and some to various lines of recreation or of accomplishment, so Paul's turned to this. And in this world of failure and disappointment, success welcomed him and gladdened him. His would have been the nobler life even if its expectation had been disappointed. But this is the life which cannot fail, because God is in it.

There is a great admonition here for all of us who profess to be followers of Christ. Our line of service may not be so emphatically marked out for distinction, for special and exceptional eminence of doing and suffering, as Paul's was. But for every believer the path of service opens, however commonplace and undistinguished its scenery may be. And in some of its stages it takes, for all of us, the peculiar character, it assumes the distinguishing features which mark it out as Christian. Here, in Paul, we see the spirit that should inspire service, should make the strength, the peculiarity, the success of it, should be the quickening and gladdening influence of its efforts and its prayers. This ought to be for us also the longing outlook and the hope.

Let us note also, before we pass on, that the Lord's personal kindness to ourselves is matter of legitimate rejoicing and legitimate desire. That may be gathered from almost every verse. There have been persons who conceived that a true Christian is to be so occupied with the thought of God's glory and will, or so occupied with the weal of others, as to have no personal

desires or interests at all. This is a mistake. One of the most intimate and special channels in which the glory of God and the revelation of it are secured, is in the expression of His good will to His child's own heart. This is the privilege of faith, to cherish the expectation that His glory and our good are to agree well together. Only, as to the latter, let us leave it to Him how it is to come to pass; and then it will come divinely and wonderfully. "The Lord is my shepherd, *I* shall not want."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHOICE BETWEEN LIVING AND DYING.

PHILIPPIANS i. 21-26 (R. V.).

AT the close of the preceding section we see that the ruling principle of the Apostle—the earnest expectation and hope which inspired his life—came into special exercise at this time with reference to the possibility, and the likelihood, of an early and violent death. Dying for the name of the Lord Jesus, as well as enduring imprisonment for Him, might be near. He might not only be straitened in his labours, and secluded from the activities connected with his loved work on earth, but might be completely and finally withdrawn from it by Roman doom and execution. The Apostle's faith looked steadily at this final possibility. As at all times, so now also, Christ should be magnified in him, whether by life or by death.

Now, when some great alternative of the future rises before a Christian,—some possibility which God's providence may turn either way,—it is natural that he should look heedfully to it, that he may order aright his faith and patience as the day of decision draws near. And it is natural in particular that his thoughts should be occupied by the consideration how far the one way of it is in itself more attractive to him than the other. For in view of that he has to watch his heart, that as to what seems more attractive he may not desire it idolatrously, nor let his heart be "overcharged" with it if it is realised; and that as to what seems less attractive he may await God's will with submission and faith, and welcome it, if so it come to pass, with sincerity. So also the Apostle fixes his eye, ponderingly, on this alternative of life or death, so strongly suggested by his circumstances. But, as it were, with a smile he recognises that to a man standing, as he did, in the light of Christ, it was hard to say which should attract him most. Life and Death—what had they once been to him? what were they still to many? To live, self—self pleased, provided for, contended for, perhaps fighting for itself a losing battle with a bitter heart; to die, a dark, dire necessity, full of fear and doubt. But now, to live is Christ. In all life as it came to him, in all its various providences, he found Christ; in all life, as it fell to him to be lived, he found the circumstances set for him and the opportunity given to follow Christ; in all the attraction and all the pressure, the force and strain of life, he found the privilege of receiving Christ and employing Christ's grace, the opportunity for living by the faith of the Son of God. That was all very real to him: it was not only a fine ideal, owned indeed but only distantly and dimly descried; no, it was a reality daily fulfilled to him. To live was Christ, with a support, an elevation, and a love in it such as the world knows not. That was good, oh, how good! And then to die was better; to die was gain. For to die, also, was "Christ"; but with many a hindrance passed away, and many a conflict ended, and many a promise coming into fulfilment as here it could not do. For if, as to his own interest and portion, he lived by hope, then death was a long step forward into possession and realisation. By grace Paul was to show how he valued Christ; he was to show it in his life. And Christ was to show His care for Paul—in this life, no doubt, very lovingly; but more largely and fully at his death. To live is Christ—to die is gain; to be all for Christ while I live, to find at length He is all for me when I die!

Which should he prefer, which should he pray for (subject to God's will), which should he hope for, life or death? The one would continue him in a labour for Christ, which Christ taught him to love. The other would bring him to a sinless and blessed fellowship with Christ, which Christ taught him to long for. Looking to the two, how should he order his desires?

It is because he speaks as one always does speak who is pondering something—the words rising, as it were, from what he sees before him—that he speaks so elliptically in ver. 22. "But if to live in the flesh come to me, as its fruit and reward bringing . . ." What? The Apostle sees, but does not say; something that might well reconcile him to prolonged toil and suffering. But why produce the considerations on either side, why balance them against one another? It is too long, too difficult a process. And how can even an Apostle confidently judge as to better or best here? "And what I shall choose, really I do not know." But this he knows, that so far as his own desires are concerned, so far as the possible futures draw his spirit, he is in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better; and yet that he should continue in the flesh is of more imperative necessity for the sake of friends like the Philippians.

Not every Christian is in the state of mind which would naturally express itself as a desire forthwith to depart and be with Christ. The great hope claims its place in every Christian heart; but not in every case so as to inspire the longing to overleap all intermediate stages. Rather must we not say that there are periods of Christian experience, as there are also casts of character, for which it is more usual and natural to desire, if it be God's will, some further experience of life on earth? If this be immature Christianity, we will not, therefore, judge that it cannot be genuine.

Yet to be ready, and, subject to God's will, desirous to depart, is an attainment to be aimed at and made good. Sooner or later it should come. It lies in the line of ripening Christian affection and growing Christian insight. For this is better. It is not that life in this world is not good: it is good, when it is life in Christ. It has its trials, its conflicts, and its dangers; it has also its elements of defect and evil; yet it is good. It is good to be a child of God in training for a better country; it is good to be one who carries the life of faith through the experiences of time. And, for some especially,

there is a strong and not an unworthy attraction in the forms of exercise which open to us just in such a life as this, under the guarantee and the consecration of Christ. Knowledge opens its career, in which many a generous mind is drawn to prove its powers. Love, in all the variety of its calmer and its more ardent affections, sends a glow through life which gladdens it with promise. The tasks which call for practical effort and achievement stir vigorous natures with a high ambition. And when all these spheres are illuminated by the light, and dominated by the authority, and quickened for us by the love of Christ, is not life on those terms interesting and good? True, it is destined to disclose its imperfection. Our knowledge proves to be so partial; our love is so sorely grieved, so often bereaved, sometimes it is even killed; and active life must learn that what is crooked cannot wholly be made straight, and that what is wanting cannot be numbered. So that life itself shall teach a Christian that his longings must seek their rest further on. Yet life in Christ here upon the earth is good: let us say no unkind word of those who feel it so,—whose hearts, with true loyalty to Christ, would yet, if it be His will, put life fully to the proof before they go. Still, this must be said and pressed—let it be joyfully believed—that to depart is better. It is *far* better. It is better to be done with sin. It is better to be where all hopes are fulfilled. It is better to rise above a scene in which all is precarious, and in which a strange sadness thrills through our happiness even when we possess it. To be where Christ most fully, eminently, experimentally is, that is best. Therefore it is better to depart. Let mortality be swallowed up of life.

It is not only better, so that we may own it so to be as a certainty of faith ; but also so that we may and ought to feel it warming and drawing the heart with delight and with desire. It is not needful that we should judge more hardly of life on earth ; but we might attain a far more gladdening appreciation of what it must be to be with Christ. With no rebellion against God's appointment when it keeps us here, and no grudging spirit towards earth's mercies and employments, we might yet have this thought of departing in God's time as a real and bright hope; a great element of comfort and of strength; a support in trouble; an elevating influence in times of gladness; an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil.

The hope of the gospel implies it. If that hope is ours and is duly cherished, must it not assert itself and sway the heart, so as more and more to command the life?

The earnest of the Spirit implies it. Of the very substance of the life eternal a foretaste comes, in the presence and grace of the Spirit of love and comfort. Can that be with us, can that leaven work duly in our hearts, and not awaken longing for the full entrance into so great a good? It may be expected of us Christians that we should lift up our heads because redemption is drawing nigh.

As for the Apostle, however, if the choice were his, he felt that it must fall in favour of still cleaving to the present life; for this, though less attractive to himself, was more necessary for the Churches, and, in particular, for his friends at Philippi. This was so clear to him that he was persuaded his life would, in fact, be prolonged by Him who appoints to all their term of ministry. Probably we are not to take this as a prophecy, but only as the expression of a strong persuasion. Work still lay before him in the line of training and cheering these believing friends, furthering and gladdening their faith. He hoped to see them yet, and to renew the old glad "fellowship" (chap. i. 5). So there should be for the Philippians fresh matter of exultation,—exultation primarily in the great salvation of Christ, but yet receiving impulse and increase from the presence and ministry of Paul. Mainly, they would be exceeding glad of Christ; but yet, subordinately, exceeding glad of Paul also.

It is a striking thing to see how confident the Apostle was of the resources given to him to wield. He knew how profitable and how gladdening his coming would be to the Philippian believers. He admits no doubt of it. God has set him in the world for this, that he may make many rich. Having nothing, he yet goes about, as one possessing all things, to impart his treasures to all kinds of people. To disguise this would be for him mock humility; it would be a denying of his Master's grace. When ministers of Christ come aright to this impression of their own calling, then they are also powerful. But they must come to it aright. For it was not the Apostle's consciousness of himself, but his consciousness of his Master, that bred this superb confidence, this unabated expectation. In subordination to that faith the Apostle no doubt had specific reason to know that his own personal mission was of the highest importance, and was designed to accomplish great results. Ordinary ministers of Christ do not share this peculiar ground of confidence. But no one who has any kind of mission from Christ can discharge it aright if he is destitute of the expectancy which looks forward to results, and, indeed, to momentous results; for the reapers in Christ's harvest are to "gather fruit unto life eternal." To cherish this mood, not in the manner of a vain presumption, but in the manner of faith in a great Saviour, is the practical question for gospel ministers.

Alike in the utterance of his mind about his Philippian friends, and in his explanations about himself, it is remarkable how thoroughly the Apostle carries his faith through the whole detail of persons and things. The elements and forces of the Kingdom of God are not for him remote splendours, to be venerated from afar. To his faith they are embodied, they are vitally and divinely present, in the history of the Churches and in his own history. He sees Christ working in the Philippian believers; he sees in their Christian profession and service a fire of love caught from the love of Christ—the increase and triumph of which he anticipates with affectionate solicitude. The tender mercies of Christ are the element in which he and they are alike moving, and this blessedness it is their privilege assiduously to improve. So he was minded in regard to all the Churches. If in any of them the indications are feeble and dubious, only so much the more intently does he scrutinise them, to recognise, in spite of difficulty, that which comes and only could come from his Master's Spirit. If indications too significant of a wholly different influence have broken out, and demand the severest rebukes, he still casts about for tokens of the better kind. For surely Christ's

Spirit is in His Churches, and surely the seed is growing in Christ's field towards a blessed harvest. If men have to be warned that naming the name of Christ they may be reprobates, that without the Spirit of Christ they are none of His, this comes as something sad and startling to be spoken to men in Christian Churches. So also in his own case—Christ is speaking and working by him, and all providences that befall him are penetrated by the love, the wisdom, and the might of Christ. In nothing is the Apostle more enviable than in this victoriousness of his faith over the earthly shows of things, and over the unlikelihoods which in this refractory world always mask and misrepresent the good work. We, for our part, find our faith continually abashed by those same unlikelihoods. We recognise the course of this world, which speaks for itself; but we are uncertain and discouraged as to what the Saviour is doing. The mere commonplaceness of Christians, and of visible Christianity, and of ourselves, is allowed to baffle us. Nothing in the life of the Church, we are ready to say, is very interesting, very vivid, very hopeful. The great fire burning in the world ever since Pentecost is for us scarcely recognisable. We even take credit for being so hard to please. But if the quick faith and love of Paul the prisoner were ours, we should be sensitive to echoes and pulsations and movements everywhere,—we should be aware that the voice and the power of Christ are everywhere stirring in His Churches.

CHAPTER V.

UNDAUNTED AND UNITED STEADFASTNESS.

PHILIPPIANS i. 27-30 (R. V.).

AT ver. 27 the letter begins to be hortative. Up to this point the Apostle has been taking the Philippians into his confidence, in order that they may share his point of view and see things as he sees them. Now he begins more directly to call them to the attitude and work which become them as Christians; but up to ver. 30 the sense of the dear tie between him and them is still very present, colouring and controlling his exhortations.

"Be assured," he has been saying, "that by the grace of God, abounding amid trials, it is well with me; and I have very good hope of yet again enjoying this honour, that through my means it may be well with you;—*only* fix you on this, let this be your concern, to walk as it becomes the gospel: this is the ground on which you must win your victory; this is the line on which alone you can make any effectual contribution to our common welfare, and that of all the Churches." So the Apostle urges. For, let us be assured of it, while we debate with ourselves by what efforts and in what lines we can do some stroke of service to the good cause, or to some special representative of it, after all the greatest and weightiest thing by far that we can do is to be thoroughly consistent and devoted in our own Christian walk, living lives answerable to the gospel.

The original suggests that the Apostle thinks of the Philippians as citizens of a state, who are to carry on their life according to the constitution and laws of the state to which they belong. That citizenship of theirs, as we shall afterwards see, is in heaven (chap. iii. 20), where Christ their head is gone. The privilege of belonging to it had reached them through the call of God. And it was their business on the earth to act out the citizenship, to prove the reality of it in their conduct, and to manifest to the world what sort of citizenship it is. Now the standard according to which this is to be done is the gospel of Christ—the gospel, not only as it contains a code of rules for practice, but as it reveals the Saviour to whom we are to be conformed, and discloses a Divine order of holiness and grace to the influence of which our souls are to bow. And, indeed, if our thinking, and speaking, and acting held some proportion to the gospel we profess to believe; if they corresponded to the purity, the tenderness, the Divine worth of the gospel; if from step to step of life we were indeed building ourselves on our most holy faith, what manner of persons should we be? This opens more fully in the next chapter.

But we are tried by circumstances; and the same Christianity will take different manifestations according to the circumstances in which it is unfolded. For every Christian and for every Christian community much depends on the shaping influence of the providences of life. The Apostle, therefore, must have regard to the circumstances of the Philippians. We are all ready, commonly, to exert ourselves, as we say, to "improve our circumstances"; and, in one view, it is natural and fitting enough. Yet it is of more importance—much more—that in the circumstances as they stand we should bear ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Some of us are ready to stir heaven and earth in order that certain unwelcome conditions of our lot may be altered or abolished. It would be more to the point to walk with God under them as long as they last. When they have passed away, the opportunity for faith, love, and service which *they* have furnished will have passed away for ever.

The Apostle, therefore, specifies what he wished to see or hear of in the Philippian Church, as proper to the circumstances in which they stood. He calls for steadfastness as against influences that might shake and overthrow, put in motion against them by the enemies of the gospel.

The words suggest the strain of the situation as it was felt in those small early Churches. It is difficult for us adequately to conceive it. There was the unfriendly aspect both of Roman law and of public opinion to unauthorised religious fraternities; there was the hostility of ardent Jews, skilful to stir into activity enmities which otherwise might have slumbered; there was the jealousy of religious adventurers of all kinds with whom that age was becoming rife. But besides, there was the immense pressure of general unbelief. Christianity had to be embraced and maintained against the judgment and under the cool contempt of the immense majority, including the wealth, the influence, the wisdom, the culture—all that was brilliant, imposing, and exclusive. This temper was disdainful for the most part; it became bitter and spiteful if in any instance Christianity came near enough to threaten its repose. It found, no doubt, active interpreters and representatives in every class, in every family circle. Christianity

was carried forward in those days by a great spiritual power working with the message. It needed nothing less than this to sustain the Christian against the deadweight of the world's adverse verdict, echoing back from every tribunal by which the world gives forth its judgments. Then every feeling of doubt, or tendency to vacillate, created by these influences, was reinforced by the consciousness of faults and failings among the Christians themselves.

Against all this faith held its ground, faith clinging to the unseen Lord. In that faith the Philippians were to stand fast. Not only so; looking on "the faith" as if it were a spiritual personality, striving and striven with, they were to throw their own being and energy into the struggle, that the cause of faith might make head and win fresh victories. The faith is knocking at many doors, is soliciting many minds. But much depends on ardent and energetic Christians, who will throw their personal testimony into the conflict, and who will exert on behalf of the good cause the magic of Christian sympathy and Christian love. So they should be fellow-athletes contending on the side of faith, and in the cause of faith.

In our own day a livelier sense has awakened of the obligation lying upon Christians to spend and be spent in their Master's cause, and to be fellow-helpers to the truth. Many voices are raised to enforce the duty. Still, it cannot be doubted that in most cases this aspect of the Christian calling is too languidly conceived and too intermittently put in practice. And many in all the Churches are so little qualified to labour for the faith, or even stand fast in it, that their Christianity is only held up externally by the consent and custom of those about them.

At this point and in this connection the Apostle begins to bring forward the exhortation to peace and unity which goes forward into the following chapter. Apparently no steadfastness will, in his view, be "worthy of the gospel," unless this loving unity is added. If there was a common instinct of worldliness and unbelief, giving unity to the influences against which the Philippians had to contend, the operation of a mighty uniting influence was to be expected on the other side, an influence Divine in its origin and energy. The subject is brought forward, one can see, in view of tendencies to disagreement which had appeared at Philippi. But it was a topic on which the Apostle had intensely strong convictions, and he was ever ready to expatiate upon it.

We need not be surprised at the earnestness about peace and unity evinced in the Epistles, nor think it strange that such exhortations were required. Consider the case of these early converts. What varieties of training had formed their characters; what prejudices of diverse races and religions continued to be active in their minds. Consider also what a world of new truths had burst upon them. It was impossible they could at once take in all these in their just proportions. Various aspects of things would strike different minds, and difficulty must needs be felt about the reconciliation of them. In addition to theory, practice opened a field of easy divergence. Church life had to be developed, and Church work had to be done. Rules and precedents were lacking. Everything had to be planned and built from the foundation. The very energy of the Christian faith tended to produce energetic individualities. If all these things are weighed, instead of being surprised at the rise of difficulties we may rather wonder how interminable disagreement was averted. The temper of "standing fast" might seem perhaps likely rather to aggravate than to alleviate some of these sources of discord.

On the other hand, to the Apostle's mind a glorious unity was one especial mark of the triumph of the Kingdom of God. That expressed the victory in all the members of the new society of one influence proceeding from one Lord; it expressed the prevalence of that new life the chief element of which is the uniting grace, the grace of love. It should not be difficult to understand the value which the Apostle set on this feature in the life of Churches, how he longed to see it, how he pressed it so ardently on his disciples. Sin, dividing men from God, had divided them also from one another. It introduced selfishness, self-seeking, self-worship, self-assertion, everything that tends to divide. It rent men into separate interests, societies, classes, worships; and these stood over against one another isolated, jealous, conflicting. Men had long ago ceased to think it possible to have things otherwise ordered. They had almost ceased to desire it. How eminently then did the glory of the redemption in Christ appear in the fact that by it the dispersed out of all kinds of dispersion were gathered into one. They were bound to one another as well as to Christ; they became more conscious of oneness than ever they had been of separation. It testified to the presence and working of Him who made all, and from whom all, by different paths, had gone astray.

The means by which this unity was to be maintained was chiefly the prevalence of the Christian affections in the hearts of believers—the presence and power of that mind of Christ, of which more must be said in connection with the following chapter. Certainly the Apostle regards this as, at any rate, the radical security for unity in life and work, and without it he does not suppose the unity for which he cares can exist at all. In this connection it is worth observing that the unity he is thinking of is chiefly that which should bind together the members of those little communities which were rising up in various places under his ministry. It is the harmony of those whose lot is cast in the same place, who can influence one another, whose plain business it was to confess Christ together. Wider unity was supposed indeed, and was rejoiced in; but the maintenance of it had not yet become so much a practical question. This continued to be the case for some time after the Apostolic period. Men were anxious to hold each local congregation together, and to avert local splits and quarrels. If that were done, it seemed as though nothing further were urgently needed.

Yet the same principles establish the unity of the visible Church throughout the world, and indicate the discharge of the duties which are necessary in order to the expression of it. Christians differ indeed among themselves upon the question how far the Church has received organic institutions fitted to give expression or embodiment to her unity; and diversity of judgment on that point is not likely soon to be removed. For the rest the main thing to observe is that Christ's Church *is* one, in root and princi-

ple. This applies not only to the Church invisible, but to the Church visible too. Only the latter, as she falls short in all service and attainment, falls short also in expressing her own unity and in performing the duties connected with it. On the one hand they err who think that because the state of the visible Church is marred by divisions, therefore unity in her case is a dream, and that the unity of the Church invisible is alone to be asserted. On the other hand they err who, on much the same grounds, conclude that only one of the organised communions can possess the nature and attributes of the visible Church of Christ. The visible Churches are imperfect in their unity as they are in their holiness. In both respects their state is neither to be absolutely condemned nor to be absolutely approved. And no one of them is entitled to throw upon the rest all the blame of the measure of disunion. Any one that does so becomes a principal fomenter of disunion.

This is too wide a subject to follow further. Meanwhile it may be gathered from what has been said that the most direct application of the Apostle's language must be, not to the mutual relations of great communions, but to the mutual relations of Christians in the same local society. There is great room for such an application of it. Exaggerated statements may sometimes be made as to the indifference of Christians in modern congregations to one another's weal or woe; but certainly very often self-will and bitter feeling are allowed to prevail, as if the tender ties and solemn obligations of Christian fellowship had been forgotten. And very often mutual ignorance, indifference, or silent aversion marks the relations of those who have worshipped God together for long years. Certainly there is either some element lacking in the Christianity which is supposed to sustain Church life of this kind, or else the temperature of it must be low. Hence it comes, too that the edification of Christians has so largely dissociated itself from the fellowship of the Churches to which they still resort, and seeks support on other lines. It was not so in those earliest Churches. The life and growth of the Christians were nursed in the Church meetings. There they gathered to read and sing and pray and break bread; to strengthen one another against Pagan violence and seduction; to love one another, as bound together by ties which Pagans never knew; to endure together the scorn and wrong which Christ's name might bring upon them; and not impossibly, after they had thus fought side by side, to die together one triumphant martyr death. Similar conditions have more or less returned again whenever the Churches have been tolerably pure and united, and have at the same time been subjected to some sharp pressure of persecution.

They were to stand fast then in one spirit, cherishing that "spirit of the mind" which is the immediate fruit of the working of the One Spirit of God, the common gift of the Father. It is supposed that Christians know what this is and can recognise it. But they might not be solicitous enough to maintain it, and they might be betrayed into preferring a spirit of their own. The Holy Spirit's influence, creating in each of them the new spirit of the mind, would be the key to right conduct in their common life. It would inspire a purer wisdom and a higher motive than the flesh supplies. Recognising it in one another, they would find themselves confirmed and cheered, established against external opposition and internal strife. Too easily we content ourselves with thoughts, words, and deeds which come only from our own private "spirit" and which are governed by that. We are too careless of living in a higher region. For the want of this some persons among us are infidels. They think they can account for all they see in Christians from the men's own spirit. Their cavil is by no means always true or fair; yet it finds too much plausible support.

The same unity in the one spirit, with its accompanying vitality, gladness, and courage, was to characterise their active labours in the gospel. Let it be remembered that men do not make this attainment in a moment by stepping across some definite line. They grow into it by sincerity of aim, and by steadfast endeavour in the strength of Christ. In this way the "fellowship unto the gospel" (ver. 5), already so happily characteristic of the Philippians, was to grow yet more in cordiality, devotedness, and power.

Meanwhile, what were they to make of the attacks directed against them by those who hated the gospel? This was no doubt a very practical question. Although persecution of the Christians had not yet revealed the energy it was afterwards to assume, their lot was often hard enough. The first burst of trial of this kind exerts a very depressing influence on some minds: with others the prolonged endurance of it, wearing out the spirit, is the more dangerous experience. Either way the dark cloud is felt, suddenly or gradually, shutting out the sky. This feeling of depression and dismay is to be steadfastly resisted. Enmity, unpleasant and ominous as it may be, is not to perturb or move you. It is not to be regarded as a reason for depression or an augury of defeat. Far otherwise: here should be discerned and grasped a token of salvation given by God Himself.

It has been said that earthly prosperity was the promise of the Old Covenant, but adversity that of the New. This is, at least, so far true that the necessity and benefit of chastening are very plainly set before us. Such discipline is part of the salvation secured for us; it is necessary to lead us aright to final well-being; and it will be administered to God's children as He sees fit. When it comes, it does not necessarily indicate special Divine displeasure, still less Divine ill will. It does indicate that we have lessons to learn, attainments to make, and faults to be purged out; it indicates also that God is taking loving pains with us for these ends. All these things ought to be very certain to Christians. Yet some Christians, when their own turn comes, find it very hard to believe so much. Pains, losses, and disappointments, coming in the very forms they most deprecate, wear such an unfriendly aspect that they can only feel scorched and affronted; and the hurt spirit breaks out in a querulous "Why?" To be so thrown off our balance is a failure of faith.

But Paul is occupied here with the spirit in which one special form of trial is to be dealt with. Antipathy, contempt, and persecution are bitter, very bitter to some sensitive souls; but when they come upon us as followers of Christ, and for His sake, they have a consolation proper to themselves. They are to be borne gladly, not only because all chastening is guided by fatherly love and wisdom, but because this kind of suffering is our glory. It comes to believers as part of their fel-

lowship with Christ; and it is such a part of that fellowship as carries with it a peculiar power of assurance and confirmation. Christians share with Christ the enmity of the world's unbelief, because they share with Him the knowledge and love of the Father. If, indeed, by indulging self-will and passion (though perhaps under religious forms) we bring enemity on ourselves, then we suffer as evil-doers. But if we suffer for righteousness, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us. Some share of suffering for Christ comes, therefore, as God's gift to His children, and ought to be valued accordingly.

As to the exact point of the Apostle's remark on the "token" of perdition and of salvation, two views may be taken. In the line of what has just been said, he may be understood to mean simply that when God allows believers to suffer, persecution for Christ's sake, it is a sign of their salvation; just as, on the contrary, to be found opposing and persecuting God's children is a sign and omen of destruction. As if he said: "It is not you but they who have cause to be terrified: for lo! thine enemies, O Lord, for lo! thine enemies shall perish."

This is a scriptural view. Yet both here and in 2 Thess. i. 6 it is perhaps more precise to say that for the Apostle the special sign of salvation on the one side, and destruction on the other, is the patience and calmness with which Christians are enabled to endure their trials. This patience, while it is a desirable attainment on their part, is also something secured for them and given to them by their Lord. It is very precious and should be earnestly embraced. In this view the Apostle says: "In no wise be terrified by your adversaries; and this tranquillity of yours shall be a sign, on the one part, of your salvation, and also, on the other part, if they repent not, of their destruction. For this tranquillity is a victory given to you by God, which endures when their malice is exhausted. Does it not tell of a power working for you which mocks their malice, a power which is well able to perfect your salvation as well as to overthrow the enemies of God? So you find coming into experience that which beforehand was given you by promise. It *was* given you to believe in Christ, and also to suffer for Him. Now that you find yourselves enabled to suffer for Him so calmly, will not that become a sign to confirm all you have believed? For the tranquillity of spirit into which faith rises under persecution is an evidence of the source from which it comes. Much may be borne by resolute men for any cause in which they have embarked. But very different from this striving of the human heart hardening itself to bear, in order that an enemy's malice may not spy out its weakness, are the calmness and patience given to God's children in the hour of trial. That bespeaks an inward support more mighty than all sorrow. The Divineness of it becomes still more conspicuous when it approves itself as the One Spirit, triumphing in persons of diverse tempers and characters. This has been a sign to many an unbeliever, filling him with rage and fear. And to the children of God it has been the Spirit witnessing with their spirit that they *are* His children.

The Apostle will not allow it to be overlooked that in this point as in others his Philippian friends and he are tied together in closest fellowship. This conflict of theirs is the same which they had heard of and seen as proceeding in his case too. Perhaps we may say of this that it admonishes us not to think too meanly of our own Christian experience, and of the questions and decisions which it involves. The Apostle knew that his Philippian friends regarded his conflict as something conspicuous and great. He was a standard-bearer, on whom much depended; and then, all the movements of his soul were magnanimous and grand. But their own experience might seem petty—almost mean; their trials not very serious, and their way of dealing with them at times so halting and half-hearted that it seemed an offence against humility to make much account of them. If this was the true view, then also it must be Christ's view; and so a very depressed way of looking at their calling and their encouragements might set in. The Apostle will not allow this. He thinks, and they are to think, that it is the same question that is being fought out in their case as in his—the same forces are arrayed against one another in both cases—and the victory in both cases will be equally momentous. So he would quicken their sense of the situation by the energy and vivacity of his own convictions. It is unquestionable that Christians suffer much loss by indulging a certain bastard humility, which leads them to underrate the solemnity of the interest attaching to their own history. This renders them inattentive to the serious eyes with which Christ their Master is looking down upon it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 1-4 (R. V.).

IN the verses last considered the Apostle had begun to summon his Philippian friends to Christian duty. But so far his words bear the character only of occasional exhortation, which falls naturally in as he dwells upon his own circumstances and on theirs. Associated as they have been and are, let there be no mistake as to the central bond between him and them. Let the Philippian believers partake increasingly in his own glowing apprehensions of the Christian calling. Let them abound in the loving, steadfast, energetic, expectant life in which men are united who have become acquainted with Christ.

But he thinks fit to press the theme in a more set and deliberate way. For it is no light thing to awaken in men's hearts a right impression of what it is to be a Christian; or, if it has been awakened, to nurse it to due strength. These Christians possessed some insight into the world of truth which held the mind of Paul; they had some experience of evangelical impression: in these things they had a happy fellowship with one another and with their great teacher. But all this must be affirmed and embodied in the conflict and ministry of Christian life. It must prove strong enough for that. Deeds are the true confession of our faith; they are the verification of our religious experience. And in this practical form we must overcome, not the temptations of other people or other ages, but our own. There is no more dangerous working of unbelief than that in which it never questions the doctrinal theory, but renders our Christianity cold and slack, and leads us to induge a preference for a religion that goes easy. Could we but see as we are seen,

we should find this to be a matter of endless lamentation.

Temptations to rivalry and discord were working at Philippi. We are not obliged to think that they had gone very far; but one could see a risk that they might go further. The Apostle has it in his heart to expel this evil, by promoting the principles and dispositions that are opposed to it. And in this work the Philippians themselves must embark with all their might.

It has been remarked already that causes are easily found to account for rivalries and misunderstandings springing up in those primitive Christian congregations. The truth is, however, that in all ages and conditions of the Church these dangers are nigh at hand. Self-seeking and self-exaltation are forms in which sin works most easily, and out of these come rivalry and discord by the very nature of the case. Eager grasping at our own objects leads to disregard of the rights and interests of others; and thence come wars. Danger in this direction was visible to the Apostle.

It may be asked how this should be, if the Philippians were genuine and hearty Christians, such as the Apostle's commendations bespeak them? Here a principle comes to light which deserves to be considered. Even those who have cordially embraced Christianity, and who have loyally given effect to it in some of its outstanding applications, are wonderfully prone to stop short. They do not perceive, or they do not care to realise, the bearing of the same principles, which they have already embraced, upon whole regions of human life and human character; they do not seriously lay to heart the duties Christianity imposes or the faults it rebukes in those departments. They are pleased to have won so much ground, and do not think about the Canaanites that still hold *their* ground. So, in whole regions of life, the carnal mind is allowed to work on, undetected and practically unopposed. This tendency is aided by the facility we have in disguising from ourselves the true character of dispositions and actions, when these do not quite plainly affront Christian rules. Self-assertion and bad temper, for example, can put on the character of honest firmness and hearty zeal. More particularly, when religious principles have led us into certain lines of action, we are apt to take for granted that all is right we do in those lines. Religious zeal leads a man to take trouble and incur responsibility in Church work. Under this notion, then, he readily persuades himself that all his Church work is conscientious and disinterested; yet it may be largely and deeply tainted with the impulses of the fleshly mind. In a measure it might be so here. The Philippians might be generally a company of sincerely Christian people. And yet the churchmanship of some of them might disclose sad tokens of selfishness and bitterness. Therefore they must be called to give heed to the principles and to give effect to the motives that expel those sins.

In all this we may feel ourselves in the region of commonplaces; we know it all so well. But the very point in hand is that for the Apostle these are not commonplaces. He is greatly in earnest about the matter, and his heart is full of it. We do not understand him until we begin to sympathise with his sorrow and his anxiety. This is for him no mere matter of expediencies or of appearances. He is striving for the victory of grace in the souls of his beloved friends; for the glory of Christ; for his own comfort and success as Christ's minister. All these are, as it were, at stake upon this question of the life of the Philippian Church proving to be, under the influence of Christ, lowly, loving, and answerable to the gospel.

No one more than Paul appreciates the value of good theological priciples; and no one more than he lays stress on the mercy which provides a gracious and a full salvation. But no one more than he is intent upon Christian practice; for if practice is not healed and quickened, then salvation ceases to be real, the promises wither unfulfilled, Christ has failed. We may well feel it to be a great question whether our own sympathy with him on such points is growing and deepening. The Kingdom of God within us must exist in a light and love for which goodness is a necessity, and evil a grief and heart-break. But if it is not so with us, where do we stand?

In four clauses the Apostle appeals to great Christian motives, which are to give strength to his main appeal—"If there be any comfort (or store of cheering counsel) in Christ Jesus, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies or compassions"; in a fifth clause he draws a motive from the regard they might have for his own most earnest desires—"fulfil ye my joy"; and then comes the exhortation itself, which is to unity of mind and heart—"that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." This, in turn, is followed by clauses that fix the practical sense of the general exhortation.

It has been made a question whether the Apostle means to say, "If there be among you, Philippians, influences and experiences such as these," or "If there be anywhere in the Church of God." But surely he means both. He appeals to great practical articles of faith and matters of experience. The Church of God believes them and claims a part in them. So does the Church of Philippi, in its degree. But there may be a great deal more in them than the Philippian believers are aware of—more in them as truths and promises; more in them as contemplated and realised by riper Christians, like Paul himself. He appeals, certainly, to what existed for the faith of the Philippians; but also to that "much more" which might open to them if their faith was enlarged.

The "comfort" or cheering counsel "in Christ" is the fulness of gospel help and promise. Great need of this is owned by all believers; and, coming as needed succour to them all, it may well bind them all together in the sense of common need and common help. As it comes from the good Shepherd Himself to all and each, so it is conceived to be ever sounding in the Church, passing from one believer to another, addressed by each to each as common succour and common comfort. Hence, in the next place, there comes into view the mutual ministry of "consolation" which Christians owe to one another, since they "receive" one another, and are to do to one another as Christ has done to them. Here the consolation acquires a special character, from the individual affection and friendship breathed into it by the Christian, who carries it to his neighbour to en-

courage and cheer him on his way. This love of the Christian to his brother, which comes from God, is itself a means of grace; and therefore the "consolation of love" deserves to be distinctly named.

The "fellowship of the Spirit" (see 2 Cor. xiii. 13) is the common participation of the Holy Spirit of God in His gracious presence and working. Without this no one could have a real share in Christian benefits. The Spirit reveals to us the Son and the Father, and enables us to abide in the Son and in the Father. He brings us into communion with the mind of God as revealed in His word. He makes real to us the things of the Kingdom of God; and it is He who opens to us their worth and sweetness, especially the lovingkindness which breathes in them all. Through Him we are enabled to exercise Christian affections, desires, and services. It is He, in a word, through whom we are participant in the life of salvation; and in that life He associates together all who share His indwelling. The Apostle supposes that no Christian could ever contemplate without, shall we say, a pang of gratitude, the condescension, the gentleness, and the patience of this ministration. And as all Christians are recipient together of so immense a benefit, they might well feel it as a bond between them all. But more especially, as the Holy Spirit in this dispensation evinces a most Divine love and kindness—for what but love could be the spring of it?—so also the upshot of all His work is the revelation of God in love. For love is at the heart of all God's promises and benefits; they are never understood until we reach the love that is in them. And God is love. So the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit given to them. Hence this is the leading view of that which the Spirit comes to do: He comes to make us members of a system in which love rules; and He inspires all loving affections and dispositions proper to make us congruous members of so high and good a world.

Therefore, in the fourth place, it is to be supposed that "tender mercies and compassions" in human breasts are abundant where the fellowship of the Spirit is. How abundant they *might* be: surely also in some measure they must be present; they must abound amid all human infirmities and mistakes. All kinds of gentle, friendly, faithful, wise, and patient dispositions might be expected. They are the fruits of the country in which Christians have come to dwell.

To all these the Apostle appeals. Perhaps a pathos is audible in the form of his appeal. "If there be any." Alas! is there then any? Is there some at least, if not much? For if all these had been duly present to the faith and in the life of the Church, they would have spoken their lesson for themselves, and had not needed Paul to speak for them.

The form of appeal, "Fulfil ye my joy," brings up one more motive—the earnest desires of one who loved them wisely and well, and whom they, whatever their shortcomings, loved in turn. It is worth observing that the motive power here does not lie merely in the consideration "Would you not like to give me pleasure?" The Philippians knew how Paul had at heart their true welfare and their true dignity. That which, if it came to pass, would so gladden him, must be something great and good for them. If their own judgment of things was cold might it not take fire from the contagion of his? The loving solicitude of a keener-sighted and a more single-hearted Christian, the solicitude which makes his heart throb and his voice tremble as he speaks, has often startled slumbering brethren into a consciousness of their own insensibility, and awakened them to worthier outlooks.

In regard to all these considerations, the main point is to catch sight of the moral and spiritual scenery as the Apostle saw it. Otherwise the words may leave us as dull as they found us. For him there had come into view a wonderful world of love. Love had come forth preparing at great cost and with great pains a new destiny for men. Love had brought Paul and the other believers, one by one, into this higher region. And it proved to be a region in which love was the ground on which they stood, and love the heaven over their heads, and love the air they breathed. And here love was coming to be their own new nature, love responsive to the love of Father, Son, and Spirit, and love going out from those who had been so blessed to bless and gladden others. This was the true, the eternal goodness, the true, the eternal blessedness; and it was theirs. This was what faith embraced in Him "who loved me and gave Himself for me." This was what faith claimed right to be and do. If this was not so, Christianity was reduced to nothing. If a man have not love, he is nothing (1 Cor. xiii.). "Is there any truth at all in this glorious faith of ours? Do you believe it at all? Have you felt it at all? Fulfil then my joy." Unity of mind and of heart is the thing inculcated. Under the influence of the great objects of faith and of the motive forces of Christianity this was to be expected. Their ways of thinking and their ways of feeling, however different, should be so moulded in Christ as to reach full mutual understanding and full mutual affection. Nor should they rest contented when either of these failed; for that would be contentment with defeat; but Christ's followers are to aim at victory.

It is obvious to say here that cases might arise in which turbulent or contentious persons might make it impossible for the rest of the Church, however well disposed, to secure either one accord or one mind. But the Apostle does not suppose that case to have arisen. Nothing had occurred at Philippi which Christian sense and Christian feeling might not arrange. When the case supposed does occur, there are Christian ways of dealing with it. Still more obviously one might say that conscientious differences of opinion, and that even on matters of moment, must inevitably occur sooner or later; and a general admonition to be of one mind does not meet such a case. Perhaps it may be said in reply that the Church and the Christians have hardly conceived how much might be attained in the way of agreement if our Christianity were sincere enough, thorough enough, and affectionate enough. In that case there might be wonderful attainment in finding agreement, and in dismissing questions on which it is not needful to agree. But if we are not to soar so high as this, it may at least be said that, while conscientious diversities of judgment are not to be disguised, they may be dealt with, among believers, in a Christian way, with due emphasising of the truth agreed upon, and with a prevailing de-

termination to speak truth in love. Here again, however, the Apostle recognises no serious difficulty of this kind at Philippi. The difficulties were such as could be got over. There was no good reason why the Philippians should not in their Church life exhibit harmony; it would be so, if Christian influences were cordially admitted into minds and hearts, and if they made a fit estimate of the supreme importance of unity in Christ. The same thing may be said of innumerable cases in later times in which Christians have divided and contended. It is right to say, however, that these considerations are not to be applied without qualification to all kinds and degrees of separation between Christians. It is a cause for sorrow that denominational divisions are so many; and they have often been both cause and consequence of unchristian feeling. Yet when men part peaceably to follow out their deliberate convictions, to which they cannot give effect together, and when in doing so they do not unchurch or condemn one another, there may be less offence against Christian charity than in cases where a communion, professedly one, is the scene of bitterness and strife. In either case indeed there is something to regret and probably something to blame; but the former of the two cases is by no means necessarily the worse.

In following out the line of duty and privilege set before them by the Apostle, Christians have to get the better of arrogance and selfishness (vv. 3, 4).

In the Church of Christ no man has a right to do anything from a spirit of strife or vainglory. Strife is the disposition to oppose and thwart our neighbour's will, either from mere delight in contest, or in order to assert for our own will a prevalence which will gratify our pride; and this is the animating principle of "faction." "Vainglory" is the disposition to think highly of ourselves, to claim for ourselves a great place, and to assert it as against the claims of others. In the jostle of the world it may perhaps be admitted that forces acting on these lines are not without their use. They compensate one another, and some measure of good emerges from their unlovely energies. But such things are out of place among Christians, for they are right against the spirit of Christianity; and Christianity relies for its equipoise and working progress on principles of quite another kind. Among Christians each is to be lowly-minded, conscious of his own defects and of his ill-desert. And this is to work in the way of our esteeming others to be better than ourselves. For we are conscious of our own inward and deep defect as we cannot be of any other person's. And it is abundantly possible that others may be better than we are and safe for us to give full effect to that possibility. It is said, indeed, that we may possibly have conclusive reason to believe that certain other persons, even in Christ's Church, are worse than we are. But, apart from the precariousness of such judgments, it is enough to say it is not for us to proceed on such a judgment or to give effect to it. We all await a higher judgment; until then it becomes us to take heed to our own spirit and walk in lowliness of mind.

Selfishness ("looking to its own things," ver. 4), as well as arrogance, needs to be resisted; and this is an even more pervading and inward evil. In dealing with it we are not required to have no eye at all to our own things; for indeed they are our providential charge, and they must be cared for; but we are required to look *not only* on our own, but every man on the things of others. We have to learn to put ourselves in another's place, to recognise how things affect him, to sympathise with his natural feelings in reference to them, and to give effect in speech and conduct to the impressions hence arising. So a Christian man is to "love his neighbour as himself"—only with a tenderer sense of obligation and a consciousness of more constraining motive than could be attained by the Israelite of old. Lovingly to do right to a brother's claims and to his welfare should be as cogent a principle of action with us as to care for our own.

Arrogance and selfishness—perhaps disguised in fairer forms—had bred the disturbance at Philippi. The same baleful forces are present everywhere in all the Churches to this day, and have often run riot in the House of God. How shall the ugliness and the hatefulness of the every-day selfishness, the every-day self-assertion, the every-day strifes of Christians, be impresses upon our minds? How are we to be awakened to our true calling in lowliness and in love?

CHAPTER VII.

THE MIND OF CHRIST (*Continued*).

PHILIPPIANS ii. 5-11 (R. V.).

IT proves hard to make us aware of the sin and the misery involved in the place commonly allowed to Self. Some of the conspicuous outrages on Christian decency we do disapprove and avoid; perhaps we have embarked in a more serious resistance to its domination. Yet, after all, how easily and how complacently do we continue to give scope to it! In forms of self-assertion, of arrogance, of eager and grasping competition, it breaks out. It does so in ordinary life, in what is called public life, and, where it is most offensive of all, in Church life. Hence we fail so much in readiness to make the case of others our own, and to be practically moved by their interests, rights, and claims. There are certainly great differences here; and some, in virtue of natural sympathy or Christian grace, attain to remarkable degrees of generous service. Yet these also, if they know themselves, know how energetically self comes upon the field, and how much ground it covers. Many among us are doing good to others; but does it never strike us that there is a distant and arrogant way of doing good? Many in Christian society are kind, and that is well; but undoubtedly there are self-indulgent ways of being kind.

Having to deal with this evil energy of self, the Apostle turns at once to the central truth of Christianity, the person of Christ. Here he finds the type set, the standard fixed, of what Christianity is and means; or rather, here he finds a great fountain, from which a mighty stream proceeds; and before it all the forms of self-worship must be swept away. In bringing this out the Apostle makes a most remarkable statement regarding the Incarnation and the history of our Lord. He reveals, at the same time, the place in his own mind held by the thought

of Christ coming into the world, and the influence that thought had exerted on the formation of his character. He bids us recognise in Christ the supreme exemplification of one who is looking away from his own things—whose mind is filled, whose action is inspired by concern for others. This is so at the root of the interposition of Christ to save us that the principle becomes imperative and supreme for all Christ's followers.

We have to consider the facts as they presented themselves to the mind of Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, that we may estimate the motive which he conceives them to reveal, and the obligation which is thus laid upon all who name the name of Christ and take rank among His followers.

The Apostle, let us first observe, speaks of the Incarnation as that reveals itself to us, as it offers itself to the contemplation of men. To involve himself in discussion of inner mysteries concerning the Divine nature and the human, and the manner of their union, as these are known to God, is not, and could not, be his object. The mysteries must be asserted, but much about them is to continue unexplained. He is to appeal to the impression derivable, as he maintains, from the plainest statement of the facts which have been delivered to faith. This being the object in view, determines the cast of his language. It is the *manner* of being, the *manner* of living, the *manner* of acting characteristic of Christ at successive stages, which is to occupy our minds. Hence the Apostle's thought expresses itself in phrases such as "*form* of God," "*form* of a servant," and the like. We are to see one way of existing succeeding another in the history of Christ.

First, our Lord is recognised as already existing before the beginning of His earthly history; and in that existence He contemplates and orders what His course shall be. This is plain; for in the seventh verse He is spoken of as emptying Himself, and thus assuming the likeness of men. For the apostle, then, it was a fixed thing that He who was born in Nazareth pre-existed in a more glorious nature, and took ours by a notable condescension. This pre-existence of Christ is the first thing to consider when we would make clear to ourselves how Christ, being true man, differs from other men. In this point Paul and John and the writer to the Hebrews unite their testimony in the most express and emphatic way; as we hear our Lord Himself also saying, "Before Abraham was, I am," and speaking of the glory which He had before the world was. But what manner of existence this was is also set forth. He "existed in the form of God." The same word "form" recurs presently in the expression "the form of a servant." It is distinguished from the words "likeness," "fashion," which are expressed by other Greek terms.

Frequently we use this word "form" in a way which contrasts it with the true being, or makes it denote the outward as opposed to the inward. But according to the usage which prevailed among thinking men when the Apostle wrote, the expression should not be understood to point to anything superficial, accidental, superimposed. No doubt it is an expression which describes the Being by adverting to the attributes which, as it were, He wore, or was clothed with. But the word carries us especially to those attributes of the thing described which are characteristic; by which it is permanently distinguished to the eye or to the mind; which denote its true nature because they rise out of that nature; the attributes which, to our minds, express the essence. So here. He existed, how? In the possession and use of all that pertains to the Divine nature. His manner of existence was, what? The Divine manner of existence. The characters through which Divine existence is revealed were His. He subsisted in the form of God. This was the manner of it, the glorious "form" which ought to fix and hold our minds.

If any one should suggest that, according to this text, the pre-existent Christ might be only a creature, though having the Divine attributes and the Divine mode of life, he would introduce a mass of contradictions most gratuitously. The Apostle's thought is simply this: For Christ the mode of existence is first of all Divine; then, by-and-by, a new form rises into view. Our Lord's existence did not begin (according to the New Testament writers) when He was born, when He was found in fashion as a man, sojourning with us. He came to this world from some previous state. One asks from what state? Before He took the form of man, in what form of existence was He found? The Apostle answers, In the form of God.

To Him, therefore, with and in the Father, we have learned to ascribe all wisdom and power, all glory and blessedness, all holiness and all majesty. Specially through Him the worlds were made, and in Him they consist. The fulness, the sufficiency, the essential strength of Godhead were His. The exercise and manifestation of all these were His form of being. One might expect, then, that in any process of self-manifestation to created beings in which it might please Him to go forth, the expression of His supremacy and transcendence should be written on the face of it.

The next thought is expressed in the received translation by the words "thought it no robbery to be equal with God." So truly and properly Divine was He that equality with God could not appear to Him or be reckoned by Him as anything else than His own. He counted such equality no robbery, arrogance, or wrong. To claim it, and all that corresponds to it, could not appear to Him something assumed without right, but rather something assumed with the best right. So taken, these words would complete the Apostle's view of the original Divine pre-eminence of the Son of God. They would express, so to say, the equity of the situation, from which all that follows should be estimated. Had it pleased the Son of God to express only, and to impress on all minds only, His equality with God, this could not have seemed to Him encroachment or wrong.

I think a good deal can be said for this. But the sense which, on the whole, is now approved by commentators is that indicated by the Revised Version. This takes the clause not as still dwelling on the primeval glory of the Son of God, and what was implied in it, but rather as beginning to indicate how a new situation arose, pointing out the dispositions out of which the Incarnation came. "He counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God." To hold by this was not the great object with Him. In any steps He might take, in any forthgoings He might enter on, the Son of God might have

aimed at maintaining and disclosing equality with God. That alternative was open. But this is not what we see: no holding by that, no solicitude about that appears. His procedure, His actings reveal nothing of this kind. What we see filling His heart and fixing His regard is not what might be due to Himself or assumed fitly by Himself, but what might bring deliverance and blessedness to us. *

On the contrary, "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." In the Incarnation our Lord assumed the "form" of a servant, or slave: for in the room of the authority of the Creator now appears the subjection of the creature. He who gave form to all things, and Himself set the type of what was highest and best in the universe, transcending meanwhile all created excellence in His uncreated glory, now is seen conforming Himself to the type or model or likeness of one of his creatures, of man. He comes into human existence as men do, and He continues in it as men do. Yet it is not said that He is now merely a man, or has become nothing but a man; He is in the likeness of men and is found in fashion as a man.

In taking this great step the Apostle says, "He emptied Himself." The emptying is perhaps designedly opposed to the thought of accumulation or self-enrichment conveyed in the phrase "He counted it not a prize." However this may be, the phrase is in itself a remarkable expression.

It seems most certain, on the one hand, that this cannot import that He who was with God and was God could renounce His own essential nature and cease to be Divine. The assertion of a contradiction like this involves the mind in mere darkness. The notion is excluded by other scriptures; for He who came on earth among us is Immanuel, God with us: and it is not required by the passage before us; for the "emptying" can at most apply to the "form" of God—the exercise and enjoyment of Divine attributes such as adequately express the Divine nature; and it may, perhaps, not extend its sense even so far; for the writer significantly abstains from carrying his thought further than the bare word "He emptied Himself."

On the other hand, we are to beware of weakening unduly this great testimony. Certainly it fixes our thoughts on this, at least, that our Lord, by becoming man, had for His, truly *for His*, the experience of human limitation, human weakness and impoverishment, human dependence, human subjection, singularly contrasting with the glory and plenitude of the form of God. This became His. It was so emphatically real, it became at the Incarnation so emphatically the form of existence on which He entered, that it is the thing eminently to be regarded, reverently to be dwelt upon. This emptiness, instead of that fulness, is to draw and fix our regard. Instead of the form of God, there rises before us this true human history, this lowly manhood—and it took place by His emptying Himself.

Various persons and schools have thought it right to go further. The word here used has appeared to them to suggest that if the Son of God did not renounce His Godhead, yet the Divine nature in Him must have bereaved itself of the Divine attributes, or withheld itself from the use and exercise of them; so that the all-fulness no longer was at His disposal. In this line they have gone on to describe or assign the mode of self-emptying which the Incarnation should imply.

It does not appear to me that one can lay down positions as to the internal privations of One whose nature is owned to be essentially Divine, without falling into confusion and darkening counsel. But perhaps we may do well to cherish the impression that this self-emptying on the part of the eternal Son of God, for our salvation, involves realities which we cannot conceive or put in any words. There was more in this emptying of Himself than we can think or say.

He emptied Himself when He became man. Here we have the eminent example of a Divine mystery, which, being revealed, remains a mystery never to be adequately explained, and which yet proves full of meaning and full of power. The Word was made flesh. He through whom all worlds took being, was seen in Judea in the lowliness of that practical historical manhood. We never can explain this. But if we believe it all things become new for us: the meaning it proves to have for human history is inexhaustible.

He emptied Himself, "taking the form of a servant," or bondslave. For the creature is in absolute subjection alike to God's authority and to His providence; and so Christ came to be. He entered on a discipline of subjection and obedience. In particular He was made after the likeness of men. He was born as other children are; He grew as other children grow; body and mind took shape for Him under human conditions.

And so He was "found in fashion as a man." Could words express more strongly how wonderful it is in the Apostle's eyes that *He* should so be found? He lived His life and made His mark in the world in human fashion—His form, His mien, His speech, His acts, His way of life declared Him man. But being so, He humbled Himself to a strange and great obedience. Subjection, and in that subjection obedience, is the part of every creature. But the obedience which Christ was called to learn was special. A heavy task was laid upon Him. He was made under the law; and bearing the burden of human sin, He wrought redemption. In doing so many great interests fell to Him to be cared for; and this was done by Him, not in the manner of Godhead which speaks and it is done, but with the pains and labour of a faithful servant. "I have a commandment," He said, as He faced the Jews, who would have had His Messianic work otherwise ordered (John xii. 49).

This experience deepened into the final experience of the cross. Death is the signature of failure and disgrace. Even with sinless creatures it seems so. Their beauty and their use are past; their worth is measured and exhausted; they die. More emphatically in a nature like ours, which aims at fellowship with God and immortality, death is significant this way, and bears the character of doom. So we are taught to think that death entered by sin. But the violent and cruel death of crucifixion, inflicted for the worst crimes, is most significant this way. What it

* Various shades of meaning have been proposed. Meyer, whose opinion has weight, virtually interprets in this way: He did not reckon equality with God (which was His) to imply or to be fitly exercised in acquisition, or in accumulation of benefit to Himself: and Hofmann, after supporting another view, appears (in his "Hist. Schrift. N. T.") to agree with this. To be equal to God, and to put forth power for His own enrichment, were for the Son very different things. The one He possessed: the other He renounced.

comprehended for our Lord we cannot measure. We know that He looked forward to it with the most solemn expectation; and when it came the experience was overwhelming. Yes, He submitted to the doom and blight of death, in which death He made atonement and finished transgression. The incarnation was the way in which our Lord bound Himself to our woeful fortunes, and carried to us the benefits with which He would enrich us; and His death was for our sins, endured that we might live. But the Apostle does not here dwell on the reasons why Christ's obedience must take this road. It is enough that for reasons concerning our welfare, and the worthy achievement of the Father's Divine purposes, Christ bowed Himself to so great lowliness. A dark and sad death—a true obedience unto death—became the portion of the Son of God. "I am the Living One, and I was dead." So complete was the self-emptying, the humiliation, the obedience.

"Therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the Name that is above every name." For still we must think of Him as One that has come down into the region of the creatures, the region in which we are distinguished by names, and are capable of higher and lower in endless degrees. God, dealing with Him so situated, acts in a manner rightly coresponding to this great self-dedication, so as to utter God's mind upon it. He has set Him on high, and given Him the Name that is above every name; so that Divine honour shall be rendered to Him by all creation, and knees bowed in worship to Him everywhere, and all shall own Him Lord—that is, partaker of Divine Sovereignty. All this is "to the glory of the Father," seeing that in all this the worthiness and beauty of God's being and ways come to light with a splendour heretofore unexampled.

So then we may say, perhaps, that as in the humiliation He who is God experienced what it is to be man, now in the exaltation He who is man experiences what it is to be God.

But the point to dwell on chiefly is this consideration—What is it that attracts so specially the Father's approbation? What does so is Christ's great act of self-forgetting love. That satisfies and rests the Divine mind. Doubtless the Son's pure and perfect character, and the perfection of His whole service, were on all accounts approved: but specially the *mind* of Christ revealed in His self-forgetting devotion. *Therefore* God has highly exalted Him.

For in the first place, Christ in this work of His is Himself the revelation of the Father. All along the Father's heart is seen disclosed. It was in fellowship with the Father, always delighted in Him, that the history was entered on; in harmony with Him it was accomplished. Throughout we have before us not only the mind of the Son, but the mind of the Father that sent Him.

And then, in the next place, as the Son, sent forth into the world, and become one of us, and subject to vicissitude, accomplishes His course, it is fitting for the Father to watch, to approve, and to crown the service; and He who has so given Himself for God and man must take the place due to such a "mind" and to such an obedience.

Let us observe it then: what was in God's eye, and ought to be in ours, is not only the dignity of the person, the greatness of the condescension, the perfection of obedience and patience of endurance, but, in the heart of all these, *the mind of Christ.* That was the inspiration of the whole marvellous history, vivifying it throughout. Christ, indeed, was not One who could so care for us, as to fail in His regard to any interest of His Father's name or kingdom; nor could He take any course really unseemly, because unworthy of Himself. But carrying with Him all that is due to His Father, and all that befits His Father's Child and Servant, the wonderful thing is how His heart yearns over men, how His course shapes itself to the necessities of our case, how all that concerns Himself disappears as He looks on the fallen race. A worthy deliverance for them, consecrating them to God in the blessedness of life eternal—this is in His eye, to be reached by Him through all kinds of lowliness, obedience, and suffering. On this His heart was set; this gave meaning and character to every step of His history. This was the mind of the good Shepherd that laid down His life for the sheep. And this is what completes and consecrates all the service, and receives the Father's triumphant approbation. This is the Lamb of God. There never was a Lamb like this.

How all this was and is in the Eternal Son in His Divine nature we cannot suitably conceive. In some most sublime and perfect manner we own it to be there. But we can think of it and speak of it as the "mind of Christ": as it came to light in the Man of Bethlehem, who, amid all the possibilities of the Incarnation, is seen setting His face so steadily one way, whose life is all of one piece, and to whom we ascribe grace. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and given Him the Name that is above every name. This is the right way. This is the right life.

Are we followers of Christ? Are we in touch with His grace? Do we yield ourselves to His will and way? Do we renounce the melancholy obstructiveness which sets us at odds with Christ? Do we count it our wisdom now to come into His school? Then, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, this lowly, loving mind. Let it. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Do nothing through strife or vainglory. In lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than himself. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and envy, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. If there is any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, let this be so. Let this mind be in you; and find ways of showing it. But, indeed, if it be in you, it will find ways to show itself.

The Church of Christ has not been without likeness to its Lord, and service to its Lord: yet it has come far short in showing to the world the mind of Christ. We often "show the Lord's death." But in His death were the mighty life and the conclusive triumph of Christ's love. Let the life also of Christ Jesus be manifest in our mortal body.

We see here what the vision of Christ was which opened itself to Paul,—which, glowing in his heart, sent him through the world, seeking

the profit of many, that they might be saved. This was in his mind, the wonderful condescension and devotion of the Son of God. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." "He loved me and gave Himself for me." And in various forms and degrees the manifestation of this same grace has astonished, and conquered, and inspired all those who have greatly served Christ in the Church in seeking to do good to men. Let us not separate ourselves from this fellowship of Christ; let us not be secluded from this mind of Christ. As we come to Him with our sorrows, and sins, and wants, let us drink into His mind. Let us sit at His feet and learn of Him.

A line of contemplation, hard to follow yet inspiring, opens up in considering the Incarnation of our Lord as permanent. No day is coming in which that shall have to be looked upon as gone away into the past. This is suggestive as to the tie between Creator and creature, as to the bridge between Infinite and finite, to be evermore found in Him. But it may suffice here to have indicated the topic.

It is more to the point in connection with this passage to call attention to a lesson for the present day. Of late great emphasis has been laid by earnest thinkers upon the reality of Christ's human nature. Anxiety has been felt to do full right to that humanity which the Gospels set before us so vividly. This has been in many ways a happy service to the Church. In the hands of divines the humanity of Christ has sometimes seemed to become shadowy and unreal, through the stress laid on His proper Godhead; and now men have become anxious to possess their souls with the human side of things, even perhaps at the cost of leaving the Divine side untouched. The recoil has carried men quite naturally into a kind of humanitarianism, sometimes deliberate, sometimes unconscious. Christ is thought of as the ideal Man, who, just because He is the ideal Man, is morally indistinguishable from God, and is in the closest fellowship with God. Yet He grows on the soil of human nature, He is fundamentally and only human. And this, it is implied, is enough: it covers all we want. But we see this was not Paul's way of thinking. The real humanity was necessary for him, because he desiderated a real incarnation. But the true original Divine nature was also necessary. For so he discerned the love—the grace, and the gift by grace; so he felt that the Eternal God had bowed down to bless him in and by His Son. It makes a great difference to religion when men are persuaded to forego this faith.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORKING AND SHINING.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 12-18 (R. V.).

AFTER his great appeal to the mind of Christ, the Apostle can pursue his practical object; and he can do so with a certain tranquillity, confident that the forces he has just set in motion will not fail to do their work. But yet that same appeal itself has tended to broaden and deepen the conception of what should be aimed at. He had deprecated the arrogant and the selfish mind, as these are opposed to lovingkindness and regard for others. But now, in presence of the great vision of the Incarnation and obedience of Christ, the deeper note of lowliness must be struck in fit accord with that of love; not only lowliness in the way of doing ready honour to others, but deep and adoring lowliness towards God, such as is due both from creatures and from sinners. For if Christ's love fulfilled itself in such a perfect humility, how deeply does it become us to bear towards God in Christ a mind of penitence and gratitude, of loving awe and wonder, such as shall at the same time for ever exclude from our bearing towards others both pride and self-seeking. In this way the one practical object suggested by the circumstances at Philippi—namely, loving unity—now allies itself naturally with ideas of complete and harmonious Christian life; and various views of that life begin to open. But each aspect of it still proves to be connected with the gracious and gentle mind of Christ, in the lowly form of that mind which is appropriate for a sinner who is also a believer.

So then they are to apply themselves to the "calling wherewith they are called," in a spirit of "fear and trembling." The phrase is a common one with the Apostle (1 Cor. ii. 3; 2 Cor. vii. 15; Eph. v. 6). He uses it where he would express a state of mind in which willing reverence is joined with a certain sensitive anxiety to escape dangerous mistakes and to perform duty well. And it is fitly called for here, for

1. If lowliness so became the Divine Saviour, who was full of grace, wisdom, and power, then what shall be the mind of those who in great guilt and need have found part in the salvation, and who are going forward to its fulness? What shall be the mind of those who, in this experience, are looking up to Christ—looking up to lowliness? Surely not the spirit of strife and vainglory (ver. 3), but of fear and trembling—the mind that dreads to be presumptuous and arrogant, because it finds the danger to be still near.

2. The salvation has to be wrought out. It must come to pass in your case in the line of your own endeavor. Having its power and fulness in Christ, and bestowed by Him on you, yet this deliverance from distance, estrangement, darkness, unholiness, is given to believers to be wrought out: it comes as a right to be realised, and as a power to be exercised, and as a goal to be attained. Think of this,—you have in hand your own salvation—great, Divine, and wonderful—to be wrought out. Can you go about it without fear and trembling? Consider what you are—consider what you believe—consider what you seek—and what a spirit of lowly and contrite eagerness will pervade your life! This holds so much the more, because the salvation itself stands so much in likeness to Christ—that is to say, in a loving lowliness. Let a man think how much is in him that tends, contrariwise, to self-assertion and self-seeking, and he will have reason enough to fear and tremble as he lays fresh hold on the promises, and sets his face to the working out of this his own salvation.

3. This very working out, from whom does it

come? Are you the explanation and last source of it? What does it mean? Wherever it takes place, it means that, in a very special sense, God's mighty presence and power are put forth in us to will and to do. Shall not this thought quell our petulance? Where is room now for anything but fear and trembling—a deep anxiety to be lowly, obedient, compliant?

Whether, therefore, we look to the history of the Saviour, or to the work to which our own life is devoted, or to the power that animates that work and on which it depends—in all alike we find ourselves committed to the lowly mind; and in all alike we find ourselves beset with a wealth of free beneficence, which lays obligation on us to be self-forgetting and loving. We are come into a wonderful world of compassionate love. That is the platform on which we stand—the light we see by—the music that fills our ears—the fragrance that rises on every side. If we are to live here, there is only one way for it—there is only one kind of life that can live in this region. And, being as we are, alas! so strangely coarse and hard—even if this gospel gladdens us, there may well thrill through our gladness a very honest and a very contrite "fear and trembling."

Now all this is by the Apostle persuasively urged upon his Philippian children (ver. 12): "As ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." For, indeed, it proves easy comparatively for our human indolence to yield to the spell of some great and forcible personality when he is present. It is even pleasant to allow ourselves to be borne on by the tide of his enthusiastic goodness. But when the Apostle was at Philippi, it might come easier to many of them to feel the force and scope of their calling in Christ. And yet now that he was gone, now was the time for them to prove for themselves, and evince to others, the durable worth of the great discovery they had made, and the thoroughness of the decision which had transformed their lives. Now, also, was the time to show Paul himself, that their "obedience" was of the deep and genuine quality which alone could give content to him.

Such in general seems to be the scope of these two verses. But one or two of the points deserve to be considered a little before we go on.

Mark how emphatically the Apostle affirms the great truth, that every good thing accompanying salvation which comes to pass in Christians is of the mighty power and grace of God. Therefore Christianity must stand so much in asking and in thanking. It is God that worketh in you. He does it, and no other than He; it is His prerogative. He worketh to will and to do. The inclination of the heart and the purpose of the will are of Him; and the striving to bring forth into act and deed what has been so conceived—that also is of Him. He quickens those who were dead in trespasses and sins; He gives the renewing of the Holy Ghost; He makes His children perfect, working in them that which is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. All this He does in the exercise of His proper power, in the "exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe"—"according to the working of His mighty power, which wrought in Christ when He was raised from the dead." Apparently we are to take it that in the children of God there is the new heart, or new nature, in respect of which they are new creatures; and also the indwelling of God by His Spirit; and also the actual working of the same Spirit in all fruits of righteousness which they bring forth to the glory and praise of God. And these three are so connected that regard should be had to all of them when we contemplate each.

He worketh to will and to do. From Him all godly desires and purposes proceed—from Him, every passage in our lives in which the "salvation that is in Christ Jesus" is by us received, put to proof, wrought out into the transactions of our lives. It must be so, if we will only think of it. For this "salvation" involves an actual, and in principle a complete agreement with God, affirmed and embodied in each right thought, and word, and deed. Whence could this flow but from Himself?

In their statements and explanations about this Christians have differed. The difference has been mainly on the point, how to make it clear that men are not dealt with as inert nor as irresponsible; that they must not hold themselves excused from working on the ground that God works all. For all agree that men are called to the most serious earnestness of purpose and the most alert activity of action; but the theorising of this activity occasions debate. It is from the motive of trying to make more room for these indispensable elements on the human side, that modes of statement have been suggested which limit or explain away the Apostle's statement here. The motive is commendable, but the method is not commonly successful. All efforts to divide the ground between God and man go astray. In the inward process of salvation, and especially in this "willing and doing," God does all, and also man does all. But God takes precedence. For it is He that quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were. Here we may say, as the Apostle does in another case, "This is a great mystery." Let us recognise it as a mystery bound up with any hope we ourselves have of proving to be children of God. And under the sense of it, with fear and trembling let us work, for it is God that worketh in us to will and to do.

He worketh in us to will. When I trace back any of my actions to the fountain where it takes its rise as mine, I find that fountain in my will. The materials which I take up into my act, the impressions which gather together to create a situation for me, may all have their separate history going back in the order of cause and effect to the beginning of the world; but that which makes it mine, is that I will, I choose, and thereupon I do it. Therefore also it is that I must answer for it, because it is mine. I willed it, and in willing it I created something which pertains to me and to no other; something began which is mine, and the responsibility for it cleaves only to me. But in the return to God through Christ, and in the working out of that salvation, there are acts of mine, most truly mine; and yet in these another Will, the Will of Him who saves, is most intimately concerned. He worketh in us to will. It is not an enslaving, but an emancipating energy. It brings about free action, yet such as fulfils a most gracious Divine purpose. So these "willings" embody a consent, a union of heart and mind and will, His and mine, the thought of which is enough to bow me to the ground with "fear and trembling." This is He who gathereth the dispersed of Israel into one.

On the other hand, the salvation is to be wrought out by us. To have faith in the Son of

God in exercise and prevalence; to have heart and life formed to childlike love of God, and to the fulfilment of His will; to carry this out against the flesh and the world and the devil,—all this is a great career of endeavour and attainment. It is much to make the discoveries implied in it: finding out at each stage the meaning of it, and how it should take shape. It is much to have the heart brought to beat true to it, to love it, consent to it, be set upon it. It is much to embody it in faithful and successful practice in the rough school of life, with its actual collision and conflict. Now the nature and working of God's grace at each stage are of this kind, that it operates in three ways at least. It operates as a call, an effectual call, setting a man on to arise and go. It operates also in a way of instruction, setting us to learn lessons, teaching us how to live, as it is said in Titus ii. 11, 12. And it operates as a power, as help in time of need. He that sits still at the call—he that will not be considerate to learn the lesson—he that will not cast himself on the strength perfected in weakness, that he may fulfil and do the Father's will—he is a man who despises and denies the grace of God.

Now what has been said of the believer's relation to the saving God prepares the way for referring to his office towards the world. Here the moral and practical theme which is in the Apostle's mind all through proves again to be in place: the lowly and loving mind will best discharge that office towards the world, which the arrogant and distempered mind would hinder. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless."

A murmuring and disputatious temper—murmuring at what displeases us, and multiplying debate about it—is simply one form of the spirit which Paul deprecates all through this context. It is the sign of the disposition to value unduly one's own ease, one's own will, one's own opinion, one's own party, and to lie at the catch for opportunities to bring that feeling into evidence. Now observe the harm which the Apostle anticipates. It is your office to serve God by making a right impression on the world. How shall that come to pass? Chiefly, or at least primarily, the Apostle seems to say, by the absence of evil. At least, that is the most general and the safest notion of it with which to begin. Some, no doubt, make impressions by their eloquence, or by their wisdom, or by their enterprising and successful benevolence—though all these have dangers and drawbacks attending them, in so far as the very energy of action provides a shelter for unperceived self-will. Still, let them have their place and their praise. But here is the line that might suit all. A man whose life stands clear of the world's deformities, under the influence of a light and a love from which the world is estranged, gradually makes an impression.

Now murmuring and disputing are precisely adapted to hinder this impression. And sometimes they hinder it in the case of people of high excellence—people who have much sound and strong principle, who have large benevolence, who are capable of making remarkable sacrifices to duty when they see it. Yet this vice, perhaps a surface vice, of murmuring and disputing, is so suggestive of a man's self being uppermost, it so unpleasantly forces itself in as the interpretation o the man, that his real goodness is little accounted of. At all events, the peculiar purity of the Christian character—its blamelessness and harmlessness, its innocence—does not in this case come to light. People say: "Ah, he is one of the mixed ones, like ourselves. Christian devoutness suits some people: they are sincere enough in it, very likely; but it leaves them, after all, pretty much as it found them."

I say no more about murmuring and disputing as these reveal themselves in our relations to others. But the same spirit, and attended in its operations with the same evil effects, may manifest itself in other ways besides that of unkindness to men. As frequently, perhaps, it may show itself in our behaviour towards God; and in that case it interferes at least as seriously with the shining of our light in the world.

Just as in the camp of Israel of old on many memorable occasions there arose a murmuring of the people against God, when His ways crossed their will, or seemed dark to their wisdom; just as, on such occasions, there broke out among the people the expression of doubt, dislike, and disputation, and they criticised those Divine dealings which should have been received with trust and lowliness,—so is it also, many a time, in the little world within us. There are such and such duties to be discharged and such and such trials to be encountered—or else a general course of duty is to be pursued under certain discouragements and perplexities. And, you submit, you do these things. But you do them with murmuring and disputing in your heart. Why should it be thus? "How is it fit," you say, "that such perplexities or such burdens should be appointed? Is it not reasonable, all things considered, that I should have more indulgence and greater facilities; or, at least, that I should be excused from this conflict and this burden-bearing for the present?" Meanwhile our conscience is satisfied because we have not rebelled in practice; and it takes no strict account of the fretfulness which marred our act, or the grumbling which well-nigh withheld us from compliance. You are called, perhaps, to speak to some erring friend, or you have to go on a message of mercy to some one in affliction. Indolently you postpone it; and your heart begins to stretch out its arms and to cling to the careless temper it has begun to indulge. At last conscience stirs, conscience is up, and you have to do something. But what you do is done grudgingly, with a heart that is murmuring and disputing. Again, you are called to deny yourself some worldly pleasure; in Christian consistency you have to hold back from some form of dissipation; or you have to take up a position of singularity and separation from other people. Reluctantly you comply; only "murmuring and disputing." Now this inward temper may never come to any man's knowledge, but shall we suppose it does not tell on the character and the influence of the life? Can you, in that temper, play your part with the childlike, the cheerful, the dignified bearing, with the resemblance to Christ in your action, which God calls for? You cannot. The duty as to the husk and shell of it may be done; but there can be little radiation of Christ's likeness in the doing of it.

Notice the Apostle's conception of the function which believers are to discharge in the world. They are set in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. These words were applied to the children of Israel of old on account of the stubborn insubordination with which they dealt with

God; and they were applicable, for the same reason, to the Gentiles, among whom the gospel had come, but who had not bowed to it. Judged by the high and true standard, these Gentiles were crooked and perverse in their ways with one another, and still more so in their ways with God. Among them the Christians were to show what Christianity was, and what it could do. In the Christians was to appear, embodied, the testimony proposed to the crooked and perverse nation, a testimony against its perverseness, and yet revealing a remedy for it. In the persons of men, themselves originally crooked and perverse, this was to become plain and legible. Now, how? Why, by their being blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke.

It has been remarked already that the special way in which we are to manifest to the world the light of Christianity is here represented as the way of blamelessness. That man aright represents the mind of Christ to the world, who in the world keeps himself unspotted from the world,—in whom men recognise a character that traces up to a purer source elsewhere. As years pass, as cross-lights fall upon the life, even in its most common and private workings, if it still proves that the man is cleansed by the faith he holds, if the unruly working of interest and passion and will, give way in him to motives of a higher strain, men will be impressed. They will own that here is something rare and high, and that some uncommon cause is at the bottom of it. For the world knows well that even the better sort of men have their weaker side, often plainly enough revealed by the trials of time. Therefore steadfast purity makes, at last, a deep impression.

Innocence indeed is not the whole duty of a Christian; active virtue is required as well. The harmlessness called for is not a mere negative quality—it is supposed to be exhibited in an active life which strives to put on Christ Jesus. But the Apostle seems to lay stress especially on a certain quiet consistency, on a lowly and loving regard to the whole standard, which gives evenness and worthiness to the life. If you will do a Christian's office to the "perverse nation," you have to seek that they may have nothing against you except concerning the law of your God; you have to seek that your reproach may be exclusively the reproach of Christ: so that if at any time the malice of men seeks to misconstrue your actions, and lays to your charge things which you know not, your well-doing may silence them; and having no evil thing to say of you, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Strong appeals are made in our day to members of the Christian Church to engage actively in all kinds of Christian work. They are summoned to go forth aggressively upon the world's misery and sin. This has become a characteristic note of our time. Such appeals were needed. It is a shame that so many Christians have absolved themselves from the obligation to place at their Lord's service the aptitudes and the energies with which He has endowed them. Yet in this wholesale administration diversities are apt to be overlooked. Christians may be undervalued who do not possess qualities fitting them for the special activities; or, attempting these without much aptitude, and finding little success, they may be unduly cast down. It is important to lay stress on this. There are some, perhaps we should say many, who must come to the conclusion, if they judge aright, that their gifts and opportunities indicate for them, as their sphere, a somewhat narrow round of duties, mostly of that ordinary type which the common experience of human life supplies. But if they bring into these a Christian heart; if they use the opportunities they have; if they are watchful to please their Lord in the life of the family, the workshop, the market; if the purifying influence of the faith by which they live comes to light in the steady excellence of their character and course,—then they need have no sense of exclusion from the work of Christ and of His Church. They, too, do missionary work. Blameless, harmless, unrebuked, they are seen as lights in the world. They contribute, in the manner that is most essential of all, to the Church's office in the world. And their place of honour and reward shall be far above that of many a Christian busybody, who is too much occupied abroad to keep the light clear and bright at home.

Blameless, then, harmless, unaspersed, must the children of God, His redeemed children, be. So will the light of Christian character come clearly out, and Christians will be "luminaries, holding forth the word of life."

The word of life is the message of salvation as it sets forth to us Christ, and goodness and blessedness by Him. Substantially it is that teaching which we have in the Scriptures; although, when Paul wrote, the New Testament was not yet a treasure of the Churches, and the "word of life" only echoed to and fro from teacher to taught, and from one disciple to another. Still, the teaching rested on the Old Testament Scriptures understood in the light of the testimony of Jesus; and it was controlled and guided by men speaking and writing in the Spirit. What it was therefore was very well known, and the influence of it as the seed of life eternal was felt. It was for Christians to hold by it, and to hold it out,—the expression used in ver. 16 may have either meaning; and virtually both senses are here. In order to give light there must be life. And Christian life depends on having in us the word, quick and powerful, which is to dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This must be the secret of blameless Christian lives; and so those who have this character will give light, as holding forth the word of life. The man's visible character itself does this. For while the word and message of life is to be owned, professed, in fit times proclaimed, yet the embodiment of it in the man is the main point here, the character being formed and the practice determined by the "word" believed. So also we are said to live by the faith of the Son of God. The life of faith on Him is the life of having and holding forth His word.

Here, as everwhere, our Lord goes first. The Apostle John, speaking in his Gospel of the Eternal Word, tells us that in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. It was not merely a doctrine of light; the life was the light. As He lived, in His whole being, in His acting and suffering, in His coming and staying and departing, in His Person and in His discharge of every office, He manifested the Father. Still we find it so; as we contemplate Him, as His words lead us to Himself, we behold the glory, the radiance of grace and truth.

Now His people are made like Him. They too, through the word of life, become partakers of true life. This life does not dwell in them as it

does in their Lord, for He is its original seat and source; hence they are not the light of the world in the same sense in which He is so. Still they are luminaries, they are stars in the world. By manifesting the genuine influence of the word of life which dwells in them, they do make manifest in the world what truth and purity and salvation are. This is their calling; and, in a measure, it is their attainment.

The view of the matter given here may be compared with that of 2 Cor. iii. 4. Christ, the Father's Word, may also be regarded as the Father's living Epistle. Then those who behold Him, and drink in the significance of this message, are also themselves, in their turn, Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men.

So to shine is the calling of all believers, not of some only; each, according to his opportunities, may and ought to fulfil it. God designs to be glorified, and to have His salvation justified, in this form. Christ has said in the plainest terms, "Ye are the light of the world." But to be so implies separateness from the world, in root and in fruits; and that is for many a hard saying. "Ye are a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."

In the sixteenth and following verses comes in again Paul's own share in the progress and victory of the Christian life in his friends. "It would be exceeding well," he seems to say, "for you; how well, you may partly gather from learning how well it would be for me." He would have cause to "rejoice in the day of Christ" that he had "not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." What might be said on this has been anticipated in the remarks made on chap. i. ver. 20 fol. But here the Apostle is thinking of something more than the toil and labour expended in the work. More than these was to fall to his lot. His life of toil was to close in a death of martyrdom. And whether the Apostle was or was not enabled to foresee this certainly, doubtless he looked forward to it as altogether probable. So he says: "But if I be offered (or poured out as a drink-offering) in the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all; and do ye also likewise joy and rejoice with me."

To see the force of this expression we must remember that it was an ancient custom to seal and complete a sacrifice by the pouring out of a libation on the altar or at the foot of it. This might be intended as the crowning testimony of the abundant freewill with which the service had been rendered and the sacrifice had been offered. To some such rite the Apostle alludes when he speaks of himself—that is to say, of his own life—as poured forth at the sacrifice and service of their faith. And it is not hard to understand the idea which dictates this mode of speech.

We read in Romans xii. an exhortation to the saints to yield themselves a living sacrifice, which sacrifice is their reasonable service. They were to do so in the way of not being conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. So here: the course of conduct which the Apostle had been exhorting the Philippians to pursue was an act of worship or service, and in particular it was a sacrifice, the sacrifice of their faith, the sacrifice in which their faith was expressed. Each believer in offering this sacrifice acts as a priest, being a member of the holy priesthood which offers to God spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter ii. 5). Such a man is not, indeed, a priest to make atonement, but he is a priest to present offerings through Christ his Head. The Philippians, then, in so far as they were, or were to be, yielding themselves in this manner to God, were priests who offered to God a spiritual sacrifice.

Here let us notice, as we pass, that no religion is worth the name that has not its sacrifice through which the worshipper expresses his devotion. And in Christian religion the sacrifice is the consecration of the man and of his life to God's service in Christ. Let us all see to it what sacrifices we offer.

This doctrine, then, of the priesthood and the sacrifice was verified in the case of the Philippians; and, by the same rule, it held true also in the case of Paul himself. He, as little as they, was priest to make atonement. But certainly when we see Paul so cordially yielding himself to the service of God in the gospel, and discharging his work with such willing labour and pains, we see in him one of Christ's priests offering himself to God a living sacrifice. Now is this all? or is something more to be said of Paul? More is to be said; and although the point now in view is not prominent in this passage, it is present as the underlying thought. For the whole sacrifice of holy life rendered by the Philippians, and by his other converts, was, in a sense, the offering of Paul also; not theirs only, but his too. God gave him a standing in the matter, which he, at least, was not to overlook. God's grace, indeed, had wrought the work, and Paul was but an instrument; yet so an instrument that he had a living and abiding interest in the result. He was not an instrument mechanically interposed, but one whose faith and love had wrought to bring the result to pass. To him it had been given to labour and pray, to watch and guide, to spend and to be spent. And when the Apostle saw the lives of many true followers of Christ unfold as the result of his ministry, he could think that God owned his place too in bringing all this tribute to the temple. "God grants me a standing in the service of this offering. The Philippians bring it, each for himself, and it is theirs; but I also bring it, and it is my offering too. God takes it at their hand, but also at my hand, as something which with all my heart I have laboured for and won, and brought to His footstool. I also have my place to present to Christ the sacrifice and service of faith of all these men who are living fruits of my ministry. I have been minister of Christ to these Gentiles, 'ministering the gospel of the grace of God, that the offering up of these Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ.'" (Rom. xv. 16, 17).

There remains but one step to be made, to reach the seventeenth verse. Consider the Apostle's heart glowing with the thought that God counted the holy fruits of those believing lives to be sacrifice and service of his, as well as theirs, and accepted it not only from their hands, but from Paul's too. Consider the gladness with which he felt that after all his toil and pains he had this great offering to bring, as his thank-offering to his Lord. And then imagine him hearing a voice which says: "Now then, seal your service, crown your offering; be yourself the final element of sacrifice; pour out your life. You have laboured and toiled, spent years and

strength, very willingly, and most fruitfully: that is over now; one thing remains; die for the worthy name of Him who died for you." It is this he is contemplating: "If I be poured out at the sacrifice and service of your faith; if I am called to go on and complete the sacrifice and service; if one thing more alone is left for Paul the aged and the prisoner, and that one thing be to lay down the life whose labours are ending; if the life itself is to run out in one final testimony that my whole heart, that all I am and have are Christ's,—shall not I rejoice? will not you rejoice with me? That will be the final identification of my life with your sacrifice and service. It will be the expression of God's accepting the completed gift. It will be the libation that crowns the service. I am not to be used, and then set aside as having no more interest in the results. On the contrary, your Christianity and mine, in the wonderful relation they have to one another, are to pass to God together as one offering. If, after running and labouring, all issues of my life be finally poured out in martyrdom, that, as it were, identifies me finally and inseparably with the sacrifice and service which have filled your lives, and also my life. It becomes one complete offering.

It may give cause for thought to ministers of the gospel that the Apostle should so vitally and vividly connect himself with the results of his work. It was no languid, no perfunctory ministry that led up to this high mood. His heart's blood had been in it; the strength and passion of his love to Christ had been poured out and spent on his work and his converts. Therefore he could feel that in some gracious and blessed way the fruits that came were still his—given to him to bring to the altar of the Lord. How well shall it be with the Churches when the ministry of their pastors burns with a flame like this! What an image of the pastoral care is here expressed!

But may not all Christian hearts be stirred to see the devotedness and the love which filled this man's soul? The constraining power of the love of Christ so wrought in him that he triumphed and rejoiced both in bringing and in becoming an offering,—breaking out, as it were, into sacrifice and service, and pouring out his life an offering to the Father and the Son. All hearts may be stirred; for all, perhaps, can imagine such a mood. But how many of us have it as a principle and a passion entering into our own lives?

CHAPTER IX.

TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 19-30 (R. V.).

THE outpouring of his thoughts, his feelings, and his desires towards the Philippians has so far spent itself. Now he turns to mention the steps he is taking, in response to their communication, to express practically his love and his care for their welfare. Yet we must carry along with us what has just been said of the Christian service and sacrifice, and of the tie between the Apostle and his converts; for these thoughts are still in the Apostle's mind, and they gleam through the passage which now comes before us.

Paul had been contemplating the possibility of dying soon in his Master's cause: no doubt it was an alternative often present to his mind; and we see with what a glow of high association it rose before him. Still he, like ourselves, had to await his Master's will, had meanwhile to carry on the business of his life, and indeed (chap. i. 25) was aware that the prolongation of his life might very likely be a course of things more in the line of God's purpose, and more serviceable to the Churches at Philippi and elsewhere. So, while he has expressed the mood in which both they and he are to face the event of his martyrdom, when it comes, he does not hesitate to express the expectation that he may be set free and may see them again. Meanwhile he has made up his mind ere long to send Timothy. Timothy will bring them news of Paul, and will represent the Apostle among them as only a very near and confidential friend could do; at the same time he will bring back to Paul an account of things at Philippi, no doubt after doing all that with God's help he could to instruct, correct, and edify the Church during his stay. In this way a sustaining and gladdening experience for the Philippian Christians would be provided; and, at the same time, Paul too ("I" also, ver. 19) would be gladdened by receiving from so trustworthy a deputy a report upon men and things at Philippi. In connection with this declaration of his intention, the Apostle reveals some of the reflections which had occupied his mind; and these suggest several lessons.

1. Notice the spirit of self-sacrifice on Paul's part. Timothy was the one thoroughly trusted and congenial friend within his reach. To a man who was a prisoner, and on whom the burden of many anxieties fell, it was no small ease to have one such friend beside Him. Our Blessed Lord Himself craved for loving human fellowship in His time of sorrow; and so must Paul do also. Yet all must give way to the comfort and well-being of the Churches. As soon as Paul can descry how it is to go with him, so that plans may be adjusted to the likelihoods of the situation, Timothy is to go on his errand to Philippi.

2. Notice the importance which may justly attach to human instrumentalities. One is not as good as another. Some are far more fit for use than others are. The Apostle thought earnestly on the point who was fittest to go, and he was glad he had a man like Timothy to send. It is true that the supreme source of success in gospel work is God Himself; and sometimes He gives unexpected success to unlikely instruments. But yet, as a rule, much depends on men being adapted to their work. When God prepares fresh blessing for His Church, He commonly raises up men fitted for the service to be rendered. Therefore we do well to pray earnestly for men eminently qualified to do the Lord's work.

3. Timothy's special fitness for this mission was that he had a heart to care for them, especially to care for their true and highest interests. So far he resembled Paul himself. He had the true pastoral heart. He had caught the lessons of Paul's own life. That was the main thing. No doubt he had intellectual gifts, but his dispositions gave him the right use of gifts. The loving heart, and the watchfulness and thoughtfulness which that inspires, do more to create pastoral wisdom than any intellectual superiority. Timothy had a share of the "mind" of Christ (ver. 5), and that made him meet to be a wise in-

spector and adviser for the Philippians, as well as a trustworthy reporter concerning their state and prospects.

4. What is most fitted to impress us is the difficulty which Paul experienced in finding a suitable messenger, and the manner in which he describes his difficulty. He was conscious in himself of a self-forgetting love and care for the Churches, which was part, and a great part, of his Christian character. He was ready (1 Cor. x. 33) to please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved. He looked out for men among his friends whose hearts might answer to him here, but he did not find them. He had no man likeminded. One indeed was found, but no more. As he looked round, a sense of disappointment settled on him.

One asks of whom this statement is made—that he finds none like-minded—that all seek their own? Probably not of Epaphroditus, for Epaphroditus goes at any rate, and the question is about some one in addition, to be, as it were, Paul's representative and commissioner. Nor are we entitled to say that it applies to Tychicus, Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus, mentioned in Colossians iv. For these men might not be with the Apostle at the precise moment of his writing to the Philippians; and the character given to them in the Epistle to the Colossians seems to set them clear of the inculpation in this passage: unless we suppose that, even in the case of some of them, a failure had emerged near the time when the Epistle was written, which vexed the Apostle, and forced him to judge them unprepared at present for the service. It will be safest, however, not to assume that these men were with him, or that they are here in view.

Still, the sad comment of the Apostle must apply to men of some standing and some capacity,—men of Christian profession, men who might naturally be thought of in connection with such a task. As he surveyed them, he was obliged to note the deplorable defect, which perhaps had not struck himself so forcibly until he began to weigh the men against the mission he was planning for them. Then he saw how they came short; and also, how this same blight prevailed generally among the Christians around him. Men were not "likeminded"; no man was "likeminded." All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. Is not this a sad saying? What might one expect at the outset of a noble cause, the cause of Christ's truth and Church? What might one count upon in the circle that stood nearest to the Apostle Paul? Yet this is the account of it,—All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Is it any wonder that the Apostle pleads earnestly with Christians to cherish the mind of "not looking each of you to his own things" (ver. 4); that he presses the great example of the Saviour Himself; that he celebrates elsewhere (1 Cor. xiii.) the beauty of that love which seeketh not his own and beareth all things? For we see how the meaner spirit beset him and hemmed him in, even in the circle of his Christian friends.

What does his description mean? It does not mean that the men in question broke the ordinary Christian rules. It does not mean that any Church could have disciplined them for provable sins. Nay, it does not mean that they were destitute of fear of God and love to Christ. But yet, to the Apostle's eye, they were too visibly swayed by the eagerness about their own things; so swayed that their ordinary course was governed and determined by it. It might be love of ease, it might be covetousness, it might be pride, it might be party opinion, it might be family interests, it might even be concentration on their own religious comfort:—however it might be, to this it came in the end, All seek their own. Some of them might be quite unsound, deceivers or deceived; especially, for instance, if Demas (2 Tim. iv. 10) was one of them. But even those of whom the Apostle might be persuaded better things, and things that accompany salvation, were so far gone in this disease of seeking their own that the Apostle could have no confidence in sending them, as otherwise he would have done, on a mission in which the mind and care of Christ were to be expressed to Christ's Church. He could not rely on a "genuine care."

You mistake if you suppose this faulty state implied, in all these cases, a deliberate, conscious preference of their own things above the things of Jesus Christ. The men might really discern a supreme beauty and worth in the things of Christ; they might honestly judge that Christ had a supreme claim on their loyalty; and they might have a purpose to adhere to Christ and Christ's cause at great cost, if the cost must finally be borne. And yet meanwhile, in their common life, the other principle manifested itself far too victoriously. The place which their own things held—the degree in which their life was influenced by the bearing of things on themselves, was far from occupying that subordinate place which Christ has assigned to it. The things of Jesus Christ did not rise in their minds above other interests, but were jostled, and crowded, and thrust aside by a thousand things that were their own.

You may not cherish any avowed purpose to seek your own; you may have learned to love Christ for the best reasons; you may have the root of the matter in you; you may have made some sacrifices that express a sense of Christ's supreme claims: and yet you may be a poor style of Christian, an inconsistent Christian, a careless, unwatchful Christian. Especially you may habitually fail to make a generous estimate of the place to be given to the things of Jesus Christ. You may not be reckoned so defective either in general judgment or in your own esteem, because you may come up very well to what is usually expected. And yet you may be allowing any Christianity you have to be largely stifled and repressed by foreign and alien influences, by a crowd of occupations and recreations that steal heart and life away. You may be taking no proper pains, no loving pains, to be a Christian, in Christ's sense of what that should be. Though only at the beginning of the conflict, you may be living as if there was scarcely a conflict to be fought. And so in practice, in the history of your hours, you may be seeking your own things to an extent that is even disgraceful to Christian religion. You may allow your course of thought and action to be dictated by that which is of self, by gain, self-indulgence, or frivolity, to a degree that would even be appalling if your eyes were opened to discern it. We all know that in religious exercises formality may usurp a large place, even in the case of men who have received power for reality. Just so in the Christian course, and under the Christian name and calling, what is

"your own" may be suffered to encroach most lamentably on the higher principle; so that an Apostle looking at you must say: "They all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." You are not faithful enough to apply Christ's standard to your heart and ways, nor diligent enough to seek His Spirit. Perhaps if you were strongly tempted to deny Christ, or to fall into some great scandalous sin, you would awaken to the danger and cling to your Saviour for your life. But as things go commonly, you let them go. And the consequence is, you are largely losing your lives. What should be your contribution to the good cause, and so should be your own gladness and honour, never comes to pass. some of you have thoughts in your minds upon this point, why you do not seem to find any doorways into Christian usefulness. You do wish to see Christ's cause prosper. Yet somehow it never seems to come to your hands to do anything effectually or fruitfully for the cause. What can the reason be? Alas! in the case of how many the reason is just what it was in the case of Paul's friends: you are so largely seeking your own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's, that you are not fit to be sent on any mission. If the Apostle could say this to the Christians of his day, how great must be the danger still!

Now if we look at it as part of the experience of Paul the Apostle, to find this temper so prevailing around him, we learn another lesson. We know Paul's character, his enthusiasm, the magnanimous faith and love with which he counted all to be loss in comparison of Christ. And yet, we see what he found among the Christians around him. This has been so in every age. The unreasonableness, faintheartedness, and faithlessness of men, the unchristlikeness of Christians, have been matter of experience. If our hearts were enlarged to plan and endeavour more generously for Christ's cause, we should feel this a great trial. All large-hearted Christians have to encounter it. Let it be remembered that it is not peculiar to any age. The Apostle had full experience of it. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. . . . Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil. . . . At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (2 Tim. iv. 10-16). Let us be assured, that if Christ's work is to be done, we must be prepared not only for the opposition of the world, but for the coldness and the disapprobation of many in the Church—of some whom we cordially believe to be, after all, heirs of the kingdom.

Timothy is to go to Philippi, and is to bring to Paul a full report. But, at the same time, the Apostle finds it necessary to send Epaphroditus, not, apparently, with a view to his returning to Rome again, but to resume his residence at Philippi. It seems, on all accounts, reasonable to believe that Epaphroditus belonged to the Philippian Church, and was in office there. In this case he is to be distinguished from Epaphras (Col. iv. 12), with whom some would identify him, for no doubt Epaphras belonged to Colossæ. Epaphroditus had come to Rome, bearing with him the gifts which assured Paul of the loving remembrance in which he was held at Philippi, and of the abiding desire to minister to him which was cherished there. His own Christian zeal led Epaphroditus to undertake the duty, and he had borne himself in it as became a warmhearted and public-spirited Christian. He had been Paul's brother and fellow-workman and fellow-soldier. But, meanwhile, the Apostle was aware how valuable his presence might be felt to be at Philippi. And Epaphroditus himself had conceived a longing to see the old friends, and to resume the old activities in the Philippian Church. For he had been sick, very sick, almost dead. Amid the weakness and inactivity of convalescence, his thoughts had been much at Philippi, imagining how the brethren there might be moved at the tidings of his state, and yearning, perhaps, for the faces and the voices which he knew so well. Paul was accustomed to restrain and sacrifice his own feelings; but that did not make him inattentive to the feelings of other people. Trying as his position at Rome was, he would not keep Epaphroditus in these circumstances. He had had great comfort in his company, and would be glad to retain it. But he would be more glad to think of the joy at Philippi when Epaphroditus should return. So he gives back Epaphroditus. As he does so he admonishes his friends to value adequately what they are receiving. Paul was sending to them a true-hearted and large-hearted Christian; one who allowed nothing—neither difficulties nor risks—to stand in the way of Christian service and Christian sympathy. Let such men be had in reputation. It is a lawful and right thing to make a high estimate of Christian character where it eminently appears, and to honour such persons very highly in love. If they are not honoured and prized, it is too likely that others will be whom it is not so fit and so wholesome to admire. And the ground of admiration in the case of Epaphroditus sets once more before us the theme of the whole chapter. Epaphroditus was to be had in reputation because he had approved himself to be one seeking not his own, one willing to lay down his life for the brethren.

CHAPTER X.

NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.

PHILLIPPIANS iii. 1-8 (R. V.).

THE third chapter contains the portion of this Epistle in which, perhaps, one is hardest put to it to keep pace with the writer. Here he gives us one of his most remarkable expositions of true Christian religion as he knew it, and as he maintains it must essentially exist for others also. He does this in a burst of thought and feeling expressed together: so that, if we are to take his meaning, the fire and the light must both alike do their work upon us; we must feel and see both at once. This is one of the pages to which a Bible reader turns again and again. It is one of the passages that have special power to find and to stir believing men.

Yet it seems to find its place in the letter almost incidentally.

It would seem, as some have thought, that in the first verse of this chapter the Apostle begins to draw his letter to a close. Cheerful words of farewell begin to shape themselves. At the same time a closing reference is in view to some practical danger that required to be guarded against. Almost suddenly things take a new turn, and a flood of great ideas claim and take their place.

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice, be of good cheer, was the common

formula of leave-taking. The same word is translated "farewell" in 2 Cor. xiii. 11 (Authorised and Revised Versions). But the Apostle, especially in this Epistle, which is itself inspired by so much of the Christian gladness, cannot but emphasise the proper meaning of the customary phrase. Rejoice, yes, rejoice, my brethren, in the Lord. The same turn of thought recurs again in chap. iv. 4. What it is fitted to suggest will be equally in place when we reach that point.

Now he seems to be on the point of introducing some subject already referred to, either in this or in a previous Epistle. It concerned the safety of the Philippians, and it required some courteous preface in touching on it once again; so that, most likely, it was a point of some delicacy. Some have thought this topic might be the tendency to dissension which had appeared in Philippi. It is a subject which comes up again in chap. iv.: it may have been upon the point of coming up here. The closing words of ver. 1 might well enough preface such a reference. The theme was not so pleasant as some of those on which he had written: it might be delicate for him to handle, and it might call for some effort on their part to take it well. Yet it concerned their safety that they should fully realise this element of the situation, and should take the right view of it. Therefore also the Apostle would not count it irksome to do his part in relation to it. People entangled in a fault are in circumstances not favourable to a right estimate of their own case. They need help from those who can judge more soundly. Yet help must be tendered with a certain considerateness.

But at this point a new impulse begins to operate. Perhaps the Apostle was interrupted, and, before he could resume, some news reaches him, awakening afresh the indignation with which he always regarded the tactics of the Judaisers. Nothing indicates that the Philippian Church was much disposed to Judaise. But if at this juncture some new disturbance from the Judaisers befell his work at Rome, or if news of that kind reached him from some other field, it might suggest the possibility of those sinister influences finding their way also to Philippi. This is, of course, a conjecture merely; but it is not an unreasonable one. It has been offered as an explanation of the somewhat sudden burst of warning that breaks upon us in chap. iii. 2; while, in the more tranquil strain of chap. iv., topics are resumed which easily link themselves to chap. iii. 1.*

Still, even if this denunciation of Judaising comes in rather unexpectedly, it does not really disturb the main drift of the Epistle, nor does it interfere with the lessons which the Philippians were to learn. It rather contributes to enforce the views and deepen the impressions at which Paul aims. For the denunciation becomes the occasion of introducing a glowing description of how Christ found Paul, and what Paul found in Christ. This is set against the religion of Judaising. But at the same time, and by the nature of the case, it becomes a magnificent exposure and rebuke of all fleshly religionising, of all the ways of being religious that are superficial, self-confident, and wordly-minded. It also becomes a stirring call to what is most central and vital in Christian religion. If then there was at Philippi, as there is everywhere, a tendency to be too easily contented with what they had attained; or to reconcile Christianity with self-seeking; or to indulge a Christianised arrogance and quarrelsomeness; or in any other shape, "having begun in the spirit to be made perfect in the flesh,"—here was exactly what they needed. Here, too, they might find a vivid representation of the "one spirit" in which they were to "stand fast," the "one soul" in which they were to "labour" together (chap. i. 27). That "one spirit" is the mind which is caught, held, vitalised, continually drawn upwards and forwards, by the revelation and the appropriation of Christ.

The truth is that a remiss Christianity always becomes very much a Judaism. Such Christianity assumes that a life of respectable conventions, carried on within sacred institutions, will please God and save our souls. What the Apostle has to set against Judaism may very well be set against that in all its forms.

"Keep an eye on the dogs, the evil workers, on the concision." The Judaisers are not to occupy him very long, but we see they are going to be thoroughly disposed of. Dogs is a term borrowed from their own vocabulary. They classed the Gentiles (even the uncircumcised Christians) as dogs, impure beings who devoured all kinds of meats and were opened to all kinds of uncleanness. But themselves, the Apostle intimates, were the truly impure, shutting themselves out from the true purity, the heart's purity, and (as Dr. Lightfoot expresses it) "devouring the garbage of carnal ordinances." They were also evil workers, mischievous busybodies, pertinaciously busy, but busy to undo rather than to build up what is good, "subverting men's souls" (Acts xv. 24). And they were the concision, not the circumcision according to the true intent of that ordinance, but the concision, the mutilation or gashing. Circumcision was a word which carried in its heart a high meaning of separation from evil and of consecration to the Lord. That meaning (and therefore also the word which carried it) pertained to gospel believers, whether outwardly circumcised or not. For the Judaising zealots could be claimed only a circumcision which had lost its sense, and which no more deserved the name,—a senseless gashing of the flesh, a concision. All these terms seem to be levelled at certain persons who are in the Apostle's view, and are not unknown to the Philippians, though not necessarily resident in that city.

For any full statement of the grounds of the Apostle's indignation at the Judaising propaganda, the reader must be referred to the expository writings on other Epistles, especially on those to the Corinthians and to the Galatians. Here a few words must suffice. Judaising made the highest pretensions to religious security and

* In the text Ewald's suggestion is followed, in the form given to it by Lightfoot. Meyer's view, however, may seem simpler to some readers. He thinks that "the same things" of ch. iii. 1 are the warnings against Judaising which actually follow in ver. 2. According to Meyer, the Apostle had already, in a previous Epistle, warned the Philippians against the Judaisers, and he considers it "safer" for them and "not irksome" to himself to repeat the admonition. In this view the connection between vv. 1 and 2 may be stated in this way: "Rejoice in the Lord; and, need I repeat it?—yes, it is better that I should repeat it,—rejoicing in the Lord is wholly contrary to that boasting in the flesh which characterises some great religious pretenders well known to you and me. Beware of them!" The energetic scorn of the phrasing is explained by supposing that the circumstances and the argument of the former Epistle had led to this animated denunciation, so that the Apostle recapitulates phrases that were well remembered in the Philippian congregation.

success; it proposed to expound the only worthy and genuine view of man's relation to God. But in reality the Judaisers wholly misrepresented Christianity, for they had missed the main meaning of it. Judaising turned men's minds away from what was highest to what was lowest—from love to law, from God's gifts to man's merits, from inward life and power to outward ceremonial performance, from the spiritual and eternal to the material and the temporary. It was a huge, melancholy mistake; and yet it was pressed upon Christians as the true religion, which availed with God, and could alone bring blessing to men. Hence, as our Lord denounced the Pharisees with special energy—sometimes with withering sarcasm (Luke xi. 47)—so, and for the same reasons, does Paul attack the Judaisers. The Pharisees applied themselves to turn the religion of Israel into a soul-withering business of formalism and pride; and Paul's opponents strove to pervert to like effect even the gracious and life-giving gospel of Christ. To such he would give place, no, not for an hour.

Two things may be suggested here. One is the responsibility incurred by those who make a religious profession, and in that character endeavour to exert religious influence upon others. Such men are taking possession, as far as they can, of what is highest and most sacred in the soul's capacities; and if they misdirect the soul's life here, if consciously or unconsciously they betray interests so sacred, if they successfully teach men to take false coin for true in the matter of the soul's dealings with God and with its own welfare, their responsibility is of the heaviest.

Another point to notice is the energy with which the Apostle thinks it right to denounce these evil workers. Denunciation is a line of things in which, as we know very well, human passion is apt to break loose—the wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God. The history of religious controversy has made this very plain. Yet surely we may say that zeal for truth must sometimes show itself in an honest indignation against the wilfulness and the blindness of those who are misleading others. It is not always well to be merely mild and placable. That may arise in some cases from no true charity, but rather from indifference, or from an amiability that is indolent and selfish. It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing. Only, we have reason to take heed to ourselves and to our own spirit, when we are moved to be zealous in the line of condemning and denouncing. Not all who do so have approved their right to do it, by tokens of spiritual wisdom and single-hearted sincerity such as marked the life and work of Paul.

The Judaisers put abroad the false coin, and believers in Christ, whether circumcised or not, had the true. "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh." Such are truly Abraham's children (Gal. iii. 29). To them belong whatever relation to God, and interest in God, were shadowed forth by circumcision in the days of old.

No doubt, the rite of circumcision was outward; and no doubt it came to be connected with a great system of outward ordinances and outward providences. Yet circumcision, according to the Apostle, pointed not outwards, but inwards (Rom. ii. 28, 29). Elsewhere he lays stress on this, that circumcision, when first given, was a seal of faith. In the Old Testament itself, the complaint made by the prophets, speaking for God, was that the people, though circumcised in flesh, were of uncircumcised heart and uncircumcised ears. And God threatens to punish Israel with the Gentiles—the circumcised with the uncircumcised—because all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.

The true circumcision then must be those, in the first place, who have the true, the essentially true worship. Circumcision set men apart as worshippers of the true God: hence Israel came to be thought of as a people "instantly serving (or worshipping) God day and night." That this worship must include more than outward service in order to be a success—that it should include elements of high spiritual worth, was disclosed in Old Testament revelation with growing clearness. One promise on which it rested was: "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." The true circumcision, those who answer to the type which circumcision was meant to set, must be those who have the true worship. Now that is the worship "by the Spirit"; on which we shall have a word to say presently.

And again, the true circumcision must be those who have the true glorying. Israel, called to glory in their God, were set apart also to cherish in that connection a great hope, which was to bless their line, and, through them, the world. That hope was fulfilled in Christ. The true circumcision were those who welcomed the fulfilment of the promise, who rejoiced in the fulness of the blessing, because they had eyes to see and hearts to feel its incomparable worth.

And certainly, therefore, as men who had discovered the true foundation and refuge, they must renounce and turn from the false trust, they must put no confidence in the flesh. Is this, however, a paradox? Was not circumcision "outward, in the flesh"? Was it not found to be a congruous part of a concrete system, built up of "elements of this world"? Was not the temple a "worldly sanctuary," and were not the sacrifices "carnal ordinances"? Yes; and yet the true circumcision did not trust in circumcision. He who truly took the meaning of that remarkable dispensation was trained to say, "Doth not my soul wait on God? from Him cometh my salvation." And he was trained to renounce the confidences in which the nations trusted. Hence, though such a man could accept instruction and impression from many an ordinance and many a providence, he was still led to place his trust higher than the flesh. And now, when the true light was come, when the Kingdom of God shone out in its spiritual principles and forces, the true circumcision must be found in those who turned from that which appealed only to the earthly and the fleshly mind, that they might fasten on that in which God revealed Himself to contrite and longing souls.

The Apostle, therefore, claimed the inheritance and representation of the ancient holy people for spiritual believers, rather than for Judaising ritualists. But apart from questions as to the connection between successive covenants, it is worth our while to weigh well the significance

of those features of Christian religion which are here emphasised.

"We," he says, "worship by the Spirit of God." The Holy Spirit was not absent from the old economy. But in those days the consciousness and the faith of His working were dim, and the understanding of the scope of it was limited. In the times of the New Testament, on the contrary, the promise and the presence of the Spirit assume a primary place. This is the great promise of the Father which was to come into manifestation and fulfilment when Christ had gone away. This, from Pentecost onwards, was to be distinctive of the character of Christ's Church. According to the Apostle Paul, it is one great end of Christ's redemption, that we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. So, in particular, Christian worship is by the Spirit of God. Therefore it is a real and most inward fellowship with God. In this worship it is the office of the Holy Spirit to give us a sense of the reality of Divine things, especially of the truths and promises of God; to touch our hearts with their goodness, on account especially of the Divine love that breathes in them; to dispose us to decision, in the way of consent and surrender to God as thus revealed. He takes the things of Christ, and shows them to us. So he brings us, in our worship, to meet with God, mind to mind, heart to heart. Although all our thoughts, as well as all our desires, come short, yet, in a measure, a real consent with God about His Son and about the blessings of His Son's gospel comes to pass. Then we sing with the Spirit, when our songs are filled with confidence and admiration, arising out of a sense of God's glory and grace; and we pray in the Holy Ghost, when our supplications express this loving and thankful close with God's promises. It is our calling and our blessedness to worship by the Spirit of God. Much of our worship might fall silent, if this alone should be upheld: yet this alone avails and finds God. Whatever obscures this, or distracts attention from it, whether it be called Jewish or Christian, does not aid worship, but mars it.

It is true that the presence of the Spirit of God is not discernible otherwise than by the fruits of His working. And the difficulty may be raised, how can we, in practice, be secure of having the Spirit whereby to worship God? But, on the one hand, we know in some degree what the nature of the worship is which He sustains; we can form some conception of the attitude and exercise of soul towards Christ and God which constitute that worship. We do therefore know something as to what we should seek; we are aware of the direction in which our face should be set. On the other hand, the presence of the Spirit with us, to make such worship real in our case, is an object of faith. We believe in God for that gracious presence, and ask for it; and so doing, we expect it, according to God's own promise. On this understanding we apply ourselves to find entrance and progress in the worship which is by the Spirit.

All appliances which are supposed to aid worship, which are conceived to add to its beauty, pathos, or sublimity are tolerable only so far as they do not tend to divert us from the worship which is by the Spirit. Experience shows that men are extremely prone to fall back from the simplicity and intentness of spiritual worship; and then they cover the gap, which they cannot fill, by outward arrangements of an impressive and affecting kind. Outward arrangements can render real service to worshippers, only if they remove hindrances, and supply conditions under which the simplicity and intentness of the worship "by the Spirit" may go on undisturbed. Very often they have tended exactly in the contrary direction; not the less because they have been introduced, perhaps, with the best intentions. And yet the chief question of all is not the more or less, the this or that, of such circumstantials; but rather what the heart fixes on and holds by.

Again, we "glory in Christ Jesus." Christians are rich and great, because Christ Jesus assumes a place in their mind and life, such as makes them partakers of all spiritual blessing in Him. They glory, not in what they are, or do, or become, or get, but in Christ. Glorying in anything implies a deep sense of its wonderfulness and worth, along with some persuasion that it has a happy relation to ourselves. So Christ is the power and wisdom of God, the revelation of the Father, the way to the Father, the centre of blessing, the secret of religious restoration, attainment, and success: and He is ours; and He sets the type of what we through Him shall be. To glory and triumph in Christ is a leading characteristic of Christian religion.

And so, then, we "put no confidence in the flesh." If in Christ, under the revelation which centres in Him, we have found the way to God and the liberty to serve God, then all other ways must be for us *ipso facto* exposed and condemned; they are seen to be fallacious and fruitless. All these other ways are summoned up in "the flesh." For the flesh is human nature fallen, with the resources which it wields, drawn from itself or from earthly materials of some kind. And in some selection or combination of these resources, the religion of the flesh stands. The renunciation of trust in such ways of establishing a case before God is included in the acceptance of Christ's authority and Christ's salvation. This condemns alike the confidence in average morality, and that in accredited ecclesiastical surroundings. It condemns confidence in even the holiest Christian rites, as if they could transfer us, by some intrinsic virtue, into the Kingdom of God, or could accredit our standing there. The same holds of confidence in doctrines, and even of confidence in sentiments. Rites, doctrines, and sentiments have their place of honour, as lines in which Christ and we may meet. Otherwise they all fall into the category of the flesh. Many things the flesh can do, in worship as in other departments; but it cannot attain to the worship that is by the Spirit of God. Much it can boast of; but it cannot replace Immanuel; it cannot fill the place of the reconciliation and the life. When we learn what kind of confidence is needed towards God, and find the ground of it in the Christ of God, then we cease to rely on the flesh.

At this point the Apostle cannot but emphasise his own right to speak. He appeals to his remarkable history. He knows all about this Judaic religion, which glories in the flesh, and he knows also the better way. The experience which had transformed his life entitled him to a hearing; for, indeed, he, as no man else, had searched out the worth of both the ways of it. So he is led into a remarkable testimony regarding the nature and the working forces of true

Christian religion. And this, while it serves the purpose of throwing deserved disgrace on the poor religion of Judaising, serves at the same time a higher and more durable purpose. It sets the glory of the life of faith, love, and worship, against the meanness of all fleshly life whatever; and thus it vividly impresses on all hearers and readers the alternatives with which we have to deal, and the greatness of the choice which we are called to make.

If Paul decries the Jewish glorying in the flesh, it is not because he lacked ground, that had enabled him to cherish it and might enable him still to do so. "I also have material enough of fleshly confidence:—if any other thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I more." Then comes the remarkable catalogue of the prerogatives which had once meant so much for Saul of Tarsus, filling his heart with confidence and exultation. "Circumcised the eighth day"—for he was no proselyte, but born within the fold: "of the stock of Israel"—for neither had his parents been proselytes: in particular, for he was one whose pedigree was ascertained and notorious, "of the tribe of Benjamin": "an Hebrew of Hebrews" nursed and trained, that is to say, in the very speech and spirit of the chosen people; not, as some of them, bred up in a foreign tongue, and under alien influences; "concerning the law, a Pharisee"—that is, "of the strictest sect of our religion" (Acts xxvi. 5); for, as a Pharisee, Saul had given himself wholly to know the law, to keep the law, to teach the law. More yet—"as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church"; in this clause the heat of the writer's spirit rises into pathetic irony and self-scorn: "This appropriate outcome of carnal Judaism, alas, was not lacking in me: I was not a Judaiser of the half-hearted sort." The idea is that those who, trusting in fleshly Judaism, claimed also to be Christians, knew neither their own spirit, nor the proper working of their own system. Saul of Tarsus had been no such incoherent Jew; only too bloodily had he proved himself thorough and consistent. Lastly, as to "law righteousness," the righteousness of compliance with rules, he had been unchallengeable; not a pharisaic theorist only, but a man who made conscience of his theory. Ah! he had known all this; and more, he had been forced in a great crisis of his life to measure and search out the whole worth of it.

"But what things were gain to me"—the whole class of things that ranked themselves before my eyes, and in my heart, as making me rich and strong—"those I have esteemed" (in a mass) "to be loss for Christ." They ceased to be valuable when they began to be reckoned as elements of disadvantage and of loss in comparison of Christ. Nor these things only, but even all things—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "All things" must include more than those old elements of fleshly confidence already enumerated. It must include everything which Paul still possessed, or might yet attain, that could be separated from Christ, weighed against Him, brought into competition with Him—all that the flesh could even yet take hold of, and turn into a ground of separate confidence and boasting. So the phrase might cover much that was good in its place, much that the Apostle was glad to hold in Christ and from Christ, but which yet might present itself to the unwatchful heart as material of independent boasting, and which, in that case, must be met with energetic and resolute rejection. "All things" may include, for instance, many of those elements of Christian and Apostolic eminence which are enumerated in 2 Cor. xi.; for which he thankfully received many such things, and lovingly prized them "in Christ Jesus," yet as they might become occasions to flatter or seduce even an Apostle—betraying him into self-confidence, or into the assertion of some separate worth and glory for himself—they must be rejected and counted to be loss.

The difficulty for us here is to estimate worthily the elevation of that regard to Christ which had become the inspiration of the life of Paul.

At the time when he was arrested on the road to Damascus, God revealed His Son to him and in him. Paul then became aware of Jesus as the Messiah of his people, against whom his utmost energies had bent themselves—against whom he had sinned with his utmost determination. That discovery came home to him with a sense of great darkness and horror; and, no doubt, at the same time, his whole previous conceptions of life, and his judgments of his own life, were subverted, and fell in ruins around him. He had had his scheme of life, of success, of welfare; it had seemed to him a lofty and well-accredited one; and, with whatever misgivings he might occasionally be visited, on the whole he thought of himself as working it out hopefully and well. Now on every side were written only defeat, perplexity, and despair. But ere long the Son of God was revealed in his heart (Gal. i. 16) as the Bearer of righteousness and life to sinners—as the embodiment of Divine reconciliation and Divine hope. In this light a new conception of the world, a new scheme of worthy and victorious life, opened itself to Paul—new and wonderful. But the reason of it, the hopefulness of it, the endless worth of it, lay chiefly here, that God in Christ had come into his life. The true relation of moral life to God, and the ends of human life as judged by that standard, were opening before him; but, if that had stood alone, it might only have completed the dismay of the paralysed and stricken man. What made all new was the vision of Christ victoriously treading the path in which we failed to go, and of Christ dying for the unrighteous. So God came into view, in His love, redeeming, reconciling, adopting, giving the Holy Spirit—and He came into view "in Christ Jesus." God was in Christ. The manifold relation of the living God to His creature man began to be felt and verified in the manifold relation of Christ the Son of God, the Mediator and Saviour, to the broken man who had defied and hated Him. Christ henceforth became the ground, the meaning, and the aim of Paul's life. Life found its explanation, its worth, its loving imperative here. All things else that once had value in his eyes fell away. If not entirely dismissed, they were now to have only such place and use as Christ assigned to them, only such as could fit the genius of life in Christ. And all new prerogatives and attainments that might yet accrue to Paul, and might seem entitled to assume value in his eyes, could only have the same subordinate place:—Christ first, whose light and love, whose power to fix and fill and attract the soul, made all things new; Christ first, so that all the rest was comparatively nowhere; Christ first,

so that all the rest, if at any time it came into competition with Him, if it offered itself to Paul as a source of individual confidence and boasting, is recognised as mere loss, and in that character resolutely cast away.

This had become the living and ruling principle with Paul; not so, indeed, as to meet with no opposition, but so as to prevail and bear down opposition. Enthusiastically accepted and embraced, it was a principle that had to be maintained against temptation, against infirmity, against the strong tides of inward habit and outward custom. Here lay the trial of Paul's sincerity and of Christ's fidelity and power.

That trial had run its course: it was now not far from its ending. The opening of heart and mind to Christ, and the surrender of all to Him, had not been the matter merely of one hour of deep impression and high feeling. It had continued, it was in full force still. Paul's value for Christ had borne the strain of time, and change, and temptation. Now he is Paul the aged, and also a prisoner of Christ Jesus. Has he abated from the force or cooled from the confidence of that mind of his concerning the Son of God? Far otherwise. With a "Yea, doubtless" he tells us that he abides by his first conviction, and affirms his first decision. Good right he had to testify. This was not a matter of inward feeling only, however sincere and strong. He had been well proved. He has suffered the loss of all things; he has seen all his treasures—what are counted for such—swept away from him as the result of unflinching faith and service; and he counts all to be well lost for Christ.

This passage sets before us the essential nature of Christianity—the essential life of a Christian, as revealed by the effect it has on his esteem for other things. Many of us, one supposes, cannot consider it without a sense of deep disgrace. The view here given awakens many thoughts. Some aspects of the subject must be dwelt upon for a moment.

Those things that were gain, all things that can be gain, such are the objects Paul here reckons with. The believing mind concerning Christ carries with it a changed mind as regards all these.

Apparently, in some deep sense, there arises for us in this world an inevitable competition between Christ on the one hand and all things on the other. If we should say *some* things, we might be in danger of sliding into a one-sided puritanism. But we escape that risk by saying, emphatically, *all* things. A decision upon this has to be reached, it has to be maintained, it is to be reaffirmed in particulars, in all particulars. For we must remember that the heart of Paul, in this burst of loyalty, is only echoing the call of Christ: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me. Let us repeat it, this applies to all things. Because a certain way of feeling and thinking about these things, and especially about some of them, is present with us all, which asserts itself against this principle, therefore Christian life, however rich and full, however gracious and generous its character truly is, must include a negative at the base of it. "Let a man deny (or renounce) himself, and take up his cross."

That life should be subjected to this severe competition seems hard: we may repine at it, and count it needless. We may ask, "Why should it be so? Why might not Christ take His place in our regard—His first, His ideal, His incomparable place—and, at the same time, all the other things take their place too, each in due order, as the true conception of human life may imply, and as the claims of loyalty to Christ may dictate? Why should not each take its place, more prominent or more subordinate, on a principle of harmony and happy order? Why should life be subjected to conflict and strain?" We may dream of this; but it will not be. We are such persons, and the world about us is so related to us now, that the "all things" are found continually claiming a place, and striving to make good for themselves a place in our heart and life, that will not consist with the regard due to Christ. They can be resisted only by a great inward decision, maintained and renewed all along our life, for Christ and against them. The nearest approach the believer makes in this life to that happy harmony of the whole being which was spoken of just now, is when his decision for Christ is so thorough and joyful, that the other elements—the "all things"—fall into their place, reduced into obedience by an energy that breaks resistance. Then, too, in that place, they begin to reveal their proper nature as God's gifts, their real beauty and their real worth.

But then, in the next place, though the decision cannot be escaped, yet, let us be assured, there is in this no real hardship. To be so called to this decision is the greatest blessedness of life. There is that in Christ for men, on account of which a man may gladly count all else but loss, may count it abundantly well worth his while to make this choice. Christ as binding us to God, Christ as the living source of reconciliation and sonship, Christ as the spring of a continually recruited power to love and serve and overcome, Christ as assuring to us the attainment of His own likeness, Christ as the revealer of a love which is more and better than all its own best gifts—Christ discloses to us a world of good, for the sake of which it is well done to cast, if need be, all else away. It proves reasonable to reject the importunate claim which other things make to be reckoned indispensable. It proves natural, according to a new nature, to hold all else loosely, that we may hold this one interest fast.

Yet this is not to be done or endeavoured by dismissing out of life all that gives character and movement to human existence. Not so; for indeed it is human life itself, with its complex of relations and activities, that is to receive the new inspiration. The decision is to be made by accepting the principle that life, throughout, must be life in Christ, life for Christ; and by setting ourselves to learn from Him what that principle means. Of the "all things" many must continue with us; but if so, they must continue on a new principle: no longer as competitors, certainly not as allowed competitors, but as gifts and subjects of Christ, accepting law and destination from Him. Then, also, they may continue to carry with them many a pleasant experience of our Master's providential goodness. The effort to comply with Paul's example by mutilating human life of some of its great elements has often been a sincere and earnest effort. But it implies a distorted, and eventually a narrowed view of the Christian's calling. For, short of suicide, we can never deal with *all* things on that principle of simple amputation. Now the Apostle says all things: "I count all things to be loss."

Let this, however, be noted, that loyalty re-

quires something more than merely a new valuation of things in our minds, however sincere that valuation might be. It demands also actual sacrifice, when duty or when faithful service calls for it. Paul's Christianity was prompt to lay down, as circumstances in the course of following Christ might demand, everything, anything, even that which, in other circumstances, might retain its place in life, and be counted, in its own place, seemly and welcome. Not only shall a man count all to be loss for Christ: he shall actually, when called upon, suffer the loss of anything or of all things. No Christian life is without its occasions when this test has to be accepted. Most Christian lives include lessons in this department at the very outset. Some Christian lives are very full of them,—full, that is, of experiences in which contented submission to privation, and cheerful acceptance of trouble and danger, must approve the sincerity of the esteem for Christ our Saviour which is the common profession of us all. So it was with Paul. He had suffered the loss of all things.

It is because the "all things," in their infinite variety of aspect and influence, tend so constantly to come into competition with Christ, to our great hurt and danger, that they must be so emphatically repudiated, and counted to be "loss." They are loss indeed, when they succeed in taking the place they claim, for then they impoverish our life of its true treasure. We may suffer this encroachment to take place stealthily—all but unconsciously. All the more fit it is that we should learn to assert loyalty to our lord with a magnanimous vigilance. It becomes us to set His worth and claims emphatically, with a "yea, doubtless," against the poor substitutes for which we are tempted silently to exchange Him. If not, we are likely to come back to that sad stage which has been already brought before us (chap. ii.), the condition of those Christians who "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

Let us own, however, that men are trained in different lines of discipline to the same great result. The lesson broke into the life of Paul with astounding force at one great crisis. Some, on the contrary, begin their training in little instances of early life, and under influences working too gently to be afterwards recalled. Gradually they grow into a clearer perception of the gifts Christ offers and of the claims He makes; and each step of decision paves the way to new attainments. The experience of all Christians, however diversified their training may be, is harmonised in the fidelity of each to the light he has, and of all to the Lord who calls them all to follow Him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8-18 (R. V.).

MR. ALEXANDER KNOX, in a letter to a friend,* makes the following remark: "Religion contains two sets of truths, which I may venture to denominate ultimate and mediatory: the former refer to God as an original and end; the latter to the Word made flesh, the suffering, dying, rising, ruling Saviour; the way, the truth, the life. Now I conceive these two views have almost ever been varying, in the minds even of the sincerely pious, with respect to comparative consequence; and while some have so regarded the ultimate as in some degree to neglect the mediatory, others have so fixed their views on the mediatory as greatly and hurtfully to lose sight of the ultimate." This writer refers to Tillotson on one side, and Zinzendorf on the other, as instances of these extremes; and indicates that perhaps his own leaning might be a little too much in the former direction.

It can hardly be doubted that there is something in this suggestion. In the guidance and training of the soul some aim mainly at right dispositions towards God and His will, without much dwelling on what Knox calls mediatory truths; because they assume that the latter exist only with a view to the former; and if the end has been brought into view and is coming to be attained, there is no special need of dwelling on the means. Others aim mainly at receiving the right impressions about Christ dying and rising, and at complying with the way of salvation as it is set forth to us in Christ; because they are persuaded that here the secret lies of all deliverance and progress, and that the end cannot otherwise be reached. And Mr. Knox suggests, with truth most likely, that such persons have often so occupied themselves with what may be called the means of salvation that they lose sight in a great degree of the end to which all tends—life in God, life in fellowship with His loving goodness and His holy will.

What application these views may have to divergences of our own day it would take too long to consider. Mr. Knox's remark has been referred to here in order to throw light on the mental attitude of Paul. Paul will hardly be accused of losing sight of the ultimate truths; but certainly he delights to view them through the mediatory truths; and he strives to reach the ultimate victory, through the most realising application to his heart and life of what those mediatory truths embody and disclose. Through the mediatory truths the ultimate ones reveal themselves to him with a wealth and an intensity otherwise unattainable. And the eternal life comes into experience for him as he takes into his soul the full effect of the provision which God has made, in Christ, to bestow eternal life upon him. That order of things which is mediatory is not regarded by Paul only as a fitting introduction, on God's part, to His ultimate procedure; it is also in the same degree fitted to become for the individual man the medium of vision, of assurance, of participation. In other words, Paul finds God and makes way into goodness through Christ; and not through Christ merely as an embodied ideal, but through union to Christ Divine and human, Christ living, dying, rising, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, glorifying. He never pauses in any of these, so as to fail in looking onward to God, the living God, But neither does he pass on to that goal so as to disregard the way unto the Father. If he could have foreseen the method of those who are striving in our day to bring men to the blessedness which Christianity holds out by dwelling exclusively on Christian ethics, he might have sympathised with their ethical intensity; but he would surely have wondered that they failed to find in Christianity more pregnant springs of motive and of power. Perhaps he would even be moved to say, "O

* "Remains," iv. p. 156.

foolish Galatians (or Corinthians), who hath bewitched you?" Not less, it must also be said, might he wonder at many a gospel preacher, who rehearses the "way of salvation" until the machinery clanks and groans, unable apparently to divine—unable, at least, to bring out—that glory of God in it, that wonderful presence and influence of infinite holiness, goodness, and pity, which make the gospel the power of God.

We, meanwhile, shall do well to imitate the charity of Mr. Knox, who cordially owned the Christian piety of those who might go too far either way. Few of us, indeed, can dispense with the charity that is tender to partial and imperfect views. But if we are to understand Paul, we must find our way into some sympathy with him here; not only as he is seen on this line to have attained so far in saintship, but as he is seen to be sure that this way lay much more—that on this line his road lay to the glory that should be revealed. He could contemplate the practice and growth of piety in many lights; yet it came home to him most evidently as growth in the knowledge and in the appropriation of Jesus Christ.

He has cast away for the sake of Christ the treasures so much valued by the Jews, and many a treasure more. But what he would chiefly impress on the minds of those to whom he writes is not so much the amount of what he has cast away, but rather the worth of that which he has found, and more and more is finding. The mass of things set down for loss is a mere stepping-stone to this central theme. But though he tells us what he thought and felt about it, most of us learn but slowly how much it meant for him. When we sit down beside the Apostle to learn his lesson, we become conscious that he is seeing what we cannot descry; he is sensitive to Christ through spiritual senses which in us are torpid and undeveloped. Christ holds him all through. It is faith, and love, and gratitude; it is self-devotion, and obedience, and wonder, and worship; and, through all, the conviction glows that Christ is his, that in Christ all things have changed for him. "In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin. He hath made me accepted in the Beloved. I live; yet not I, but Christ. In Christ, old things have passed away, all things are made new. Christ is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The intense heat of this conception of Christ, it must once more be said, gives its distinctive character to the religious life of Paul. May we not say that the lamentable distinction of a great deal of current Christianity is the coldness of men's thoughts about their Saviour? The views of many may be characterised as "correct, but cold." Only what can be more incorrect, what can more effectually deny and controvert the main things to be asserted, than coldness towards our Saviour, and cold thoughts of His benefits? This we should hold to be unpardonable. We never should forgive it to ourselves.

"For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." Christ had come into the life of Paul as a wonderful knowledge. Becoming thus known to him, He had transformed the world in which Paul lived, and had made him conscious of a new order of existence, so that old things passed away and all became new. The phrase employed combines two ideas. In the first place, Paul felt Christ appealing to him as to a thinking, knowing nature. Various influences were reaching him from Christ which bore on heart, will, conscience: but they all came primarily as a revelation; they came as light. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." In the next place, this discovery came with a certain assuredness. It was felt to be not a dream, not a fair imagination only, not a speculation, but a knowledge. Here Paul felt himself face to face with the real—indeed, with fundamental reality. In this character, as luminous knowledge, the revelation of Christ challenged his decision, it demanded his appreciation and adherence. For since Christ claims so fundamental a place in the moral world, since He claims so intimate and fruitful a relation to the whole state and prospects of the believing man, acquaintance with Him (at least, if it be acquaintance in Paul's style) cannot pause at the stage of contemplation: it passes into appropriation and surrender. Christ is known as dealing with us, and must be dealt with by us. So this knowledge becomes, at the same time, experience.

Hence, while in ver. 8 the Apostle speaks of himself as encountering all earthly loss that he may know Christ, in ver. 9 it is that he may gain Christ and may be found in Him. Christ so came into the field of his knowledge as to become the treasure of his life, replacing those things which heretofore had been gain, and which now figured as loss. When Paul turned from all else to know Christ, he turned, at the same time, to have Christ, "gaining Him," and to be Christ's, "found in Him."

Christ, in fact, comes to us with commandments, "words" (John xiv. 23), which are to be kept and done. He comes to us, also, with promises, the fulfilment of which, in our own case, is a most practical business. Some of these promises concern the world to come; but others apply to the present; and these, which lie next us, either are neglected, or are embraced and put to proof, every day of our lives. Besides all this, Christ comes to us to fix and fill our minds, and to endear Himself to us, in virtue simply of what He is. So viewed, He is to be owned as our best Friend, and indeed henceforth, with reverence be it said, by far our nearest Relation. This is to be, or else it is not to be. Each day asks the question, Which? Paul's Christianity was the answer to that question. How his answer rings in all our ears! Our Chistianity also is making its reply.

Both as to knowledge and as to experience the type was fixed from the first: there could be no doubt about either. But both were to deepen and widen as life went on. Christ was apprehended at first as a wonderful Whole of good; but so that indefinite fields of progress were continually to open up. In the very first days a knowledge dawned, for the sake of which all else was counted loss; yet a world of truths remained to know, as well as of good to experience, for the sake of which also all else should continue to be counted but loss. This, in fact, is only one way of saying that Christ and His salvation were realities, divinely full and worthy. Being real, the full acquaintance with all they mean for men can only arise in a historical way. Paul therefore emphasises this, that real Christianity, the right kind of Christianity, just be-

cause it has found a treasure, is set on going on to find that same treasure still further and still more (comp. chap. i. 9). If the treasure is real and the man is in earnest, that will be so. Such had been the course of his own Christian life from the first. Now, though many years have disciplined him, though changing experiences have given him new points of view, still, no less than at the first, his rejoicing in the present goes hand in hand with reaching onward to the future. The one, in fact, is the reason of the other. Both are rational, or neither. He has counted all to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge which has broken upon his soul: and still he presses on, that he may know; for the same strong attraction continues and grows.

Before passing to details, something more should perhaps be said of this magnificent generality, "the knowledge of Christ."

Christ is first of all known historically; so He is presented to us in the Gospels. His story is part of the history of our race. He passes through youth to manhood. We see Him living, acting, enduring; and we hear Him teaching—wonderful words proceed from His mouth. We contemplate Him in His humiliation, under the limits to which He submitted that He might share our state and bear our burdens. In the pathways of that Jewish life He discloses a perfect goodness and a perfect dignity. We see especially that He cherishes a purpose of good will to men which He bears to them from the Father. It overflows in all His words and works, and in the prosecution of it He moves on to lay down His life for us. This is the beginning of the knowledge of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Much may as yet be undefined; many questions may crowd on us that receive as yet no precise answer; nay, much may seem to us as yet to be strangely entangled in the particulars of an individual and of a provincial existence. But this presentation of Christ can never be dispensed with or superseded; and, for its essential purpose, it never can be surpassed. For this is the Life. "The Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

This vision, which the Gospels set before us, was also before the mind of Paul. And words of our Lord, delivered in His earthly ministry, and preserved by those who heard Him, were treasured by the Apostle of the Gentiles, and reproduced to guide the Churches as need required. Yet there is a sense in which we may say that it is not exactly the Christ of the Gospels who comes before us in the Pauline writings. The Christ of Paul is the Lord who met him by the way. It is Christ dead, risen, and ascended; it is Christ with the reason and the result of His finished work made plain, and with the relation unveiled which He sustains to men who live by Him; it is Christ with the significance of His wonderful history for believers shining out from Him—Christ *vestitus Evangelio*. Now He has gone up above all worlds. No longer is He hedged about by necessities of mortal life; no longer tied by earthly bonds to some places and some men and one nation. He is glorified; all fulness dwells in Him; all God's purposes are seen to centre in Him. And then, by His death and resurrection, the tie between Him and His people is unveiled to faith, as it could not be before. They are one with Him—in Him redeemed, endowed, triumphant, glorified. Every Christian privilege and attainment, every grace, every virtue and good gift, takes on a celestial character, as it is seen to be an element in our fellowship with Christ. The state of Christians is seen reflected in their Head. And, in turn, Christ is seen, as it were, through the medium of the relation which He sustains to them, and of the wealth of good arising to them by it. It is Christ as He is to His people, Christ as He is set in the centre of the world of good that radiates to them all, whom Paul wonders at and worships. And he finds all this to be rooted in our Lord's death upon the cross, which was the crisis of the whole redemption. All that follows took character and efficacy from that death.

A special insight into all this was included in the wisdom given to Paul. And yet this view of things does not turn out to be something diverse or alien from what the Gospels set before us. Rather it is the gospel story revealing its native significance and virtue along many lines which were not so distinct before.

But now all this, in turn, leads us to the third aspect of the case. What Christ is and what He does may be described; but there is a knowledge of it which is imparted practically, in the progressive history of the believer. According to the Christian teaching, we enter, as Christians, on a new relation; and in that relation a certain blessed well-being is appointed to us. This well-being is itself an unfolding or disclosure of Christ. Now this well-being comes home to us and is verified in the course of a progressive human experience. Life must become our school to teach us what it all means. Life sets us at the point of view now for one lesson, now for another. Life moves and changes, and brings its experiences; its problems, its conflicts, its anxieties, its fears, its temptations; its need of pity, pardon, strengthening; its experience of weakness, defeat, and disgrace; its opportunities of service, self-denial, fidelity, victory. For all those occasions Christ has a meaning and a virtue, which, in those occasions, is to become personal to ourselves. This makes knowledge indeed. This becomes the vivid commentary upon the historical and the doctrinal instruction. Life, taken in Christ's way, along with prayer and thought, manifests Christ's meaning, and makes it real to us, as nothing else can. It furnishes the stepping-stones for passing onward, in the knowledge of Christ.

This also was Paul's condition, though he was an inspired man. He too was fain to improve his knowledge in this school. And when we take all three aspects together, we shall see how truly, for Paul and for us, the knowledge of Christ is, on the one hand, so excellent from the first, that it justifies the great decision to which it calls us; and, on the other hand, how it creates a longing for further insight and fresh attainment. The latter we see in the Apostle as plainly as the former. From the first, he knew in whom he believed, and was persuaded that for His sake all else was to be resigned. Yet to the end he felt the unsatisfied desire to know more, to gain more; and his heart, if we may apply here the Psalmist's words, was breaking for this longing which it had.

It was remarked above that the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ" in ver. 8 corresponds in the Apostle's thought to the "gain-

ing" of Christ and being "found in Him" of ver. 9; and this may be the best place to say a word on these two phrases. To gain Christ, points to a receiving Christ as one's own; and the Apostle uses the phrase so as to imply that this finding of Christ, as One who is gained or won, was still going on; it was progressive. Clearly also the alternative is implied, that what is not gained is lost. The question in the Apostle's life, about which he was so decided, was about no less than losing or gaining Christ. The phrase "be found" points to the verification of Paul's relation to Christ in his history and in its results. That relation is contemplated as something that proves true. It turns out to be so. We shall best understand the phrase as referring, not to some one future date at which he should be so found, but rather to present and future alike. As men, or angels, or God, or Christ might view him, or as he might take account of his own state, this is what he would have found in regard to himself. Every way he would be found in Christ. The form of expression, however, is specially appropriate here, because it fits so well into the doctrine of righteousness through Christ, which the Apostle is about to emphasise. A similar remark applies to the expression "in Christ" so frequently occurring in the Pauline writings. This is usually explained by saying that the Apostle sets before us Christ as the sphere of his spiritual being—in whom he lived and moved—never out of relation to Him, and not so related to any other. Such explanations are true and good: only we may say that the pregnant strength of the expression seems to be weakened even by the best explanations. The relation in view is too wonderful ever to be adequately described. The union between Christ and His Church, between Christ and the believing man, is a mystery; and like all objects of faith, it is dimly apprehended by us for the present. But the certainty of it, and its wonderfulness, we should never allow ourselves to overlook. Christ is able to bring men into fellowship with Himself, to assume responsibility for them, to represent their interests and to care for their good; and men may receive Christ into their lives; with a completeness on both sides which no explanations can adequately represent. The identification with Christ which the phrase suggests naturally fits what follows.

Now the Apostle goes more into detail. He tells us what were for him the main articles of this good state of being "found in Christ." He indicates, with a certain eager gratitude, the main lines along which the benefits of that state had come into experience, and along which he was pressing on to know the fulness of Christ. First, in Christ he has and shall have not his own righteousness, which is that of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Then, secondly, he has in hand a practical knowledge of Christ, culminating in the complete deliverance of the resurrection. It includes two aspects or elements: Christ known in the power of His resurrection, and Christ known in the fellowship of His sufferings.

The first thing then which rises distinctly into view in connection with being found in Christ is the possession of the new righteousness. We have seen already that value for righteousness such as is of law, and hope of achieving it, had been associated with Paul's old days of Jewish zeal. He then stood on the law, and gloried in the law. But that had passed away when he learned to count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Ever after, the contrast between the two ways of seeking "righteousness" continued to be fundamental in Paul's Christian thinking.

The law here in view was the whole revealed will of God touching man's behaviour, coming as a will of authority, requiring obedience. The discussion in the earlier chapters of the Epistle to the Romans makes this plain. And Paul's way of keeping the law, in those old days, though it was necessarily too external, had not been so merely external as is sometimes supposed. His obedience had been zealous and resolute, with as much heart and meaning as he could put into it. But law-keeping for righteousness had been the principle of it. The Jew was placed under a law; obedience to that law should be his pathway to a destiny of incomparable privilege and gladness. That was the theory. So believing, Paul had given himself with zeal to the work, "living in all good conscience before God." A great change had now befallen him; but that could not imply on his part a renunciation of God's law. The law, better understood indeed, and far more inwardly apprehended, still retained for Paul its great outlines, and was reverenced as Divine. It was holy and just and good. It was felt still to shed its steadfast light on human duty, awakening and illuminating the conscience; and therefore it revealed most authentically the moral situation, with its elements of failure, and danger, and need. The law stood fast. But the scheme of life which stood in keeping the law for righteousness had passed away for Paul, vanishing in the light of a new and better day.

Here, however, we must ask what the Apostle means when he speaks of the righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, the righteousness which is of God unto or upon faith. Great disputes have arisen over this question. We must endeavour to find the Apostle's main meaning, without involving ourselves too much in the mazes of technical debate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH.

Philippians iii. 9 (R. V.).

Righteousness is a term which is applied in different ways. Often it denotes excellence of personal character. So used, it suggests the idea of a life whose manifestations agree with the standard by which lives are tried. Sometimes it denotes rectitude or justice, as distinguished from benevolence. Sometimes a claim to be approved, or judicially vindicated, is more immediately in view when righteousness is asserted. Paul himself freely uses the word in different applications, the sense, in each passage, being determined by the context. Here we have the righteousness of faith, as distinguished from the righteousness of works, or righteousness by the law. The passage belongs to a large class in which righteousness is spoken of as accruing, through Christ, to those who are unrighteous, or whose own righteousness has proved unreliable. Let us try to

fix the thought which the Apostle designed to inculcate in such passages.*

The Apostle, then, conceives of the righteousness, of which he has so much to say, as God's: it is the "righteousness of God" (Rom. i. 17, iii. 22, x. 3). Yet it is not God's in the sense of being an attribute of His own Divine nature: for (in the passage before us) it is called "the righteousness from God"; it arises for us by our faith in Jesus Christ; and so (2 Cor. v. 21) "we are made the righteousness of God in Christ." It is, therefore, something that is from God to us believing, a "gift of righteousness" (Rom. v. 17). At the same time it is not, on the other hand, an attribute or quality of the human mind, whether natural or imparted; for it is something "revealed" (Rom. i. 17). Also, it is opposed to the wrath of God. Now, that wrath is indeed an element of our state as sinners, but not a feature of our character. Further, it could not be said of any internal character of our own, that we are to be "obedient," or are to "submit" to it (Rom. x. 3).

In the latter part of Romans v. we have set before us two counter conceptions: the one of sin and condemnation, deriving from Adam, antecedent to the personal action and offence of those who descend from him; the other of free gift unto justification, following from the righteousness or obedience of Christ, this being a gift of grace abounding unto many. In either case the Apostle sees arising from one a relation which pertains to many, and which brings forth its results to them: on the one hand, sin and death; on the other, righteousness and life. In both cases a common relation is recognised, under which individuals are found existing; and in either case it traces up to the one—to Adam or to Christ. Whatever difficulties may be felt to attach to this passage, the Apostle's doctrine of the righteousness of faith must be understood so as to agree with the way of thinking which the passage expresses.

It appears, then, that the righteousness which is from God, unto or upon faith, expresses a relation between God and believers that is the proper basis for fellowship with God, confiding on their part, communicative of the best blessings on His. It is analogous to the relation conceived to arise when a perfectly righteous man is approved and set apart to weal; and like that it stands in contrast with the relation due to sin as it incurs wrath. It follows that this righteousness, if it exists or becomes available for those who have sinned, includes the forgiveness of sins. But it includes more than forgiveness, in so far as it is not merely negative. It is the concession to us of a standing which is a positive basis for experiences, pointing towards eternal life, and rising into it.

This relation to Himself God has founded for us sinful men in Christ, and specially in His atonement. It is part of what is divinely held out to us, as life or well-being in Christ. When we do awaken to it, our whole religious attitude towards God takes character from it, and is to be ordered accordingly. This way of being related to God is called God's righteousness, or righteousness "from God," because it is not set up by us, but by God's grace, through the redeeming work of Christ ("being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"—Rom. iii. 24). On the other hand, it is righteousness "of faith," or "through faith of Christ," because faith subjects itself to the order of grace, revealed and made effectual in Christ, and therein finds the reconciliation. For the believing man the relation becomes effectual and operative. He is "accepted in the Beloved." He is "constituted righteous" (Rom. v. 19), and his intercourse with his Heavenly Father regulates itself accordingly, he being justified "from —or upon—his faith." The harmony with God on which he has entered becomes, in some degree, matter of consciousness for himself (Rom. v. 1). With this connection of things in view, the Apostle teaches that righteousness is imputed, or reckoned, to him who believes in Jesus (Rom. iv. 24).

Whatever opinion we may choose to entertain of this scheme, it ought not to be disputed that this, in general, is Paul's conception of the matter.

However, let us emphatically note that it is as "in Christ," "found in Him," the Apostle possesses this form of well-being. If there be such a thing as a real union between the Saviour and Paul, then in the Saviour and with the Saviour Paul is thus righteous. The faith to which this righteousness arises is faith that unites to Christ, and not any other kind of faith. And so, if it be possible for Paul to fall from Christ, then also he must fall from the righteousness of faith. In Christ a relation to God appears, made good, maintained, and verified, in which He gathers to Himself and comprehends all true believers: "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Hence also this Christian benefit, though it is distinguishable, is not separated radically from the other benefits. It is not possible to take the one and leave the rest; for Christ is not divided. But there is an order in His gifts; and, for Paul, this gift is primary. God is ours in Christ; therefore religion, true religion, may begin and go on.

It is of weight with Paul that this righteousness of faith, arising for him who is "found" in Christ, is founded for us in the atonement. That is to say, the new relation is not represented as a relation created for us by a mere Divine fiat that it shall be so. It is represented as arising for sinful men out of the redemption of Christ; which redemption is represented as in its own nature fitted to fructify into this result, as well as into other fruits which are due to it. Christ's atonement is the way which grace has taken to bring in the righteousness of faith. In particular we are made righteous (in this sense) through Christ, in a manner corresponding to that in which He was made sin for us (2 Cor. v. 21). Hence the blood, the sacrifice, the obedience of Christ are referred to on all occasions, in connection with the righteousness of faith, as explicative causes to which this is to be traced. The relation is first of all a relation completely grounded and made good in Christ; and then we are participant in it with Him, in virtue of our faith in Him.

Clearly the Apostle thinks of this righteousness of faith as something very wonderful. It is for him fundamental. It is the first article in which he celebrates the worth of the knowledge of Christ; no doubt, because he felt it transforming his whole moral and spiritual experience; and,

* The statement which follows in the next six paragraphs is partly based on Pfleiderer, "Paulinismus," p. 172 fol. He will perhaps be regarded as a tolerably impartial reporter on this point.

in particular, because it contrasted so vividly with the nugatory righteousness of earlier days.

In earlier days Paul sought righteousness—an approved and accepted standing with God—by the works of the law. That project failed when the great discovery on the road to Damascus showed him to himself as all astray; in particular, when the law itself, coming home to him in the fulness of its meaning, both revealed to him the beggarliness of his own performance, and, at the same time, stung into appalling activity ungodly elements within him. Then he saw before him the law rising from its deep foundations in eternal strength and majesty, imperative, unalterable, inexorable; and over against it his own works lay withered and unclean. But another vision came. He saw the Son of God in His life, death, and resurrection. Mere love and pity were the inspiration of His coming: obedience and sacrifice were the form of it. So in that great vision one element or aspect that rose into view was righteousness,—righteousness grounded as deep as the law itself, as magnificent in its great proportions, as little subject to change or decay, radiant with surpassing glory. As he saw, and bowed, and trusted, he became conscious of a new access and nearness to God Himself; he passed into the fellowship of God's dear Son; he found acceptance in the Beloved. Here was the answer to that woeful problem of the law: righteousness in Christ for a world of sinners, coming to them as a free gift to faith. Here was the strong foundation on which faith found itself set to learn its lessons, and perform its service, and fight its battles. In Christ he received the reconciliation—merciful, and also righteous. As Paul thought of the ground on which he once had stood, and of the standing granted to him now, "in Him," it was with a "yea, doubtless" he declared that he counted all to be loss for the gain of Christ, in whom he was found, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ.

Righteousness of faith, as the Apostle conceives it, is to be distinguished from personal righteousness, or goodness, as an attribute of human character, but yet is most closely connected with it. Righteousness of faith opened what seemed to Paul the prosperous way into righteousness of daily living. In the very hour when he first believed for righteousness, he felt himself entering a kingdom of light, and love, and power, in which all things were possible; and ever after the same order of experience verified itself for him afresh. The righteousness of faith being the relation in which, through Christ, he found himself standing to God, fixed at the same time his relation to all Christian benefits, including, as a principal element, conformity to the likeness of Christ. To the man in Christ all these benefits pertained; in Christ he could claim them all: in Christ he found himself before doors that opened of their own accord to let him in; in Christ it proved to be a fit thing, grounded deep in the congruities of God's administration, that God should be for him; therefore, also, the pathway of holiness lay open before him. The fulness of blessing had not yet come into possession and experience. But in the righteousness of faith he apprehended all blessings as stretching out their hands to him, because through Christ they ought to be his. That he should find himself in a relation to God so simple and so satisfying was wonderful; all the more, when it was contrasted with the condemnation belonging to him as a sinner. This was the righteousness from God to faith, in the strength of which he could call all things his own.

If Paul had succeeded in the enterprise of his earlier days, when he sought righteousness by the law, he would, as he hoped, have found acceptance in the end; and various blessings would have followed. He would have emerged from his task a man stamped as righteous, and fit to be treated accordingly. That would have been the end. But now, in reference to his present enterprise, he has found, being Christ, acceptance at the beginning. So often as faith lifts him into the heavenly places where Christ is, he finds all things to be his; not because he has achieved righteousness, but because Christ has died and risen, and because God justifies him who believes in Jesus. The platform he hoped to reach by the efforts of a lifetime is already under his feet. Paul faces each arduous step in his new enterprise, strong in the conviction that his standing before God is rooted, not in his doings nor in his feelings, but in his Saviour in whom he holds the righteousness of faith.

We need not conceal from ourselves, however, that many find the doctrine thus ascribed to Paul unacceptable. If they do not count it positively misleading, as some do, they yet regard it as unprofitable theory.

Apart from objections drawn from theology or morals or texts, they argue, for example, that it is all in the air, away from real experience. Christian religion is a practical matter,—a question of improved dispositions, improved habits, and improved prospects. If, through Christ, such things as these arise for us, if, through Him, influences reach us that tend to such results, then those are the practical specimens which interpret to us a Saviour's kindness. To know Christ in these must be the true knowledge of Him. To carry us away beforehand into the region of a supposed relation to God is a precarious, and may be a delusive business; it is, at any rate, a dogmatic nicety rather than a vital element in religion. If we are to experience God's mercy or Christ's kindness in any practical form, then that is to be so; and it is shorter to say so at once. Let us fix on that, without interposing any doctrine of "righteousness by faith."

But it must be said, in reply, that to speak of this righteousness of faith as unpractical is a strange mistake. All religion aims at fellowship with God; and in Christian religion that fellowship becomes real and authentic in Christ. Through all exercises and attainments of Christian religion that are genuine, this thread goes. We have access to God, and we abide in the Father and the Son. How imperfectly this takes place on our part need not be said. The imperfection on our part is, indeed, only exceeded by the condescension on His. Yet our faith is that this is real, otherwise Christianity would not be for us the opening of an eternal blessedness. How can it be judged unpractical, if God reveals to men, first, that in the room of those confused and melancholy relations to God which arise for us out of our own past history, He has constituted for us a relation, apprehensible by faith, in which we find ourselves pardoned, accepted, commended to God to be made partakers of life eternal; and, secondly, that this is grounded in

the service and sacrifice of His Son, sent forth to save us; so that we enter this relation and hold it, not independently, but in fellowship with the Son of God, His sonship becoming the model of ours? Is this unpractical? Is it unpractical to be conscious of such a relation between God and men, for ever embodied and made accessible in His Son our Saviour? Is it unpractical to apprehend God in the attitude towards us which is due to such a relation, and to take, ourselves, the attitude of gratitude and penitence and trust which on our side corresponds to it? It cannot be unpractical. It may be pernicious, if it takes the form of a cold, presumptuous arrogance, or of a self-satisfied Pharisaism; that is to say, if God be not in it. But if God in Christ is reaching us along those lines, or if we, alive to His eternal character, and conscious of our guilt and need, are reaching out to real relations and real fellowship with Him through His Son our Lord, then it cannot be unpractical. And, indeed, however men may differ as to theological explanations, some sense of the worth of the thing intended has reached the hearts of all true Christians.

Perhaps the state of the case will more clearly appear if we fix attention on one Christian benefit. Let us take the forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness of sins is the primary grace, and it sets the type of the grace to which we owe all benefits. Forgiveness, as it were, leads in all other blessings by the hand; or, each blessing as it advances into a Christian life, comes with a fresh gift of forgiveness in the heart of it. If this is so, then the tendency, which is observable in various quarters, to pass forgiveness by, as a matter of course, and to hurry on to what are reckoned more substantial, or more experimental benefits, must be attended with loss. It must, so far, damage our conceptions of the manner in which it befits God to bestow blessings on sinful men, and also our conception of the spirit in which we should receive them.

But then, in the next place, the forgiveness of sins itself is referred to the mediation of Christ, and the work accomplished in that mediation, as its known basis. Forgiveness of sins was to arise out of an order of grace, embodied in history—namely, in the history of the Incarnate Son of God; and we are not entitled to take for granted it could fitly arise otherwise. Apparently Christ Himself came into the inheritance which He holds for us, by an order of things which it was imperative on Him to regard, and by a history which He must fulfil. And we, believing in Him, find, in consequence, a new place and standing; we receive a "gift of righteousness" which contains the forgiveness of sins; we obtain, through Christ, a mode of access to God, of which forgiveness is a feature. So the place of forgiveness in the Divine administration is vindicated and safe-guarded; and while forgiveness comes to us as a gift of the Father's compassionate heart, it is found to be true also that "Christ washed us from our sins in His own blood." "God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "God hath sent Him forth for a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, . . . that He might be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Our forgiveness is a free gift of God's goodness; yet also, it is our participation with Christ, sent to us from the Father, in a wonderful relation which He has come to hold to sin and to righteousness. If we overlook this, we conceal from ourselves great aspects of the work undertaken for us by the love of God.

But if forgiveness, which is itself a meeting with God in peace, refers itself to the mediation of Christ as preparing for us a blessed relation to God—a righteousness of faith—how should our whole fellowship with God, in grace, fail to presuppose the same foundation?

But argument upon this topic might lead us far. Let us close the chapter in another vein.

All religion, worth recognising in that character, implies earnestness, serious aspiration, and endeavour. It supposes human life to place itself under the influence of an order of motives that is to be comprehensive and commanding. And this is true also of Christian religion. But Christian religion, as we know, does not begin with a consciousness of ability to achieve success; it is not grounded in an expectation that by strenuous or apt effort of ours, we may achieve the aims and secure the benefits at which religion points. That is not the root of Christian religion. It begins with a consciousness and confession of weakness: the soul owns its incompetency to deal with the great interests that reveal themselves in the light of Christ; it is without strength for tasks like these. And so the deepest and earliest exercise of Christian religion is Prayer. It asks great things from a great God. "This poor man cried," and the Lord heard him. Paul's Christianity began thus: "Behold, he prayeth."

Now just so Christian religion does not begin with a consciousness of deserving something, or an idea that by taking pains we may deserve something, may single ourselves out for at least some modest share of favourable recognition. Rather it often begins with the fading away of such ideas when they were present before. Christian religion roots itself in the confession of sin, and therefore of ill-desert; it signalises itself by a deepening sense of the seriousness of the situation in this respect. With this it comes face to face before God. "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." "God be merciful to me a sinner." We have nothing that is not sinful to bring before Him; so, at length, we come with that. It is all we have. Our prayer rises not merely out of the sense of weakness, but out of the consciousness of demerit.

But in Christian religion we are aware, as of strength which can remedy our weakness, so of forgiveness which can put away our sins. "There is forgiveness with Thee." "Through this Man is preached to us the forgiveness of sins." It is clear also that this forgiveness comes, wherever it comes, as full and free forgiveness, "forgiving you all trespasses." So that in Christian religion we listen at Christ's feet to the testimony directed to all penitent believers, that instead of reckoning in part or whole about the guilt of sins committed, we are to find God in Christ to be One who simply puts away our sin. That shall hold us apart from God no more. Rather, the putting of it away brings with it the strangest, lowliest access to God. "O God, thou art my God." "Who is a God like unto Thee?" Forgiveness is by no means mere immunity (least of all for Christian religion). Punishment, certainly, in the sense of the separation and evil which sin deserves, passes away. But

forgiveness, in Christian religion, is forgiveness with the Forgiver in it. We meet God in the forgiveness of sins. We abide with God in the forgiveness of sins.

Forgiveness, too, as we already foresee, is but the foundation and beginning of a history in which we are called to go forward. This history may have sad passages in it; but in going forward in it in faith we are assured that on God's part it is a history of most painstaking and most sublime benefaction: all of it ordered so as to be of a piece with His sending of His Son; all of it instinct with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faith looking to Christ believes this, and receives it. And to faith upheld by Him on whom we trust all this is more and more made good, and comes true. It is a history of progress in true goodness. And the end is life everlasting.

Now the words before us suggest, upon the one hand, very strongly, the simply gratuitous character of the Christian benefits, and the sense of undeserved kindness with which they are to be received. In Christian religion we begin as those who have no righteousness, who plead no merit, who owe and are to owe all to Divine mercy. From the base upwards Christian religion is a religion of grace; and "it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Whatever activities, whatever successes may fall into the Christian's career, whatever long possession of accustomed good may eventually mark his experience, all is to be informed and inspired by this initial and perpetual conviction, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law."

At the same time, the same words of the Apostle suggest very strongly the Divine stability of the good which meets us in Christ. A very strong foundation has been laid for those who flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel. To our sense, indeed, things may seem to be most mutable. But when faith reaches to the things not seen, it learns another lesson. In Christ believers are graced with entrance into an order of salvation divinely strong and durable. When God gave us Christ, He gave us, in a sense, "all things," and indeed all things ordering themselves into ε ι eternal expression of fatherly love and care. In Christ comes into view not goodness only, but goodness allying itself for us with Wisdom and Power and Right. It makes its way by incarnation and atonement and resurrection to a kingdom which, being first Christ's, appointed to Him, is also His people's, appointed to them. Now a relation to God which looks forward to all this, which is the basis for it and the entrance to it, descends on the believing man through Christ. It is due to Christ that it should come so. It is the Father's loving will that it should be so. All that is needful to ground and vindicate that most gracious relation is found in Christ, who of God is made unto us righteousness; in whom we hold the righteousness which is of God on faith.

The Apostle's course of thought has not led us to raise any question about the nature and the virtue of the faith which apprehends and receives the righteousness of God. It is a subject on which much has been said. What seems needful here may be soon spoken.

The only way of entering on new relations with God, or ourselves becoming new men, is the way of faith. This Christian way is the only way. Every other is simply impossible. Let any man seriously try it, and he will find it so. But the question, What kind of faith? is best answered by saying, Such faith as is called for by the object of faith set before us, when that is honestly and intently regarded. As the gospel is, the faith must be; for the gospel is the instrument by which faith is evoked, sustained, and guided. The great object of faith is God, graciously revealing Himself through Christ. Every genuine aspect of this revelation takes its significance from its disclosure of God. The faith, so called, which misses this, is wrong faith; the faith which marks and welcomes this is right faith. And such faith is already, even in its earliest life, breaking forth into repentance and love and obedience. It must be, for God is in it.

So, to confine ourselves to the aspect of things which occupies this chapter, the faith which meets God in the forgiveness of sins through Christ, and genuinely accepts from Him the wonderful position of holding fellowship with God forgiving, is already, virtually, repentance as well as faith. The man who so meets with God, is therein agreed with God about his own sin: he feels God to be in the right and himself to be wholly in the wrong; he feels, in particular, God to be most sublimely and conclusively in the right in the holy pity of His forgiveness. The man who does not feel this, is not accepting forgiveness. He may be posturing as if he were, but he is not doing it.

There is just one difficulty in faith—the difficulty of being real. But when it is real, it makes all things new.

CHAPTER XIII.

RESURRECTION LIFE AND DAILY DYING.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10, 11.

WE have still other aspects to consider of that "gain" which the Apostle descried in Christ, for the sake of which he had cast so much away.

To prize the righteousness of faith was an element in the true knowledge of Christ; but it was so far from exhausting that knowledge that it only opened a door of progress, and brought near the most stirring possibilities. For, indeed, to be found in Christ having that righteousness meant that God in Christ was his, and had begun to communicate Himself in eternal life. Now this must still reveal itself in further and fuller knowledge of Christ. According to the Apostle's conception, that which Christ means to be to us, that which we may attain to be by Christ, opens progressively to the soul that has been won to this pursuit; it comes into view and into experience in a certain growing knowledge. It is a practical historical career; and the Apostle was set on achieving it, not by strength or wisdom of his own, but by the continual communication of grace, responding to desire and prayer and endeavour.

We must not forget, what has more than once been said, that this earthly life of ours is the scene in which the discipline goes on, in which the career is achieved. It is the calling here and now, not at some other stage of being, that the Apostle is thinking of for himself and for his disciples. And as earthly life is the scene, so earthly life also furnishes the occasions and opportunities by which the knowledge of Christ is to advance. Any other way of it is for us incon-

ceivable. This life in all the various forms which it assumes for different men, in all the changing experiences which it brings to each of us—life on the earth we know so well—with its joy and sorrow, its labour and rest, its gifts and its bereavements, its friends and foes, its times and places, its exercise and interest for body and mind, for intellect and heart and conscience, with its temptations and its better influences,—life must furnish the opportunities for acquiring this practical knowledge of Christ. For that which falls to us, if we are in Christ, is a certain blessed well-being (itself an unfolding of Christ's wisdom and grace). And this must impart itself, and reveal itself, in our actual experience, but in an experience which we pass through under the guidance of Christ.

This familiar life, then, is the scene; it alone can furnish the opportunities. And yet what the Apostle apprehends, as coming into possession and experience, is a life of a higher style, a life set on a nobler key: it is a life that has its centre and source and true type elsewhere; it belongs to a higher region; indeed, it is a life whose perfect play pertains to another, coming world. Capacity for such a life is not something superhuman; it is congenital to man, made in the image of God. And yet, if these capacities unfold, man's life must, in the end, become other than we know it now; with a new proportioning of elements, with a new order of experience, with new harmonies, with aptitudes for love and service and worship that are beyond us now. Only now, they begin and grow; they are now to be aimed at, and realised in earnest and first-fruit, and embraced in hope. For they are elements in the knowledge of Christ, who is ours to know.

This is indicated in the Apostle's aspiration after knowing Christ in the power of His resurrection, and his yearning if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of Christ marked the acceptance of His work by the Father, and revealed the triumph in which that work ended. Death and all the power of the enemy were overcome, and victory was attained. For one thing, the resurrection of Christ made sure the righteousness of faith. He rose again for our justification. So every passage of the Apostle's life which proved that his confidence in that respect was not vain, that God in Christ was truly his God, was an experience of the power of Christ's resurrection. But the resurrection of Christ was also His emergence—His due emergence—into the power and blessedness of victorious life. In the Person of Christ life in God, and unto God, had descended into the hard conditions set for Him who would associate a world of sinners to Himself. In the resurrection the triumph of that enterprise came to light. Now, done with sin, and free from death, and asserting His superiority to all humiliation and all conflict, He rose in the fulness of a power which He was entitled also to communicate. He rose, with full right and power to save. And so His resurrection denotes Christ as able to inspire life, and to make it victorious in His members.

When, then, Paul says that he would know Christ in the power of His resurrection, he aims at a life (already his, but capable of far more adequate development) conformed to the life which triumphed in the risen Christ, one with that in principle, in character, and in destiny. This was, in the meantime, to be human life on the earth, with the known elements and conditions of that life; including, in Paul's case, some that were hard enough. But it was to be transformed from within, inspired with a new meaning and aim. It was to have its elements polarised anew, organised by new forces and in a new rhythm. It was, and was to be, pervaded by peace with God, by the consciousness of redemption, by dedication to service. It was to include a recoil from evil, and a sympathy with goodness,—elements these which might be so far thought of as a reverting to the unfallen state. But it had more in it, because it was based on redemption, and rooted in Christ who died and rose again. It was baptised with the passion of gratitude; it was drawn into the effort to build up the Redeemer's kingdom; and it aimed at a better country.

So while the life we know so well was the sphere in which this experience fulfilled itself, the longings it included pointed to an existence higher up and further on—to an existence only to be reached by resurrection from the dead, an existence certainly promised to be so reached. All the effort and the longing pointed to that door of hope; Paul was reaching on to the resurrection of the dead. For that blessed resurrection would consummate and fulfil the likeness to Christ and the fellowship with Him, and would usher into a manner of being where the experience of both should be unimpeded. The life of "knowing Christ" could not be contented here, could not rest satisfied short of that consummation. For indeed to be with Christ and to labour for Christ here on earth was good; yet so that to depart and be with Christ was far better.

We have here to do with the active and victorious aspect of Christian life, the energy in it that makes it new and great. It holds by a title and it draws from a source which must be looked for, both of them, high up in heaven. Something in it has already triumphed over death.

It may be felt, however, that there is some danger here lest the great words of Paul may carry us off our feet, and divorce us from *terra firma* altogether. Some one may ask, But what does all this mean in practice? What sort of life is it to be? Apostles can soar, perhaps; but how about the man in the workshop or in the counting-house, or the woman busied in family cares? A life in "the power of a resurrection" seems to be something that transcends earthly conditions altogether. These are perfectly fair questions, and one should try to meet them with a plain reply.

The life in view is first of all goodness in its ordinary sense, or what we call common morality —common honesty, common truthfulness, common kindness. "Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour"; "Not slothful in business"; "Lie not one to another, seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds." But then this common morality begins to have an uncommon heart or spirit in it, by reason of Christ. So a new love for goodness and a new energy of rejection of evil begin to work; also a new sensitiveness to discern good, where its obligation was not felt before, and to be aware of evil which, before, was tolerated. Moreover, in the heart of this "common morality" the man carries about a consciousness of his own relation to God, and also of the relation to God of all

with whom he meets. This consciousness is very imperfect, sometimes perhaps almost vanishes. Yet the man is aware that an immense truth is here close to him, and he has begun to be alive to it. This consciousness tends to give a new value to all the "moralities": it awakens a new percipiency as to good and evil; in particular, the great duty of purity in relation to the man himself, and to others, acquires a new sacredness. The place and claims of self also begin to be judged by a quite new standard. In all directions possibilities of good and evil in human life are descried; and the obligation to refuse the evil and to choose the good presses with a new force. So far, the remark made a little ago is justified, that the Christian life of Paul was a life that had begun to point practically towards sinlessness, towards what we call an unfallen state; however far off it might be, as yet, from that attainment. But this would be a very limited account of the matter. The whole region of duty and privilege Godwards is lighted up now by the faith of redemption in Christ; that not only awakens gratitude, but inspires a new passion of desire and hope into all moral effort. And the man, being now aware of a kingdom of goodness set up by Christ, which is making its way to victory against all the power of evil, and being aware of the agencies by which it works, must give himself in his own place to the service of that kingdom, that he may not hurt, but help, the cause which it embodies. The new life is therefore to be an energetic life of the plainest goodness. Only faith places it in relation to the world of faith, and inspires it with the passion of love and gratitude, and amplifies it by the new horizons that fall back on all sides, and gives it a goal in the hope of life eternal.

Returning to the instance of the Apostle Paul, one observes from his account of it that the regard of the believer to Christ, such regard as may actually be attained and operative in this life, ought to fructify into desires and prayers that point beyond this life, and reach out to the resurrection of the dead. There is a contentedness with life here that is not Christian. It would agree well with a thankful use of earthly comforts, and a cheerful serenity amid earth's changes, that we should feel our home and our treasure to be in another place, and the enjoyment of them to lie in a coming world. Not otherwise shall we know how to make a right Christian use and have a right Christian enjoyment of this life. We are not prepared to get the full good of this world until we are ready and willing to go out of it.

Let it be observed, also, how the Apostle strove to "attain" the resurrection of the dead. The great things of the Kingdom of God are exhibited in various connections, none of which is to be overlooked. One of these connections is here exhibited.

We know that in Scripture a distinction is made between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked. A solemn obscurity rests on the manner and the principles of the latter, the resurrection to shame. But the resurrection of the just takes place in virtue of their union to Christ; it is after the example of His resurrection; it is to glory and honour. Now this resurrection, while it is most obviously a crowning blessing and benefaction coming from God, is represented also as having the character of an attainment made by us. The faith in which we turn to God is the beginning of a course leading to the "end of our faith, the salvation of our souls." This end coincides with the resurrection. Then the hour comes which completes, then the state arrives in which is completed, the redemption of the man. The resurrection rises before us, therefore, as something which, while on the one hand promised and given by God, is, on the **other** hand, "attained" by us. Our Lord (Luke xx. 35) speaks of those who shall be "counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of the dead."

The resurrection is promised to believers. It is promised to arise to them in sequel to a certain course—a history of redemption, made good in their lives. How shall the disciple verify his expectation of this final benefit? Not surely without verifying the intermediate history. The way must point towards the end—*at least*, must point towards it. A resurrection state, if it be like Christ's, how much must it include! What purity, what high aptitudes, what delicate congenialities! The desires of the true Christian life, its aspirations and efforts, as well as the promises which animate and the influences which sustain it, all point in this direction. But how if in any case this prove unreal, deceptive; how if it be ostensible only? How if no real changes take place, or if they die out again? What if soul and body rise unchanged, the soul polluted, and so the very body bearing the stamp of old sins? What if the murderous eye of hate, or the lurid eye of lust, shall look into the eyes of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire? Accordingly this connection of things is impressed upon us by our Apostle (Rom. viii. 11): "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by His Spirit which dwelleth in you." While we live here, our body, however disciplined, must still be the body of our humiliation (ver. 21); and sin continues to beset even renewed souls. But if the Spirit of grace is even now bringing all into subjection to the obedience of Christ, enabling us to die to sin and to live to righteousness, that points forward to the completion of the work, in the resurrection to glory.

This, then, is one view in which the Apostle realises the solemnity and interest of Christian life. It is the way that leads up to such a resurrection. The resurrection rises before him as the consummate triumph of that life for which he came to Christ, the life which he longs perfectly to possess, perfectly to know. The success of his great venture is to meet Him in the rising from the dead; his course, meanwhile, is a striving onwards to it. How was it to be reached? In order to that, much must still be brought into experience of the resurrection power of Christ. Only in that strength did Paul look to be carried to the point at which, ending his course, he should lie down (if he died before Christ come) in the blessed hope of the rising from the dead. For this he looked to Christ to work mightily in him; for this he owned himself bound, under the grace of Christ, to strive mightily, if "by any means" he might attain to it. So great is this consummation; so great are those things which fitly lead up to it. Is it not a great view of Christian religion that it sends men onward in a life in which they "attain" to the resurrection of the dead? Must not that be a

great history of which this is the appropriate close?

Paul, then, was eager to go forward in a life intense and mighty, drawing on a great power to sustain it, and rising into splendid effects and results. But yet, in respect of some of its aspects, it rather seemed to the Apostle to be a certain deliberate and blessed dying. At least, the life must fulfil and realise itself along such a dying; and this also, this emphatically, he pressed on to know—"the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."

Our Lord's life on earth, strong and beautiful though it was, was really at the same time His procedure towards death. He lived as one laying down His life, not merely in one great sacrifice at the close, but from step to step along His whole earthly history. With no touch of the morbid or the fanatical, yet His course, in practice, had to be one of self-impoverishment, of loneliness, of acquaintance with energetic hostility of sin and sinners. It had to be so if it was to be faithful. He knew not where to lay His head; He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Even His friends, whom He so loved, and who loved Him in their imperfect way, did not love Him wisely or magnanimously, and constantly became occasions of temptation which had to be resisted. Pain and trial were the inevitable characters of the work given Him to do. It lay in His calling to put a strong and faithful negative on the natural desire for safety, for happiness, for congenial society and surroundings, for free and unembarrassed life. All this He had steadily to postpone to a period beyond the grave, and meanwhile make His way to the final crisis, at which, under a mysterious burden of extreme sorrow, accepted as the Saviour's proper portion, He died for our sins. By this sacrifice He did, no doubt, relieve His followers of a burden which they never could have borne. But yet in doing so He made it possible for them to enter, happily and hopefully, on a life so far like His own. Their life, too, comes to be governed by a decision, maintained and persisted in, for God's will, and against the impulse, in their case the impure and treacherous impulse, of their own will. They also, in their turn, but under His influence and with His loving succour, have so to live as in that life to die. They learn to say "No" for their Master's sake to many objects which strongly appeal to them. They consent to postpone the period of perfectly harmonious life, free and unimpeded, to the time which lies beyond death. They must count their true life to be that which, perfectly conformed to and associated with their Master's life, they shall live in another scene of things. Meanwhile, as to the elements of this world, the life which stands in these must die, or they must die to it, growing into the mind of their Lord.

It is difficult to speak of this without, on the one hand, conveying a strained and unreal view of the Christian's attitude towards the present life, or, on the other hand, weakening too much the sense of "conformity to His death." In the first place the Christian's dying is mainly, and certainly it is first of all, a dying to sin, a mortifying the flesh with the affections and lusts. It is the practical renunciation of evil, along with the maintenance of the watchfulness and self-discipline needed in order to be ready to renounce evil when it comes. Evil has to be rejected, not merely by itself, but at the cost of those earthly interests which are involved in the surrender to it, however dear or constraining those interests may seem to be; so that conformity to Christ's death, if it covered no more, would still cover a great deal of ground. But it seems to cover something more—namely, a general loosening of the grasp upon this life, or on the temporary and sensible elements of it, in view of the worth and certainty of the higher and the better life. This life, indeed, as long as we are in it, can never lose its claims upon us, as the sphere of our duty, and the scene of our training. Here we have our place to fill, our relations to sustain, our part to play, our ministries to perform. In all these ways of it we have some good to do, of lower or loftier kinds; in all, we have many lessons to learn, which crowd upon us to the last; through all we have to carry the faith of the unseen Kingdom and the unseen Lord; and in all these aspects of earthly life, if God gives us any cheering experience of earthly brightness, surely it is to be taken most thankfully. It is a poor way of construing the conformity to Christ's death, to renounce interest in the life of which we are a part, and the world which is the scene of it. But the interest should fasten more intently on the things which interest our Lord, and eagerness of spirit about earthly good for ourselves must give place and subside.

And yet, when one thinks of the beauty and sweetness of much that pertains to our earthly existence, and of the goodness of God in material or temporal gifts, and of the thankfulness with which Christian hearts are to take these when they are given, and are to walk with God in the use of them, one feels the risk of involving oneself here in extravagance or in contradiction. We are not going to maintain that the Apostle would shut himself out, or us, from interest or delight in the innocent beauty or gladness of the earth. But yet is it not true that we are all passing on to death, and in death are to be parted from all this? Is it not true that as Christians we consent to dying; we count it the good discipline of Christ's people that they should die, and pass so into the better life? Is it not true that our life as Christians should train us to maintain this mind deliberately and habitually, calmly and gladly? For indeed this life, at its purest and best, still offers to us a vision of good that is apt to steal our hearts away from the supreme good, the best and highest. Now that best and highest rises before us, as practically to be made ours, in the resurrection.

Meanwhile, it is well, no doubt, that we should cherish a frank and thankful gladness in all earthly good and earthly beauty that can be taken as from the Father's hand. Yet there should grow upon us an inward consent, strengthening as the days go by, that this shall not endure; that it shall not be our permanent possession; that it shall be loosely held, as erelong to be parted from. Such a mind should grow, not because our hearts are cold to the present country of our being, but because they are warming towards a better country. These earthly things are good, but they are not ours; we have only a lease of them, terminable at any time. Who shall bring us to that which is, and shall eternally be, our very own?

So Christ our Master passed through life, with an open eye and heart for the fair and the lovable around Him, for flowers and little children, and

for what was estimable or attractive in men, even in a natural way. Surely all was dear to Him on which he could see the trace of the Creator's holy hands. Yet He passed on and passed by, going forward to death and consenting to die, His face set steadfastly to a joy before Him which could not be realised by lingering here.

Now let this be especially observed, that while we may here recognise a practical lesson to be learned, the wisest of us may also recognise it as a lesson we could not undertake to teach to ourselves. To oppose sin, when conscience and God's word warn us of its presence, is at least something definite and plain. But how to take the right attitude and bear the right mind towards this various, manifold, engrossing, wonderful human life, as it unfolds for us here—how shall that be done? Some have tried to answer by amputating large sections of human experience. But that is not the way. For, indeed, it is in human life itself—in this present, and, for the present, the only form of our existence—that we must take the right view of human life, and form the right mind about it. Moreover, our conditions are varying continually, from the state of the little child, open to every influence that strikes the sense, to the state of the old man, whom age is shutting up in a crippled and stunted existence. The just equipoise of soul for one stage of life, could it be attained, would not be the just equipoise for the next.

The truth is, there is no ready-made theory here for any of us. All our attainments in it are tentative and provisional; which does not hinder, however, that they may be very real. When we believe in Christ we become aware that there is a lesson in this department to be learned, and we become willing, in a measure, to learn it. But we should learn little were it not for three great teachers that take us in hand.

The first is the inevitable conflict with sin and temptation. The Christian must, at all events, strive against known sin, and he must hold himself ready to resist the onset of temptation, watching and praying. In this discipline he soon learns how sin is entangled for him with much that in other respects seems desirable or good; he learns that in rejecting sin he must forego some things which on other accounts he gladly would embrace. It is often a painful conflict through which he has to pass. Now in seeking help from his Lord, and entering into the fellowship of the mind of Christ, he is not only strengthened to repel the sin, but also learns to submit willingly to any impoverishment or abridgment of earthly life which the conflict entails. He is taught in practice, now in one form, now in another, to count all things but loss—to lower the overweening estimate of earthly treasure and let it go, dying to it with his dying Lord.

Then, besides, there is the discipline of suffering. Sorrow, indeed, is not peculiar to Christians. Of it, all are partakers. But Christian endurance is part of a fellowship with Christ, in which we learn of Him. In the warm air of prosperity a hot mist rises round the soul, that hides from view the great realities, and that deceives and misleads us with its vain mirage. But in suffering, taken in Christ's way and in fellowship with Him, in the pain of disappointment and of loss, and especially in the exercise of submission, we are taught feelingly where our true treasure is; and we are trained to consent to separations and privations, for the sake of Christ, and under the influence of the love of Christ.

And, lastly, the growth of Christian experience and Christian character deepens our impressions of the worth of Christ's salvation, and gives more body and more ardour to Christian hope. As that world with its perfect good draws the believer, as it becomes more visible to faith and more attractive, his grasp of this world becomes, perhaps, not less kindly, but it becomes less tenacious. Knowledge, such as the schools of earth afford, we still feel to be desirable and good. Love, under the conditions which earth supplies for its exercise, we still feel to be very dear. The activities which call out courage and resource, we still feel to be interesting and worthy. Yet knowledge proves to be but in part. And love, if it does not die, needs for its health and security a purer air. And in the problems of active life failure still mingles with success. But the love of God which is in Jesus Christ grows in worth and power; so that, in new applications of the principle, we learn afresh to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ."

In a word, then, that we may grow into the mind of Christ, sufferings and self-denials are appointed to come into experience. He sets them for us; we should not unwisely set them for ourselves. They come in the conflict with sin or in the ordinary discipline of life. Either way they become for believers the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; for they are taken in Christ's way, under His eye, endured in the strength of His truth and grace and salvation. So believers become more conformable to His death. Hence this discipline of trial is indispensable to all disciples.

Some such view of the ends of Christ in regard to separation from sin and disengagement from the life which is doomed to die, we suppose to have been before Paul's mind. He had come to Christ for life, abundant and victorious, such as should be answerable to the power of Christ's resurrection. But he saw that such life must fulfil itself in a certain dying, made good in a fellowship of Christ's sufferings; and it must find its completeness and its peace beyond death, in the resurrection of the dead. Did he flinch or shrink from this? No: He longed to have it all perfectly accomplished. His knowledge of Christ was to be not only in the power of His resurrection, but in the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death.

Whatever mistakes have been made by followers of the ascetic life, it is a mistake on the other side to neglect this element of Christianity. He who is not self-denied, and that cheerfully, to the danger and seduction of lawful things, is one who has not his loins girt nor his lamp burning.

It is worth our while to mark the thoroughgoing sincerity of the Apostle's Christianity. Not merely did he in general embrace Christ and salvation: but with the utmost cordiality he embraced the method of Christ; he strove after fellowship with Christ's mind in living, and also in dying; he did so, though the fellowship included not only the power of His resurrection, but the fellowship of His sufferings. He longed to have it all fulfilled in his own case. So he strove toward the resurrection of the dead.

In parting from these great Christian thoughts we may note how fitly the power of Christ's resurrection takes precedence of the fellowship

of His sufferings and the being made conformable to His death. Some have thought that, as death comes before resurrection, the order of the clauses might have been inverted. But it is only through the precedent virtue of Christ's resurrection that such a history is achieved, either in Paul or in any of us. We must be partakers of life in the power of Christ's resurrection, if we are to carry through the fellowship with the suffering and the death.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHRISTIAN LIFE A RACE.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 12-17 (R. V.).

VARIOUS passages in this Epistle suggest that the Apostle's Philippian friends or some of them were relaxing in diligence; they were failing perhaps to lay to heart the need of progress, less sensitive than they ought to be to the impulse of Christianity as a religion of effort and expectancy. Some of them, it might be, were inclined to think of themselves as now pretty well initiated into the new religion, and as pretty thorough adepts in its teaching and its practice; entitled therefore to sit down and look round with a certain satisfaction and complacency. If it were so, the tendency to division would be accounted for. Arrogance in Christians is a sure preliminary to heats and disputings. At all events, however it might be at Philippi, an insidious complacency in little improvements and small attainments is not unknown among Christians. It is, one may fear, a common impression among us that we are fair average Christians,—a feeling perhaps not so cherished as to make us boast, but yet so cherished as to make us feel content. And, alas! the very meaning of Christianity was to inspire us with a spirit that would refuse so to be contented.

Some feeling of this kind may have led the Apostle to lay stress on the onward energising character of Christianity as he knew it. This was the manner of his regard to his Lord. At the foundation of his religion there was, indeed, the faith of a wonderful gift of righteousness and life. That gift he welcomed and embraced. But it wrought in him eagerness of desire, and intentness of purpose, to secure and have all that this gift implied. It stirred him to activity and progress. His was not the Christianity of one who counts himself to have already obtained all into possession, nor of one who finds himself landed already in the state at which the Christian promises aim. Rather he is one set in full view of a great result: some experience of the benefits of it is already entering into his history; but it is yet to be brought to pass in its fulness; and that must be along a line of believing endeavour, Christ working and Paul working, Christ faithful with Paul faithful. "I follow after, if that I may lay hold and extend my grasp, seeing Christ has laid hold with His grasp on me." Christ had a purpose, and has mightily inaugurated a process through which this purpose may be achieved in the history of Paul. And as Christ lays His grasp on Paul, behold the purpose of Christ becomes also the purpose of Paul, and he now throws himself into the process with all his force, to apprehend that for the sake of which Christ apprehended him.

Here Paul signalised one distinguishing attribute of genuine Christianity as he knew it. He did not yet count himself to have laid complete grasp on the whole of Christian good. In a very important practical sense salvation was still something ahead of him, as to the final, secure, complete possession; Christ Himself was an object still before him, as to the knowledge and the fellowship for which he longed. But one thing is vital and distinctive. "This Saviour with His salvation holds me so, that I count all but loss for Him. He holds me so, that forgetting all that lies behind, I bend myself to the race, stretching out towards the goal at which the prize of the high calling of God in Christ is won. That is my Christianity." He who had suffered loss of all for Christ, he who so burned with desire to know Him in His righteousness, in the power of His resurrection, in the fellowship of His sufferings, is far from thinking he has reached the goal. Because the knowledge of Christ is so great a thing in his eyes, therefore, on the one hand, all he has attained as yet seems partial and imperfect; but for the same reason, on the other hand, he feels the great attraction by which all his powers are drawn into the endeavour which so great a prize shall crown.

The question may here be put how the consistency of the gospel can be made out if we are called to rest and rejoice in Christ, and if, at the same time, we find ourselves committed to so absorbing a struggle for a prize. If God will have us, it may be said, to seek and strive that we may obtain, then we must do so because it is His will. But where is the connection of things that will avert inconsistency, and bring out a reasonable continuity of principles, between the call to rest on Christ for full salvation, and the call to run a race, and so run as to obtain? For answer it is to be remembered, in the first place, that (as commonly happens in matters where life and its activities are concerned) the difficulty concerns only the adjustment of our theory; it begins to vanish when we come to practice. When we are in vital contact with the spiritual realities themselves, we find both elements of the case to be true for us, and each indispensable to the truth of the other. The rest of faith and the fight of faith belong to each other. But not to dwell on so general a consideration, two lines of thought may be suggested to those who are conscious of embarrassment at this point.

First, let it be considered that the faith of a Christian embraces real relations with the living God, different from anything that is possible to unbelief. Through Christ we believe in God. Those relations are conceived to be real and vital from the first, though the perfect experience of all that they imply belongs to the future. Faith means that from the outset of believing we are to be to God, and God is to be to us, something different from what the flesh perceives. Christ believed in is an assurance that so it is and shall be. But now, the state of men is such, as long as they have to carry on a life of faith in a world of sense and sin, that this faith of theirs presently meets with flat contradiction. The course of the world treats it all as null. Sin in their own hearts, and many experiences of life, seem to negative the pretensions and the claims of faith. And strong temptations whisper that this high fellowship with a living God not only does not exist, but that it is not desirable that it should. So that from

the outset and all along, faith, if it is not content to be a mere dream, if it will count for a reality, must contend for its life. It must fight, "praying always with all prayer," to make good its ground, and to hold on to its Lord. It is indeed the nature of faith to rest, for it is a trust; not less certainly faith is under necessity to strive, for it is challenged and impeached.

It lies therefore in the very nature of the case that, if faith is in earnest in embracing real and progressive salvation, it must find itself drawn into conflict and effort to assert the reality and to experience the progress. The opposition it meets with ensures this.

On the other hand, it is the nature of the gospel to set men free for active service. It supplies motives, therefore, for enterprise, diligence, and fidelity; and it provides a goal towards which all shall tend. So men become fellow-labourers with their Lord. And if it is intelligible that the Lord should exert continual care for them, it ought to be intelligible also that they are to be exercised in a continual care for Him; care, that is, for the discharge of the trust which they hold from Him.

The Apostle dwells on all this, evidently because he felt it to be a point of so great importance in practical Christianity. In this world the right Christian is the man who knows well he has not attained, but who devotes his life to attaining. Paul brings this out by means of the image of a race for a prize, such as might be seen in the public games. This is a favourite illustration with him. His use of it illustrates the way in which things that are steeped in worldliness may aid us in apprehending the things of God's kingdom. They do so, because they involve elements or energies of man's nature that are good as far as they go. As the Apostle thought of the racers, prepared by unsparing discipline, which had been concentrated on the one object; as he thought of the determination with which the eager runners started, and of the way in which every thought and every act was bent upon the one purpose of success, until the moment when the panting runner shot past the goal, it stirred him with the resolve to be not less eager in his race; and it made him long to see the children of light as practical and wise as, in their generation, the children of this world are.

As usual in the case of illustrations, this one will not hold in all points. For instance, in a race one only wins, and all the rest are defeated and disappointed. This is not so in the Christian race. The analogies lie elsewhere. In order to run well the runners submit to preparation in which everything is done to bring out their utmost energy for the race. When the race comes each competitor may possibly win: in order to win he must put forth his utmost powers; he must do so within a short period of time; and during that time nothing must distract him from the one aim of winning. He does this for a benefit embodied in, or symbolised by, the prize which rewards and commemorates his victory. These are the points in which the races of public games afford lessons for the Christian race. In the former the fact that the success of any one competitor deprives the others of the prize they seek, is the circumstance that puts intensity into the whole business, and makes a real race of it. So also in the spiritual antitype there are elements which make the race the most real, though they are elements of another kind.

The prize can be nothing else than the life eternal (1 Tim. vi. 12) which comes, as we have seen, into full possession at the resurrection of the dead. He whose favour is life confers it. The bestowment of it is conceived as taking place with gladness and with honourable approbation: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The prize stands in strict connection with the perfecting of the believer: the time of receiving the prize is also the time of being presented faultless. Neither prize nor perfectness is attained here; neither is attained unless sought here; and the blessedness bestowed is connected in fact and measure with the faith and diligence expended on the race. On all these accounts the prize is spoken of as a crown; a crown of glory, for it is very honourable; a crown of life, incorruptible, that fadeth not away, for it shall never wither on the brow, as the wreaths of those earthly champions did. Now to run his race was for Paul the one thing. He had not yet attained; he could not sit still as if he had: it was his living condition that he must run, as one not yet there, following on in earnest that he might actually have the prize.

Perhaps some one may regard it as objectionable to conceive practical Christianity as a race for a prize. This seems, it may be said, to subordinate the present to the future, this world to the other world, and, in particular, virtue to happiness; because in this way the efforts of goodness here are conceived only as a means to enjoyment or satisfaction there. We reply that the prize does indeed include joy, the joy of the Lord. But it includes, first of all, goodness, consummate in the type of it proper to the individual; and gladness is present no otherwise than as it is harmonised with goodness, being indeed her proper sister and companion. Besides, the elements of the gladness of that state come in as the expression of God's love—a love both holy and wise. Communion with that love is the true security for goodness. It is equally absurd to suppose, on the one hand, that when that love fills the heart with its unreserved communication there can fail to be gladness; and, on the other hand, to suppose that fellowship with it can be other than the proper and supreme object of a creature's aspiration.

There is no unworthiness in devoting life to win this prize; for it is a state of victorious well-being and well-doing. The highest goodness of all intervening stages is to aspire to that highest goodness of all. Whatever we may do or be, meanwhile, is best attained and done as it confesses its own shortcoming, and hopes and longs to be better and to do more.

It is true that a complete gift of eternal life is held out to us in Christ, and it is faith's part to accept that gift and to rest in it. But yet part of that gift itself is an emancipation of the soul; in virtue of this the man becomes actively responsive to the high calling, reiterates his fundamental decision all along the detail of mortal life, affirms his agreement with the mind and life of his Lord, approves himself faithful and devoted, and runs so as to obtain. All this is in the idea of the gift bestowed, and is unfolded in the experience of the gift received. So the prize is to arise to us as the close of a course of progressive effort tending that way: the reality of the

prize corresponds to the reality of the progress; the degree of it, in some way, to the rate of that progress. The progress itself is made good, as we have said, by perpetually re-affirming the initial choice; doing so in new circumstances, under new lights, with a new sense of its meaning, against the difficulties implied in new temptations; yet so as ever, in the main, to abide by the beginning of our confidence. With all this let it be remembered that the time is short; and it will be understood that the Christian life, so viewed, assumes the character, and may well exhibit the intensity and pressure, of a race.

How far short men fall of the great idea of such a life—how they flinch from the perfectness of this Christian imperfection—need not be enlarged upon. But if any life is wholly untrue to this ideal, the Apostle seemingly could not count it Christian. This one thing he did, he bent himself to the race. For if the ultimate attainment has become very attractive, if the sense of present disproportion to it is great, and if, in Christ, both the obligation and the hopefulness of reaching the perfect good have become imperatively plain, what can a man do but run?

Verses 15 and 16 state the use which the Apostle desires his disciples to make of this account of his own views and feelings, his attitude and his effort,—"As many of us as are perfect."

Since the Apostle has disclaimed (ver. 12) being already perfected, it may seem strange that he should now say, "As many of us as are perfect." His use of language in other places, however, warrants the position that he is not speaking of absolute perfection, as if the complete result of the Christian calling had been attained. Rather he is thinking of ripe practical insight into the real spirit of the Christian life—that is to say, advanced acquaintance, by experience, with the real nature of the Christian life. He uses this word "perfect" in contrast to "babes" or "children" in Christ. These last are persons who have been truly brought to Christ; but their conceptions and their attainments are rudimentary. They have not attained to large insight into the means and ends of the Christian life, nor to any ripe acquaintance with the position of a Christian man, and the relation he holds to things around him. They are therefore unready to face the responsibilities and perform the duties of Christian manhood. Hence the translators of the Authorised Version, in some passages, render the same word so as to bring out this sense of it. So 1 Cor. xiv. 20, "Be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (τέλειοι), and Heb. v. 14, "Strong meat belongs to those that are of full age" (τελείων).

It cannot be doubted, however, that the word is used here with a certain emphatic significance in reference to the previous disclaimer, "I am not yet perfected." In the Philippians, or in some of them, Paul apprehended the existence of a self-satisfied mood of mind, such as might perhaps be warrantable if they were now perfect, if Christianity had brought forth all its results for them, but on no other terms. In contrast to this he had set before them the intense avidity with which he himself stretched out towards attainment and completeness which he had not reached. And now he teaches them that to be thus well aware how far we are from the true completeness, to be thus reaching out to it, is the true perfection of our present state: he only is the perfect Christian who is "thus minded"; who knows and feels how much remains to be attained, and gives himself up to the effort and the race under that inspiration. It is as if he said: Would you approve yourselves to be believers, advanced and established; would you show that you have come to a larger measure of just views and just feelings about the new world into which faith has brought you; would you have the character of men well-acquainted with your Lord's mind about you, with your own position in relation to Him; in short, would you be perfect, fully under the influence of the Christianity you profess:—then let you and me be "thus minded"; let us evince the lowly sense of our distance from the goal, along with a living sense of the magnificence and urgency of the motives which constrain us to press on to it.

For is there such a thing attainable here as a Christian perfectness, a ripe fulness of the Christian life, which exhibits that working of it, in its various forces, which was designed for this stage of our history? If so, what must it be? That man surely is the perfect man who fully apprehends the position in which the gospel places him here, and the ends it sets before him, and who most fully admits into his life the views and considerations which, in this state of things, the gospel proposes. Then, he must be a man penetrated with a sense of the disproportion between his attainment and Christ's ideal, and at the same time set on fire with the desire and hope of overcoming it. Has a man experienced many gracious dealings at his Lord's hands, has he made attainments by grace, has he come to a Christian standing that may be called full age, would he be what all this would seem to imply,—then let him take heed to be "thus minded." Otherwise he is already beginning to lose what he seemed to have attained.

It is not so surprising, and it is not so severely to be reprehended, if those fail in this point who are but children in Christ. When the glorious things of the new world are freshly bursting into view, when the affections of the child of God are in their early exercise, when sin for the present seems stricken down, it is not so wonderful if men suppose danger and difficulty to be over. Like the Corinthians, "now they are full, now they are rich, now they have reigned as kings." It has often been so; and at that stage it may be more easily pardoned. One may say of it, "They will learn their lesson by-and-by; they will soon find out that in the life of a Christian all is not triumph and exultation." But it concerns those who have got further on, and it is expected of them, that they should be "thus minded" as the Apostle Paul was. It is a more serious business for them to be of another mind on this point, than for those who are only children in Christ. It tends to great loss. Are we, says the Apostle, come to a point at which we may be thought to be—may hope we are—experienced believers, well acquainted now with the salvation and the service, men in Christ? Then as we would ever act in a manner answerable, at this stage, to the gospel and to our position under the gospel, let us be thus minded; forgetting that which is behind, reaching forth to that which is before, let us press toward the mark. For at each stage of progress much depends on the way in which we deal with the position now attained, with the views which have opened to us, and with the experiences that have

been acquired. This may decide whether the stage reached shall be but a step towards something better and more blessed, or whether a sad blight and declension shall set in. There are Christian lives to-day sadly marred, entangled and bewildered so that one knows not what to make of them, and all by reason of failure to be "thus minded."

A man is awakened to the supreme importance of Divine things. At the outset of his course, for years, perhaps, he is a vigorous and growing Christian. So he comes to a large measure of establishment: he grows into knowledge of truth and duty. But after a time the feeling creeps into his mind that matters are now less urgent. He acts rather as a man disposed to keep his ground, than as one that would advance. Now he seems to himself to lose ground somewhat, now to awaken a little and recover it, and on those terms he is fairly well contented. All this while it would be unjust to say that he does not love and serve Christ. But time passes on; life draws nearer to its close. The period at which God's afflictions usually multiply has arrived. And he awakens at last to see how much of his life has been lost; how extensively, though secretly, decay has marred his attainments and his service; and how little, in the result, of that honourable success has crowned his life which once seemed fair before him.

"Let us be thus minded." Let Christians be admonished who have for some time been Christians, and especially those who are passing through middle life, or from middle life into older years. There is enchanted ground here, in passing over which too many of Christ's servants go to sleep. Leave that which is behind.

"Let us be thus minded:" but this proves hard. One may see it in a general way to be most reasonable, but to come up to it in particulars is hard. In all particular cases we are tempted to be otherwise minded. And in many particulars we find it very difficult to judge the manner of spirit that we are of. Were all right in us, absolutely right, rectitude of disposition and of moral action would be in a manner instinctive. But now it is not so. With reference to many aspects of our life, it is very difficult to bring out distinctly to our own minds how the attitude that becomes us is to be attained and maintained. The difficulty is real; and therefore a promise is annexed. "If in anything ye be otherwise minded." That may realise itself in two ways. You may be distinctly conscious that your way of dealing with some interests which enter into your lives is unsatisfactory, is below your calling and privilege as a Christian; and yet you may find it hard to see how you are to rise into the worthier life. It is like a problem which you cannot solve. Or, again, you may fear that it is so; you may fear that if things were seen in the true light it would turn out so. But you cannot see clearly; you cannot identify the faulty element, far less amend it. Here the promise meets you. "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Keep your face in the right direction. Be honestly set on the attainment, and the way will open up to you as you go. You will see the path opening from the point where you stand, into life that throughout is akin to the aspiration and the achievement of the life of Paul.

Paul here has regard to a distinction which theorists are apt to overlook. We have a sufficient objective rule in the word and example of Christ. This may be summarised in forms easily repeated, and a man may, in that respect, know all that need be said as to what he is to do and to be. But in morals and in spiritual life this is only the beginning of another process—namely, the subjective individual entrance into the meaning of it all and the practical appropriation of it. I know the whole of duty on the human side: I am to love my neighbour as myself. It is most essential to know it, and a grand thing to have consented to make a rule of it. But, says one, there remains the difficulty of doing it? Is that all? I reply. There is another previous difficulty. I can preach a sermon on loving my neighbour as myself. But what does that mean, for me, not for any one else, but for myself, on a given day in November, at half-past one in the afternoon, when I am face to face with my neighbour, who has his merits, and also his defects, being, perhaps, provoking and encroaching, with whom I have some business to arrange? What does it mean then and there and for me? Here there opens the whole question of the subjective insight into the scope and genius of the rule; in which problem heart and mind must work together; and commonly there have to be training, experience, growth, in order to the expert and just discernment. Short of that there may be honest effort, blundering most likely, but honest, and lovingly accepted through Christ. But there ought to be growth on this subjective side.

Moreover, when progress has been made here it imposes responsibility. Have you been carried forward to such and such degrees of this subjective insight? Then this ought to be for you a fruitful attainment. Do not neglect its suggestions, do not prove careless and untrue to insight attained. Whereto we have attained, "by the same rule let us walk,"—or, as we may render it, "go on in the same line." So new insight and new achievement shall wait upon our steps.

Generally, if their Lord had carried the Philippians forward to genuine attainments of Christian living, then that history of theirs was a track which reached further on. It was not a blind alley, stopping at the point now reached. It had had a meaning; there was some rationale of it; it proceeded on principles which could be understood, for they had been put in practice; and it demanded to be further pursued. There is a continuity in the work of grace. There is a rational development of spiritual progress in the case of each child of God. What God means, what the direction is in which His finger beckons, what the dispositions are under the influence of which His call is complied with and obeyed,—these are things which have been so far learned in that course of lessons and conflicts, of defeats and backslidings, restorations and victories, which has brought you so far. Let this be carried out; keep on in the same road. Whereto you have attained, go on with the same.

But such an admonition at once raises a question; the question, namely, whether we are at any stage in the pathway of Christian attainment, whether there is for us as yet any history of a Divine life. Among those who claim part in Christ's benefits are some whom the grace of God has never taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly; for they have been persistently deaf to the lesson. There are some who do not know

how Christ turns men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. To them the line of admonition now in hand does not apply: to exhort them to "walk on in the same" would be to perpetuate for them a sad mistake. Their course has been dark and downward. Therefore to the admonition already given, the Apostle adds another. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark (keep sight of) them who walk so as ye have us for an example." Do not mistake the whole nature of Christianity; do not altogether miss the path in which God's children go. It is one spirit that dwells in the Church; let not your walk forsake the fellowship of that spirit. Christians are not bound to any human authority: Christ is their Master. They must sometimes assert their independence, even with respect to the maxims and manners of good people. Yet there is one spirit in God's true Church, and there is in the main one course of life which it inspires. God's children have not been mistaken in the main things. In these, to forsake the spirit and the way of Christ's flock is to forsake Christ.

CHAPTER XV.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 18-19 (R. V.).

THE New Testament writers, and not least the Apostle Paul, are wont to bring out their conception of the true Christian life by setting it vividly in contrast with the life of the unspiritual man. They seem to say: "If you really mean to say No to the one, and Yes to the other, be sincere and thorough: compromises are not possible here." So 1 Tim. vi. 10: "The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God," etc. Or Jude 18: "mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved," etc. Here in like manner the course of worldliness and self-pleasing life is sketched in concrete instances, that its sin and shame may be felt, and that by contrast the true calling of a Christian may be discerned and may be impressed on the disciples.

It may be taken as certain that the Apostle is not speaking of mere Jews or mere heathen. He is speaking of professing Christians, whose practical life belied their profession. In general they are enemies of the cross of Christ; that is the first thing he thinks fit to say of them. And here it may be asked whether the Apostle has in view, if not Jews, yet the Judaising faction about which he had already said strong things in the beginning of this chapter. Some have thought so; and it must be owned that antagonism to the cross, ignorance of its virtue, and antipathy to its lessons, are exactly what the Apostle was wont to impute to those Judaisers; as may be seen in the Epistle to the Galatians, and in other Pauline writings. But it is preferable, as has been already indicated, to take it that the Apostle has turned from the particular issue with those Judaisers; and having been led to declare emphatically what the life of Christianity was in his own experience and practice, he now sets this life in Christ not merely against the religion of the Judaisers, but in general against all religion which, assuming the name of Christ, denied the power of godliness; which meddled with that worthy name, but only brought reproach upon it. It is quite possible indeed that here he might have in view some of the Judaisers also; for there was a sensual side of popular Judaism which might be represented also among the Judaising Christians. But it is more likely that the Apostle's eye is turning mainly to another class of persons. It seems that in the early Churches, especially perhaps at the time when the later Epistles were written, a recognisable tendency to a loose and lawless Christianity was finding representatives. Warning against these was needed; and they embodied a form of evil which might serve to show the Philippians, as in a mirror, the disaster in which an idle, self-satisfied, vainglorious Christianity was like to land its votaries.

What first strikes the Apostle about them is that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. One asks, Does he mean enemies of the doctrine of the cross, or of its practical influence and efficiency? The two are naturally connected. But here perhaps the latter is principally intended. The context, especially what follows in the Apostle's description, seems to point that way.

When Christ's cross is rightly apprehended, and when the place it claims in the mind has been cordially yielded, it becomes, as we see in the case of Paul himself, a renovating principle, the fountain of a new view and a new course. That immense sacrifice for our redemption from sin decides that we are no more to live the rest of our time in the flesh to the lusts of men (1 Peter iv. 1). And that patience of Christ in His lowly love to God and man under all trials, sheds its conclusive light upon the true use and end of life, the true rule, the true inspiration, and the true goal. So regarded, Christ's cross teaches us the slender worth, or the mere worthlessness, of much that we otherwise should idolise; on the other hand it assures us of redemption into His likeness, as a prospect to be realised in the renunciation of the "old man"; and it embodies an incomparable wealth of motive to persuade us to comply, for we find ourselves in fellowship with Love unspeakable.

Under this influence we take up our cross; which is substantially the same as renouncing or denying ourselves (Matt. xvi. 24) carried practically out. It is self-denial for Christ's sake and after Christ's example, accepted as a principle, and carried out in the forms in which God calls us to it. This, as we have seen, takes place chiefly in our consenting to bear the pain involved in separation from sin and from the life of worldliness, and in carrying on the war against sin and against the world. It includes rejection of known sin; it includes watchfulness and discipline of life with a view to life's supreme end; and so it includes prudential self-denial, in avoiding undue excitement and over-absorbing pleasure, because experience and God's word tell us it is not safe for our hearts to be so "overcharged" (Luke xxi. 34). This cross in many of its applications is hard. Yet in all its genuine applications it is most desirable; for in frankly embracing it we shall find our interest in salvation, and in the love which provides it, brought home with comfort to our hearts (1 Peter iv. 14).

It seems, then, that there are professing Christians who are enemies of the cross of Christ.

Not that it is always an open and proclaimed hostility; though, indeed, in the case of those whom Paul is thinking of, it would appear to have revealed itself pretty frankly. But at all events it is a real aversion; they would have nothing to do with the cross, or as little as they may. And this proves that the very meaning of salvation, the very end of Christ as a Saviour, is the object of their dislike. But in Christianity the place of the cross is central. It will make itself felt somehow. Hence those who decline or evade it find it difficult to do so quietly and with complacency. Eventually their dislike is apt to be forced into bitter manifestation. They begin, perhaps, with quiet and skilful avoidance; but eventually they become, recognisably, enemies of the cross, and their religious career acquires a darker and more ominous character.

It is, however, an interesting question, What draws to Christianity those who prove to be the enemies of the cross? Nowadays we may explain the adhesion of many such persons to Christian profession by referring to family and social influences. But we can hardly set much down to that score when we are thinking of the days of Paul. It cannot be doubted that some persons were then strongly drawn by Christianity who did not prove amenable to its most vital influence. And that may persuade us that the same phenomenon recurs in all ages and in all Churches. For different minds there are different influences which may operate in this way. Intellectual interest may be stirred by the Christian teachings; the sense of truth and reality may be appealed to by much in the Christian view of men and things; there may be a genuine satisfaction in having life and feelings touched and tinged with the devout emotions which breathe in Christian worship; there may be a veneration, real as far as it goes, for some features of Christian character, as set forth in Scripture and embodied in individual Christians; and, not to dwell on mere particulars, the very goodness of Christian truth and life, which a man will not pay the cost of appropriating to himself, may exert a strong attraction, and draw a man to live upon the borders of it. Nay, such men may go a good long way in willingness to do and bear for the cause they have espoused. Men have run the risk of loss of life and goods for Christianity, who have yet been shipwrecked on some base lust which they could not bring themselves to resign. And who has not known kindly, serviceable men, hanging about the Churches with a real predilection for the suburban life of Zion,—men regarding whom it made the heart sore to form any adverse judgment, and yet men whose life seemed just to omit the cross of Christ?

In the case of those whom Paul thinks of there was no room for doubt as to the real nature of the case; and therefore the Apostle cannot too emphatically bring it out. He puts first the most startling view of it. Their end is destruction. Not salvation, but destruction is before them, although they name the name of Christ. Destruction is the port they are sailing for: that is the tendency of their whole career. Their place must be at last with those on whom the day of the Lord brings sudden destruction, so that they shall not escape. Alas for the Christians whose end is destruction!

"Their God is their belly." Their life was sensual. Most likely, judging from the tone of expression, they were men of coarse and unblushing indulgence. If so, they were only the more outstanding representatives of the sensual life. The things which delight the senses were for them the main things, and ruled them. They might have intellectual and æsthetic interests, they might own family and social connections, they certainly did attach importance to some religious views and some religious ties; but the main object of their life was to seek rest and content for those desires which may have rest apart from any higher exercise or any higher portion. Their life was ruled and guided by its lower and sensual side. So their belly was their god. Yet they claimed a place in the Christian fellowship, in which Christ has revealed God, and has opened the way to God, and brings us to God. But their thoughts ran, and their plans tended, and their life found its explanation, bellywards. This was their god. Their trust and their desire were placed in the things which the flesh appreciates. These they served, and of these they took on the likeness. They served not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. One cannot think of it without grave questions as to the direction in which life preponderates. That would seem to indicate our god. One does not severely judge "good living." And yet what may "good living" denote in the case of many a professing Christian? In what direction do we find the tides of secret and unrestrained thought setting?

And they glory in their shame. In this Epistle and elsewhere, one sees the importance attached by the Apostle to that which a man glories in, as marking his character. For himself, Paul gloried in the cross of Christ: he counted all things but loss for the knowledge of Christ. And these men also were, or claimed to be, in Christ's Church, in which we are taught to rate things at their true value and to measure them by the authentic standard. But they gloried in their shame. What they valued themselves upon; what they inwardly, at least, rejoiced in, and applauded themselves for; what they would, perhaps, have most cheerfully dwelt upon in congenial company, were things of which they had every reason to be ashamed—no doubt, the resources they had gathered for the worship of this god of theirs, and the success they had had in it. For example, such men would inwardly congratulate themselves on the measure in which they were able to attain the kind of satisfaction at which they aimed. They gloried in the degree in which they succeeded in bringing about a perfect accommodation between themselves and the objects which sense alone appreciates, and in producing a harmonious and balanced life set on that key. Really it should have been to them a cause of grief and shame to find themselves succeeding here, and failing in attaining a right relation to Christ and to the things of God's kingdom, to righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. So they gloried in their shame. This was seen in their lives. Alas, is there no reason to fear that when the thoughts of all hearts are revealed, too many whose lives are subject to no obvious reproach shall be found to have lived an inward life of evil thought, of base desire, of coarse and low imagination, that can only rank in the same class with these—men whose whole inward life gravitates, and gravitates unchecked, towards vanity and lust?

In a word, their character is summed up in this,

that they mind earthly things. That is the region in which their minds are conversant and to which they have regard. The higher world of truths and forces and objects which Christ reveals is for them inoperative. It does not appeal to them, it does not awe them, it does not govern them. Their minds can turn in this direction on particular occasions, or with a view to particular discussions; but their bent lies another way. The home of their hearts, the treasure which they seek, the congenial subjects and interests, are earthly.

Since this whole description is meant to carry its lesson by suggestion of contrast, the clause last referred to brings powerfully before us the place to be given to the spiritual mind in our conception of a true Christian life. In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we are told that to be carnally minded—or the minding of the flesh—is death, but the minding of the spirit is life and peace. Care, therefore, is to be taken of our thoughts and of our practical judgments, so that they may be according to the spirit. Effort in this direction is hopeful effort, because we believe that Christ grants His Spirit to hallow those regions of the inward man by His illuminating and purifying presence. It cannot be doubted that many lives that were capable of yielding much good fruit, have been frittered away and wasted through indulged vanity of thought. Others, that are methodical and energetic enough, are made sterile for Christian ends by the too common absence or the too feeble presence of the spiritual mind. It is not altogether direct meditation on spiritual objects that is here to be enforced. That has its important place; yet certainly, frank converse with the whole range of human interests is legitimately open to the Christian mind. What seems to be essential is that, through all, the regard to the supreme interests shall continue; and that the manner of thinking and of judging, the modes of feeling and impression, shall keep true to faith and love and Christ. The subject recurs in another form at the eighth verse of the following chapter.

Probably, as was said, the Apostle is speaking of a class of men whose faults were gross, so that at least an Apostolic eye could not hesitate to read the verdict that must be passed upon them. But then we must consider that his object in doing this was to address a warning to men to whom he imputed no such gross failings; concerning whom, indeed, he was persuaded far other things, even things that accompany salvation; but whom he knew to be exposed to influences tending in the same direction, and whom he expected to see preserved only in the way of vigilance and diligence. Outstanding failures in Christian profession may startle us by their conspicuous deformity; but they fail to yield us their full lesson unless they suggest the far finer and more subtle forms in which the same evils may enter in, to mar or to annul what seemed to be Christian characters.

The protest against the cross is still maintained even in the company of Christ's professed disciples. But this takes place most commonly, and certainly most persuasively, without advancing any plea for conduct grossly offensive, or directly inconsistent with Christian morals. The "enemies of the cross" retreat into a safer region, where they take up positions more capable of defence. "Why have a cross?" they say. "God has not made us spiritual beings only: men ought not to attempt to live as if they were pure intelligences or immaterial spirits. Also, God has made men with a design that they should be happy; they are to embrace and use the elements of enjoyment with which He has so richly surrounded them. He does not mean us to be clouded in perpetual gloom, or to be on our guard against the bright and cheering influences of the earth. He has made all things beautiful in their time; and He has given to us the capacity to recognise this that we may rejoice in it. Instead of scowling on the beauty of God's works, and the resources for enjoyment they supply, it is more our part to drink in by every sense, from nature and from art, the brightness, and gladness, and music, and grace. Let us seek, as much as may be in this rough world, to have our souls attuned to all things sweet and fair."

There is real truth here; for, no doubt, it lies in the destiny of man to bring the world into experience according to God's order: if this is not to be done in ways of sin and transgression, it is yet to be done in right ways; and in doing it, man is designed to be gladdened by the beauty of God's handiwork and by the wealth of His beneficence. And yet such statements can be used to shelter a life of enmity to the cross, and they are often employed to conceal the more momentous half of the truth. As long as the things of earth can become materials by means of which we may be tempted to fall away from the Holy One, and as long as we, being fallen, are corruptly disposed to make idols of them, we cannot escape the obligation to keep our hearts with diligence. So long, also, as we live in a world in which men, with a prevailing consent, work up its resources into a system which shuts God and Christ out; so long as men set in motion, by means of those resources, a stream of worldliness by which we are at all times apt to be whirled away,—so long every man whose ear and heart have become open to Christ will find that as to the things of earth there is a cross to bear. For he must decide whether his practical life is to continue to accept the Christian inspiration. He must make his choice between two things, whether he will principally love and seek a right adjustment with things above, with the objects and influences of the Kingdom of God, or whether he will principally love and seek a right, or at least a comfortable adjustment with things below. He must make this choice not once only, but he must hold himself at all times ready to make it over again, or to maintain it in reiterated applications of it. The grace of Christ who died and rose again is his resource to enable him.

Every legitimate element of human experience, of human culture and attainment, is, doubtless open to the Christian man. Only, in making his personal selection among them, the Christian will keep sight of the goal of his high calling, and will weigh the conditions under which he himself must aim at it. Still every such element is open; and all legitimate satisfaction accruing to men from such sources is to be received with thankfulness. Let all this be recognised. But Christianity, by its very nature, requires us to recognise also, and in a due proportion, something else. It requires us to recognise the evil of sin, the incomparable worth of Christ's salvation. Along with these things, duly regarded,

let all innocent earthly interests take their place. But if we are conscious that as yet we have very incompletely established the right proportionate regard, is it any wonder if we are obliged to keep watch, lest the treacherous idolatry of things seen and temporal should carry us away,—obliged to accept the cross? We are obliged; but in the school of our Master we should learn to do this thing most gladly, not by constraint, but of a ready mind.

The ideal life on earth no doubt would be a life in which all was perfectly harmonised. The antagonism of the interests would have passed away. Loyalty and love to God's kingdom and to His Son would embody themselves in all human exercise and attainment as in their proper vesture, each promoting each, working together as body and soul. There are Christians who have gone far towards this attainment. They have been so mastered by the mind of Christ that while, on the one hand, they habitually seek the things above, on the other hand there is little trace of bondage or of timorousness in their attitude towards the bright aspects of earthly experience. Some of them were happily carried in early days into so clear a decision for the better part; some emerged later, after conflict, into so bright a land of Beulah that they find it easy, with little conflict and little fear, to make frank use of forms of earthly good which other Christians must treat with more reserve.

This is one of the reasons why we must not judge one another about these things; why we must not lay down absolute rules about them; why even our recommendations must be provisional and prudential only. It is at the same time a reason for the more fidelity in each of us towards himself, to see that we do not trifle with the great trust of regulating our own life. It is possible to give to God and to Christ a recognition which is not consciously dishonest, and yet to fail in admitting any deep and dominant impression of the significance of Christ's redemption for human life. So the heart is yielded, the time is surrendered, the strength is given to attractive objects, which are not indeed essentially immoral, but which are suffered to usurp the heart, and to estrange the man from Christ. Such persons prove enemies of the cross of Christ: they mind earthly things.

Since the earthly side of human life, with its sorrow and joy, its work and its leisure, is legitimate and inevitable, questions arise about adjusting details. And in particular those who retain a relation to Christianity while they cherish a worldly spirit, take a delight in raising questions as to the forms of life which are, or are not, in harmony with Christianity, and as to whether various practices and indulgences are to be vindicated or condemned. It is a satisfaction to persons of this sort to have a set of fixed points laid down, with respect to which, if they conform, they may take the credit of doing so, and if they rebel, they may have the comfort of feeling that the case is arguable: as indeed these are often matters upon which one may argue for ever. Now what is clearly prohibited or clearly warranted in Scripture, as permanent instruction for the Church, must be maintained. But beyond that point it is often wisest to refuse to give any specific answer to the questions so raised. The true answer is, Are you a follower of Christ? Then it is laid on your own conscience, at your own responsibility, to answer such questions for yourself. No one can come in your place. You must decide, and you have a right to decide for yourself, what course is, for you, consistent with loyalty to Christ and His cross. Only it may be added that the very spirit in which one puts the question may be significant. One who minds earthly questions will put the question in one way; one whose citizenship is in heaven, in another. And the answer which you attain will be according to the question you have put.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUR CITY AND OUR COMING KING.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 20, 21 (R. V.).

To live amid the things of earth, and in constant converse with them, a life in the power of Christ's resurrection, and in the fellowship of His sufferings, was the Apostle's chosen course in which he would have the Philippians to follow him. For a moment he had diverged to sketch, for warning, the way of the transgressors, who spend their lives intent on the things that pass away. Now he brings the argument to a close, by once more proclaiming the glory of the high calling in Christ. As the Christian faith looks backward to the triumph of Christ's resurrection, and to the meekness of His suffering, and receives its inspiration from them, so also it looks upward, and it looks forward. It is even now in habitual communion with the world on high; and it reaches on towards the hope of the Lord's return.

"Our citizenship is in heaven." The word here used (comp. i. 27) means the constitution or manner of life of a state or city. All men draw much from the spirit and laws of the commonwealth to which they belong; and in antiquity this influence was even stronger than we commonly find it to be in our day. The individual was conscious of himself as a member of his own city or state. Its life enfolded his. Its institutions set for him the conditions under which life was accepted and was carried on. Its laws determined for him his duties and his rights. The ancient and customary methods of the society developed a common spirit, under the influence of which each citizen unfolded his own personal peculiarities. When he went forth elsewhere he felt himself, and was felt to be, a stranger. Now in the heavenly kingdom, which had claimed them and had opened to them through Christ, the believers had found their own city; and finding it, had become, comparatively, strangers in every other.

A way of thinking and acting prevails throughout the world, as if earth and its interests were the whole sphere of man; and being pervaded by this spirit, the whole world may be said to be a commonwealth with a spirit and with maxims of its own. We, who live in it, feel it natural to comply with the drift of things in this respect, and difficult to stand against it; so that separation and singularity seem unreasonable and hard. We claim for our lives the support of a common understanding; we yearn for the comfort of a system of things existing round us, in which we may find countenance. It was urged against the Christians of the early ages that their religion was unsocial—it broke the ties by which men

held together; and doubtless many a Christian, in hours of trial and depression, felt with pain that much in Christian life offered a foundation for the reproach. On the other hand, those who, like the enemies of the cross, refer their lives to the world's standard, rather than to Christ's, have at least this comfort, that they have a tangible city. The world is their city: therefore also the prince of it is their king. But the Apostle, for himself and his fellows, sets against this the true city or state—with its more original and ancient sanctions; with its more authoritative laws; with its far more pervading and mighty spirit, for the Spirit of God Himself is the life which binds its all together; with its glorious and gracious King. This commonwealth has its seat in heaven; for there it reveals its nature, and thence its power descends. We recognise this whenever we pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." This, says the Apostle, is our citizenship. The archaism of the Authorised Version, "Our conversation" (that is, our habitual way of living) "is in heaven," expresses much of the meaning; only the "conversation" is referred, by the phrase employed in the text, to the sanctions under which it proceeds, the august fellowship by which it is sustained, the source of influence by which it is continually vitalised. Our state, and the life which as members of that state we claim and use, is celestial. Its life and strength, its glory and victory, are in heaven. But it is ours, though we are here on earth.

Therefore, according to the Apostle, the standard of our living, and its sanctions, and its way of thinking and proceeding, and, in a word, our city, with its interests and its objects, being in heaven, the earnest business of our life is there. We have to do with earth constantly and in ways most various; but, as Christians, our way of having to do with the earth itself is heavenly, and is to be conversant with heaven. What we mainly love and seek is in heaven; what we listen most to hear is the voice that comes from heaven; what we most earnestly speak is the voice we send to heaven; what lies next our heart is the treasure and the hope which are secure in heaven; we are most intent upon is what we lay up in heaven, and how we are getting ready for heaven; there is One in heaven whom we love above all others; we are children of the kingdom of heaven; it is our country and our home; and something in us refuses to settle on those things here that reject the stamp of heaven.

Does this go too high? Does some one say, "Something in this direction attracts me and I reach out to it, but ah! how feebly"?—then how strongly does the principle of the Apostle's admonition apply. If we own that this city rightfully claims us, if we are deeply conscious of shortcoming in our response to that claim, then how much does it concern us to allow no earthly thing that by its own nature drags us down from our citizenship in heaven.

It is in heaven. Many ways it might be shown to be so; but it is enough to sum up all in this, that One has His presence there, who is the Life and the Lord of this city of ours, caring for us, calling us to the present fellowship with Him that is attainable in a life of faith, but especially (for this includes all the rest) whom we look for, to come forth from heaven for us. He has done wonders already to set up for us the grace of the kingdom of heaven, and He has brought us in to it; He is doing much for us daily in grace and in providence, upholding His Church on earth from age to age; but this "working" is proceeding to a final victory. He is "able to subject all things to Himself." And the emphatic proof of it which awaits all believers, is that the body itself, reconstituted in the likeness of Christ's own, shall at last be in full harmony with a destiny of immortal purity and glory. So shall the manifestation of His power and grace at last sweep through our whole being, within and without. That is the final triumph of salvation, with which the long history finds all its results attained. For this we await the coming of the Saviour from heaven. Well therefore may we say that the state to which we pertain, and the life which we hold as members of that state, is in heaven.

The expectation of the coming of Christ out of the world of supreme truth and purity, where God is known and served aright, to fulfil all His promises,—this is the Church's and the believer's great hope. It is set before us in the New Testament as a motive to every duty, as giving weight to every warning, as determining the attitude and character of all Christian life. In particular, we cannot deal aright with any of the earthly things committed to us, unless we deal with them in the light of Christ's expected coming. This expectation is to enter into the heart of every believer, and no one is warranted to overlook or make light of it. His coming, His appearing, the revelation of Him, the revelation of His glory, the coming of His day, and so forth, are pressed on us continually. In a true waiting for the day of Christ is gathered up the right regard to what He did and bore when He came first, and also a right regard to Him as He is now the pledge and the sustainer of our soul's life: the one and the other are to pass onward to the hope of His appearing.

Some harm has been done, perhaps, by the degree in which attention has been concentrated on debatable points about the time of the Lord's coming, or the order of events in relation to it; but more by the measure in which Christians have allowed the world's unbelieving temper to affect on this point the habit of their own minds. It must be most seriously said that our Lord Himself expected no man to succeed in escaping the corruption of the world and enduring to the end, otherwise than in the way of watching for his Lord (see Luke xii. 35-40—but the passages are too numerous to be quoted).

And the Apostle lays an emphasis on the character in which we expect Him. The word "Saviour" is emphatic. We look for a Saviour; not merely One who saved us once, but One who brings salvation with Him when He comes. It is the great good, in its completeness, that the Church sees coming to her with her Lord. Now she has the faith of it,—and with the faith an earnest and foretaste,—but then salvation comes. Therefore the coming is spoken of as redemption drawing nigh, as the time of the redemption of the purchased possession. So also in the Epistle to the Galatians the end of Christ's sacrifice is said to be to "deliver us from this present evil world."

Doubtless it is unwise to lay down extreme positions as to the spirit in which we are to deal with temporal things, and especially with their winning and attractive aspects. Christian men, at peace with God, should not only feel spiritual

joy, but may well make a cheerful use of passing mercies. Yet certainly the Christian's hope is to be saved out of this world, and out of life as he knows it here, into one far better—saved out of the best and brightest state to which this present state of things can bring him. The Christian spirit is giving way in that man who, in whatever posture of his worldly affairs, does not feel that the present is a state entangled with evil, including much darkness and much estrangement from the soul's true rest. He ought to be minded so as to own the hope of being saved out of it, looking and hasting to the coming of the Lord.

If we lived out this conviction with some consistency, we should not go far wrong in our dealings with this present world. But probably there is no feature in which the average Christianity of to-day varies more from that of the early Christians, than in the faint impressions, and the faint influence, experienced by most modern Christians in connection with the expectation of the Lord's return.

As far as individual life goes, the position of men in both periods is much the same; it is so, in spite of all the changes that have taken place. Then, as now, the mirage of life tempted men to dream of felicities here, which hindered them from lifting up their heads to a prospect of redemption. But now, as then, counter-influences work; the short and precarious term of human life, its disappointments, its cares and sorrows, its conflicts and falls, conspire to teach even the most reluctant Christian that the final and satisfying rest is not to be found here. So that the difference seems to arise mainly from a secret failure of faith on this point, due to the impression made by long ages in which Christ has not come. "Where is the promise of His coming? All things continue as they were."

This may suggest, however, that influences are recognisable, tending to form, in modern Christians, a habit of thought and feeling less favourable to vivid expectation of Christ's coming. It does not arise so much in connection with individual experience, but is rather an impression drawn from history and from the common life of men. In the days of Paul, general history was simply discouraging to spiritual minds. It led men to think of all creation groaning together. Civilisation certainly had made advances; civil government had conferred some of its benefits on men; and lately, the strong hand of Rome, however heavily it might press, had averted or abridged some of the evils that afflicted nations. Still, on the whole, darkness, corruption, and social wrong continued to mark the scene, and there was little to suggest that prolonged effort might gradually work improvement. Rather it seemed that a rapid dispensation of grace, winning its way by supernatural energy, might well lead on to the winding up of the whole scene, sweeping all away before the advent of new heavens and a new earth. But, for us, nineteen hundred years have well-nigh passed. The Christian Church has been confronted all that time with her great task; and however imperfect her light and her methods have often been, she has set processes a-going, and pressed on in lines of action, in which she has not been without her reward. Also the public action of at least the European races, stimulated and guided by Christianity, has been inspired by faith in progress and in a reign of justice, and has applied itself to improve the conditions of men. How much of sin and pain still afflicts the world is too sadly evident. But the memory of the successive lives of saints, thinkers, men of public spirit and devoted public action, is strong in Christian minds to-day—it is a long, animating history. And never more than at the present time did the world press itself on the Christian mind as the sphere for effort, for helpful and hopeful achievement. All this tends to fix the eye on what may happen before Christ comes; for one asks room and time to fight the battle out, to see the long co-operant processes converge upon their goal. The conflict is thought of as one to be bequeathed, like freedom's battle, from sire to son, through indefinite periods beyond which men do not very often look. And, indeed, the amelioration of the world and remedy of its ills by works of faith and love are Christlike work. The world cannot want it; the fruit of it will not be withheld; and the hopeful ardour with which it is pursued is Christ's gift to His people. For Christ Himself healed and fed the multitudes. Yet all this shall not replace the coming of Christ, and the redemption that draws nigh with Him. The longing eyes that gaze into the prospects of public-spirited beneficence and Christian philanthropy, do well; but they must also look higher up and further on.

One thing must be said. It is vain for us to suppose we can adjust beforehand, to our own satisfaction, the elements which enter into the future, so as to make a well-fitted scheme of it. That was not designed. And in this case two ways of looking at the future are apt to strive together. The man who is occupied with processes that, as he conceives, might eventuate in a reign of goodness reached by gradual amelioration, by successive victories of the better cause, may look askance on the promise of Christ's coming, because he dislikes catastrophe and cataclysm. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, is his motto. And the man who is full of the thought of the Lord's return, and deeply persuaded that nothing less will eradicate the world's disease, may look with impatience on measures that seem to aim at slow and far results. But neither the one mode of view nor the other is to be sacrificed. Work is to be done in the world on the lines that promise best to bless the world. Yet also this faith must never be let down—the Lord is coming; the Lord shall come.

How decisive the change is which Christ completes at His coming—how distinctive, therefore, and unworldly, that citizenship which takes its type from heaven where He is, and from the hope of His appearing—is last of all set forth. Paul might have dwelt on many great blessings the full meaning of which will be unfolded when Christ comes; for He is to conform all things to Himself. But Paul prefers to signalise what shall befall our bodies; for that makes us feel that not one element in our state shall fail to be subjected to the victorious energy of Christ. Our bodies are, in our present state, conspicuously refractory to the influences of the higher kingdom. Regeneration makes no improvement on them. In our body we carry about with us what seems to mock the idea of an ethereal and ideal life. And when we die, the corruption of the grave speaks of anything but hope. Here, then, in this very point the salvation of Christ shall

complete its triumph, saving us all over and all through. He "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory."

For the Apostle Paul the question how the body is to be reckoned with in any lofty view of human life had a peculiar interest. One sees how his mind dwelt upon it. He does not indeed impute to the body any original or essential antagonism to the soul's better life. But it shares in the debasement and disorganisation implied in sin; it has become the ready avenue for many temptations. Through it the man has become participant of a vivid and unintermittent earthliness, contrasting all too sadly with the feebleness of spiritual impressions and affections, so that the balance of our being is deranged. Nor does grace directly affect men's bodily conditions. Here, then, is an element in a renewed life that has a peculiar refractoriness and irresponsiveness. So much is this so that sin in our complex nature easily turns this way, easily finds resources in this quarter. Hence sin in us often takes its denomination from this side of things. It is the flesh, and the minding of the flesh, that is to be crucified. On the other hand, just because life for us is life in the body, therefore the body with its members must be brought into the service of Christ, and must fulfil the will of God. "Yield your bodies a living sacrifice." "Your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost." A disembodied Christianity is to the Apostle no Christianity. There may be difficulties, indeed, in carrying this consecration through, elements of resistance and insubordination to be overcome. If so, they must be fought down. "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest I prove a castaway." To be thorough in this proved hard even for Paul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—a text in which one sees how the "body" offered itself as the ready symbol of the whole inward burden and difficulty. So the body is dead because of sin: dying, fit to die, appointed to die, and not now renewed to life. "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Then, limits now imposed on right thinking, right feeling, right acting, shall be found to have passed away. Till then we groan, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body; but then shall be the manifestation of the sons of God. To Paul this came home as one of the most definite, practical, and decisive forms in which the triumph of Christ's salvation should be declared.

The body, then, by which we hold converse with the world, and by which we give expression to our mental life, has shared in the evil that comes by sin. We find it to be the body of our humiliation. It is not only liable to pain, decay, and death, not only subject to much that is humbling and distressing, but it has become an ill-adapted organ for an aspiring soul. The bodily state weighs down the soul, when its aspirations after good have been rekindled. It is not wholly unconnected with our physical state that it is so hard to carry the recognition of God and the life of faith into the comings and goings of the outward life; so hard to wed the persuasions of our faith to the impressions of our sense. But we look forward to our Lord's coming with the expectation that the body of our humiliation shall be transfigured into the likeness of the body of His glory. In this we discern with what a pervading energy He is to subdue all things to Himself. Love in righteousness is to triumph through all spheres.

We have more than once acknowledged how natural it is to dream of constructing a Christian life on earth with all its elements, natural and spiritual, perfectly harmonised, each having its place in relation to each so as to make the music of a perfect whole. And in the strength of such a dream, some look down on all Christian practice as blind and narrow, which seems to them to mar life by setting one element of it against another. It must be owned that narrow types of Christianity have often needlessly offended so. Nevertheless we have here a new proof that the dream of those who would achieve a perfect harmony, in the present state and under present conditions, is vain. A perfect Christian harmony of life cannot be restored in the body of our humiliation. The nobler part is to own this, and to confess that amid many undeserved good gifts, yet, in relation to the great hope set before us, we groan, waiting for the redemption; when Christ who now fits us to run the race and bear the cross, shall come and save us out of all this, changing the body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory.

Against the ways of Jewish self-righteousness, and against the impulses of fleshly minds, the Apostle had set the true Christianity—the methods in which it grows, the influences on which it relies, the truths and hopes by which it is mainly sustained, the high citizenship which it claims and to the type of which it resolutely conforms. All this was possible in Christ, all this was actual in Christ, all this was theirs in Christ. Yet this is what is brought into debate, by unbelief and sin; this against unbelief and sin has to be maintained. Some influences come to shake us as to the truth of it—"It is not so real after all." Some influences come to shake us as to the good of it—"It is not after all so very, so supremely, so satisfyingly good." Some influences come to shake us as to our own part in it—"It can hardly control and sustain my life, for after all, perhaps—alas, most likely—it is not for me, it cannot be for me." Against all this we are to make our stand, in and with our Lord and Master. He is our confidence and our strength. How the Apostle longed to see this victory achieved in the case of all these Philippians, who were the treasure and the fruit of his life and labour! Be decided about all this, be clear about it, cast every other way of it from you. "Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

CHAPTER XVII.

PEACE AND JOY.

PHILIPPIANS 2-7 (R. V.).

DR. LIGHTFOOT has observed that the passages in the Acts of the Apostles which record the Macedonian experiences of Paul have a good deal to say about women (Acts xvi., xvii.). They convey the impression that in Macedonia women had a position and exercised an influence, at least

in religious matters, that was not usual in the Greek world. And he has appealed to the remains of ancient Macedonian inscriptions to support the general idea that exceptional respect was accorded to women in that country. Here, at any rate, we have two women of note in the Church at Philippi. They might, very likely, possess social standing and influence. They had been qualified to render, and in point of fact did render, important help in setting forward the cause of Christ in that city. We cannot doubt therefore that they were warm-hearted Christian women, who had deeply felt the power of the gospel, so that, like many of their sisters in later days, they gladly embarked in the service of it. In those days such service on the part of women implied no small effort of faith; and doubtless it had cost them something in the way of cross-bearing. But now, disagreements and estrangement had fallen out between them. Most likely the keen practical energies, which made them serviceable Christians, had brought about collision on some points in which their views differed. And then they had not managed the difference well. Self came in, and coloured and deepened it. Now, one may think, they were in danger of being always ready to differ, and to differ with mutual distrust and dislike.

People cannot always think alike, not even Christians who share the same service. But there is a Christian way of behaving about these inevitable divergences. And, in particular, in such cases we might be expected to show a superiority, in Christ our Lord, to minor differences, not allowing them to trouble the great agreement and the dear affection in which Christ has bound us. Whatever is to be said about a difference, as to its merits, the main thing that has to be said about it often is, "You should not have let it come between you. You should both of you have been big enough and strong enough in Christ, to know how to drop it and forget it. In making so much of it, in allowing it to make so much of itself, you have been children, and naughty children."

What this difference was we do not know; and it is of no consequence. Paul does not address himself to it. He holds both parties to be in the wrong now, and, for his purpose, equally in the wrong; and he addresses entreaty to both, in exactly the same terms, to agree in Christ and be done with it: no longer to allow this thing to mar their own edification and hinder the cause of Christ. Yet, while he is sure that this is the right way, he does not conceal from himself how difficult human nature finds it to come happily out of such a complication. So he appeals to some old comrade at Philippi, whom he calls his "genuine yokefellow," to lend a hand. A Christian bystander, a friend of both parties, might help them out of the difficulty. In this connection the apostle's mind goes back to happy days of cordial effort at Philippi, in which these women, and the "yokefellow," and Clement, and others had all been at work, shoulder to shoulder, all rejoicing in the common salvation and the joint service.

In difficulties between Christians, as between other people, wise and loving friendship may perform the most important services. Selfishness shrinks from rendering these; and on the other hand, meddlesomeness, which is a form of egotism combined with coarseness, rushes in only to do harm. Wisdom is needed, mainly the wisdom which consists in loving thoughtfulness. The love which seeketh not her own, and is not easily provoked, is much called for in this ministry of reconciliation.

These good women had little idea, probably, that their names should come down the ages in connection with this disagreement of theirs; and they might have deprecated it if they had thought of it. But let them be remembered with all honour—two saints of God, who loved and laboured for Christ, who bore the cross, and each of whom was so important to the Church, that it was a matter of public interest to have this difficulty removed out of the way of both. As to it, we of later times have not succeeded in keeping Christian activity so free of personal misunderstandings as to be entitled on this account to assume any attitude of superiority. Let us think only with tenderness and affection of those venerable and beloved, those long-remembered mothers in Christ, Euodia and Syntyche.

The commentators have tried to divine something further about this "true yokefellow"; but with no success. As to Clement, some have been willing to identify him with the Clement known to have laboured in the first age at Rome, and who is reported to have been the writer of a well-known Epistle from the Church at Rome to that at Corinth. He, again, has been by some identified with another Clement, also a Roman, a near relation of the Emperor Domitian, whom we have reason to believe to have been a Christian. Both identifications are probably mistaken; and the Clement now before us was no doubt resident at Philippi, and belonged to a somewhat earlier generation than his Roman namesake. The Roman world was full of Clements, and there is nothing surprising in meeting several Christians who bore the name.

With the "yokefellow" and with Clement, the Apostle recalls other "labourers" who belonged to the fellowship of those gospel days at Philippi. We are not to think that they were all gifted as teachers or preachers; but they were zealous Christians who helped as they could to gather and to confirm the Church. Paul will not give their names; but it must not be thought that the names have ceased to be dear and honourable to him. "They shall not be in my letter," he says, "but they are written in even a better place, in the book of life. They are precious, not to me only, but to my Master." Here, again, if any one had asked Paul how he ventured to speak with so much assurance of the condition of persons whose course was not yet ended, he would no doubt have replied, as in chap. i. 7: "It is meet for me to think thus of them, because I have them in my heart: because both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, they all are partakers with me of grace."

These personal references indicate that the main burden of the Apostle's thought in the Epistle has been disposed of, and that it is drawing to a close. Yet he finds it natural to add some closing admonitions. They are brief and pithy; they do not seem to labour with the weight of thought and feeling which pours through the preceding chapter. Yet they are not quite fragmentary. A definite conception of the case to be provided for underlies them, and also a definite conception of the way in which its necessities are to be met.

He had been pouring out his soul on the subject of the true Christian life—the deep sources from which it springs, the great channels in

which it runs, the magnificent conditions of Christ's kingdom under which it becomes possible and is accomplished. But yet, another order of things crosses all this. It is the incessant detail of human life on earth, with its pettiness and superficiality, and yet with its inevitable hold upon us all. How much we are at the mercy of it! How hard to keep quite true to the grand music of the gospel we believe, amid the multifarious patter of the incidents of life, playing on the surface only, but on the sensitive surface of our being. The case of Euodia and Syntyche was but itself an illustration of the commonest kind, of the liability of believing lives to be swayed and marred in this way. For all these little things claim attention; they assume a magnitude that does not belong to them, and they take a place to which they have no right. Can anything be said to help us to some prevailing mood, in which we shall be likely to take the right attitude toward these elements of life, and, at the same time, to keep due touch with the springs of our spiritual welfare?

The Apostle reverts to the significant "good-bye" which was heard at the beginning of the third chapter. "Rejoice," "Be of good cheer," was the usual farewell salute. He had begun to use it in the third chapter, with an emphasis on the native signification of the word. Now he resumes it more emphatically still, for here he finds the keynote which he wants: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; again I will say it, Rejoice."

If joy be possible, it would seem to need no great persuasion to induce men to embrace it. But, as a matter of fact, Christians fail greatly here. In the Old Testament there are abundant exhortations to Israel to rejoice in the Lord: the Lord being Jehovah, without further distinction or limitation; and the ground of rejoicing being His revealed character, especially His mercy and His truth, and the fact that He is Israel's God. Here the Lord is our Lord Jesus, in whom the Father is both known and found. Now, to rejoice in Him is, and should be recognised as being, for believers, the most direct inference from their faith. For if this Lord be what the believer holds Him to be, then there is more in Christ to make him glad, than there can be in anything whatever to make him sorry. This applies even to remembered sin; for where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. If indeed the joy be really in the Lord, it will be found to agree well with humility and penitence, as well as with diligence and patience; for all these things, and whatever should accompany them, come naturally from faith in Christ. But not the less, joy should have its place and its exercise.

If one will think of it, it will be plain that rejoicing in the Lord just denotes this, viz., that the influence of the objects of faith has free play through the soul. It is well that faith should bring our intellective powers under its influence—that we should be brought to a vivid sense of the reality of Christ, and that our minds should work in reference to Him as they do in reference to things which are felt to be real, and which claim to be understood. That is well, even if, as yet, some malign force seems to impede cordial appreciation and personal fellowship. It is well, again, if Christ is felt drawing out personal trust, and with that, genuine affection, so that the heart beats with desire and admiration, even though for the present that can only be under the burden of a perplexed and sorrowful mind. But when the conviction makes way through all the soul, first that Christ is most real, and second that Christ is most good and desirable, and thirdly that Christ is for me, and when the soul surrenders thoroughly to it all, then gladness is the token that faith is playing through the human soul, throughout all its provinces. It is the flag hoisted to signify that Christ is believed and loved indeed. On the other hand, wrong is done to the Lord, and an evil report is brought up upon Him, when those who profess to believe in Him fail to rejoice in Him.

You well may rejoice in the Lord; you ought surely to do it. You ought to give yourselves time to think and feel so as to rejoice; you should be ashamed to fail to rejoice. You do not apprehend aright your position as a believer, you do not take the attitude that befits you, if the Lord believed in, though perhaps He makes you diligent, and patient, and penitent, and thankful, does not also make you heartily glad. Let the elements of this gladness come warm home to your heart and do their work. Then you will realise as, short of this, you never can, how the believer rises above the things that threaten to entangle him, and can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth him.

And, in particular, how influential this is to preserve men from being unduly moved and swayed by the passing things of time! These sway us by joy and grief, by hope and fear; and what an inordinate measure of those affections they do beget in us! but let the great joy of the Lord have its place, and then those lesser claimants will have to content themselves with smaller room. A great grief shuts out lesser griefs. When a woman has lost her son, will she grieve greatly for the loss of her purse? So a great joy keeps down the excess of lesser joys. A man that has just won the heart and hand of the woman he loves will not be greatly concerned about winning or losing at some game. He will be about equally glad either way. So he whose heart thrills with the joy of Christ will feel the pleasure and pain of earthly things; but they will not master him, nor run away with him.

According to the Apostle, a believer in the way of his duty, if he cherishes this joy, may ordinarily have a great deal of it. And, as it were, he urges us: "Now do not be moved away from it. Do not be so foolish. Various things will come, all sorts of things, claiming to preoccupy your mind, so that for the present this joy shall fall into the background. They claim it—and far too often they are allowed to succeed. Do not let them. 'Rejoice in the Lord alway; again I will say, Rejoice.'"

Always: for many believers rejoice in the Lord sometimes; for example, in hours of undisturbed meditation. But when they go out into the stir of life, to meet experiences which neither greatly gratify nor greatly grieve them, then it seems fit that the new passion should have its turn, and the heart insists on this indulgence. So also when some great hope absorbs the mind, or some great anxiety weighs upon it, the soul seems fascinated with the coming good or ill, and hangs upon the prospect as if nothing else for the present could be minded. Now the Apostle does not say that insensibility is the duty of Christians in these circumstances. Indeed it is because these experi-

ences do interest and impress, that they become an effective instrument of Divine training. But Christ is fit to be rejoiced in, right through all vicissitudes; and common experiences, duly dealt with, ought to throw into relief the reasons why He must still be cause of gladness, whatever may be felt about other things. This maintained joy of the Lord—a rejoicing faith, a rejoicing love, a rejoicing obedience—this is the temper in virtue of which all else of life will fall into its due place, and will assume its just proportion. "Though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. iii. 17, 18).

So then, "Let your moderation (or forbearance) be known to all men." The word here used expresses a state of mind opposed to the eagerness that overrates the worth of our personal objects, and to the arrogance that insists on our own will about them. Some would render it "considerateness." It is a temper which dictates a gentle and forbearing way of dealing with men. This is the appropriate evidence that the impetuosity of the heart about earthly things has been assuaged by the unseen presence and the influence of Christ. Christ seen, felt, and rejoiced in, is the secret of this moderation. A great vision of faith, and that not a vision which is dreaded, but a vision which is loved, brings the movement of the soul into a happy order. Now, not only so: not only does the love of Christ, unseen and absent, work in this way; but Christ is coming and is near. The hopes connected with Him are soon to be realised, the gladness of fellowship with Him is soon to be complete. The Lord is at hand. "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Stablish your hearts. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James v. 7).

For believers, as we have already seen, the coming of the Lord is, according to the New Testament, the great hope. Then the joy in the Lord is to be complete and crowned. Those who apprehend that glad day as near are not supposed to be capable of yielding up their hearts to the uncontrolled sway of mere earthly interests.

Here, however, a question arises. Paul speaks of the day as near, and calls on his disciples to live under the influence of that belief. He does not merely say that it may be near, but that it is. Yet we now know that the day was then more than eighteen hundred years away. In the light of this fact one asks what we are to make of the statement before us, and what we are to make of the view of Christian life which the statement implies.

Our Lord expressly withheld from His disciples all definite statement of times and seasons in this connection. Yet the Early Church with one consent expected the Lord to come within comparatively few years (what are commonly called few), and language shaped itself in accordance with that impression. We have here, however, more than a mere mode of phrasing. The nearness of Christ is emphasised as the ground on which Christian experience ought to build. Was not this a mistake?

But one may ask in reply, Was it after all untrue that Christ's coming was near then, or that it is near now? Even if anticipations in our own day which bring it within a generation are to fail again, as they have always done before, shall we think that the Lord is not near?

There is a nearness which pertains to all future events which are at once very great and important, and also are absolutely certain. Being so great, involving interests so great, and being contemplated in their inevitable certainty, such events can loom large upon the eye, and they can make their influence felt in the present, whatever tale of days may interpose before they actually arrive. If, for instance, one were told of a friend, whom he supposed he might meet at any time, "You shall certainly see him six months hence," the reply might be, "Six months! That is a long time to wait." But if he were told with infallible authority, "Six months hence you shall die," would he then say, "It is a long time"? Would he not feel that it was near? Would not an event so momentous as death, so inclusive of all interests and all issues, prove able to stretch, as it were, across six months, and to come into each day, as part of that day's concern? So of the coming of Christ. It is the great event for the individual, the Church, the world. All issues run up to it; all developments are broken off by it; all earthly histories await its decision. To it all earthly movement tends; from it all that lies beyond is dated. It is the great gate of the world to come. Let us think what it means: and suppose that we could be assured that it is still ten thousand years away, shall we say, "How far off it is"? Not if we believe in its certainty, and realise what it means. If we do so our hearts will stir and thrill as we hearken how the surges of the eternal world are beating on the thin barrier of ten thousand years. Come when it may, it comes hasting to us, pressing before it all that lies between, big with the decisions and the fulfilments of Eternity. If we truly believe and rightly estimate it, we shall feel that it is near—even at the door. We shall be aware whenever we look forward that beyond all possible events of earthly history it rises high, catching and holding our gaze, and hurrying toward our individual selves not one whit the less because it aims at others too.

We are apt to ask why the words of warning and encouragement in reference to the future are not connected with the prospect of death, rather than with that of the Lord's return; for death certainly is the topic generally selected for such purposes by moralists and preachers of more recent days. The answer may partly be, that the possibility and likelihood of the Lord's return, even in the lifetime of themselves and their contemporaries, might render it more natural for the Apostles to fix all but exclusively on that. Yet this will not suffice. For nobody could overlook the fact that some believers were dying, and that death before the Lord's return might well be the portion of more. Besides, in particular circumstances, death does come into view in a perfectly easy and natural way, as at chap. i. 23; and the bearing of it on what lies nearer is considered. The true answer is that death is not the great expectation of the believer—not death, but victory over death, consummated and conclusively manifested when the Lord comes. This expectation is certainly associated with the solemn prospect of judgment; but not so as to quench the gladness of the hope for those who love the Lord and have trusted in

Him. This is our expectation—"the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1). Death is a great event; but it is negative, privative, and, after all, provisional. True, it seals us up for the coming of the Lord, and so, in many respects, it may be, for many purposes, practically identified with that coming. The sermons which are preached upon it, commonly from Old Testament texts, are, no doubt, well grounded and edifying. But the New Testament, speaking to believers, all but constantly passes on to the day of the Lord as the true focus of the future; and it will be well for us to conform our thinking and our feeling to this model. No one can estimate, who has not made it matter of personal study, how large and how influential a place this topic takes in New Testament teaching.

Meanwhile, no doubt, the vicissitudes and the possibilities of earthly life press upon us. Now the Apostle provides a special additional relief for that. We are not merely prepossessed with a joy that should fortify us against undue disturbance from this source, but we have access in all things to the mind and heart of our Father. We can bring our thoughts and wishes about them all into contact with the deep, true thoughts and with the fatherly love of God. The incidents and the possibilities of life exercise us: they tend to become anxieties, keen and wearing; and anxieties are the materials of disturbance and temptation. "Be anxious about nothing; but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thankfulness, let your requests be made known unto God."

This is the practical way of getting continually to those springs of joy which comfort and establish the heart. The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.

It is promised that when we pray in faith God hears us, and that he that asketh receiveth. However, this does not mean that whatever appears to us desirable shall certainly be brought to pass in answer to prayer. That would be to sacrifice our own welfare, and also the order of God's world, to our shortsightedness and vanity. There is great reason to believe indeed that those who live by prayer find many a desire granted, and many a burden lifted, in token of God's loving interest in them, and the heed He gives to their prayers. But we are not to start from a general principle that we are to get all our own way by praying. Two things we may fix upon: First, the absolute promises of the gospel, the blessings which pertain to eternal life, are given to us through prayer. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Secondly, concerning all other things we have access to God in prayer, as to One who grudges us no good thing; we are to express our anxieties and our desires, and to receive the assurance that they are lovingly considered by One who knows our frame and understands our troubles. Often the answer comes, even in small things. But, generally, we may in this point have an absolute assurance that we shall either have what we ask, or else something which God sees to be better for us than that.

It is this second article of the doctrine of prayer that is chiefly in view here. The prayer of faith must be a prayer of thanksgiving, because faith knows how much it owes to God. "Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins." At the same time it has supplications and requests, over and above the great petition for life eternal. For our daily human experience is God's providence to us. It exercises our thoughts and feelings, and sets a-going contemplations and desires, which may be short-sighted and erring, but, so far, they are the best that we can make of it; or, if not the best, they have the more need to be corrected. Here, then, we are encouraged to pour out our hearts to God. We are to do it with submission: that is one of the best parts of the privilege, for our Father knows best. At the same time, we are to do it with supplication; we not only may, but we should. Our desires should all be made known in this quarter; nowhere will they have a kindlier hearing. So, last of all, we come, not only touching eternal life, but touching each day's concerns, into a blessed agreement with God our Father through Christ. It is agreed that He takes loving charge of our anxieties and desires, as One who would withhold no good from us; and it is agreed that we put unreserved confidence in Him,—in which confidence we say, "Abba, Father; not our will, but Thine be done."

The confidence we have that all this is most real and solid, and not merely a deceptive piece of religious acting, comes to us in the channel of the faith and experience which have been fulfilled in God's children from the first; but it is most emphatically confirmed and made sure to us by Christ. He has taught us to pray. His is the religion in which men pray. Under His influence we come away from ceremonial utterances, and also from the despairing experiments of supplication with which, in other religions, men assail the heavens; and hand in hand with that loving Mediator, we pray. Prayer, when it is real, when it is "in the Holy Spirit," is a wonderfully simple and a wonderfully great thing.

So it comes to pass that the peace of God which passeth all understanding is found. For this great and deep agreement with God in Christ, about all things great and small, is the very entrance into the peace of God Himself, and is the participation of it. In this, as in other aspects, things are daily realised in the history of believers, that pass all understanding, because God in Christ is in the matter. The infinite and eternal life is wedding itself to us and our affairs. It may be understood, finally, that this peace, arising to Christians at the throne of grace, guards their minds and hearts. It guards them against being overcharged, outworn, surprised; it guards them against being carried captive by earthly care. Yet this peace does not disable them for earthly business. Rather, because their main interests are so secure, it gives them calmness and clearness; it supplies them a moral vantage ground from which to dispose of all earthly affairs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE THINGS TO FIX UPON.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 8, 9 (R. V.).

THE topics last considered bring us naturally to the remarkable exhortation of vv. 8 and 9. This proceeds on the same view of the moral and spiritual situation, and completes what the Apostle has to say in reference to it.

If men are to live as citizens of a heavenly commonwealth, on great principles and to great

ends, it is, as we have seen, a very practical question, What to do about the inevitable play and onset of this changing earthly life, which assails us with motives, and detains us upon interests, and inspires us with influences, of its own. These cannot be abjured: they are not easy to harmonise with the indications of that loftier and purer world; they are prone to usurp the whole heart, or at least a very undue share of it. This is the practical problem of every honest Christian. In reference to the solving of it the Apostle had suggested the place given to Christian joy; he had suggested also the place and power of prayer. These were indications as to the spirit and the method in which a believer might bring into play the resources of the Kingdom of Christ to control and subjugate those insubordinate forces. But might not all this seem to be too negative? Does it not speak too much of holding off and holding in? After all, do not all human experiences constitute the scene in which we are both formed and tried? What can we make of life unless we are interested in it? How otherwise can we even be religious in it? What is life if it is not a scene of inquiry and of search set in motion by the objects around us, a scene in which we like and dislike, hope and fear, desire and think? The answer is, Yes, we are to be keenly interested in the experiences of life, and in the possibilities it opens. Life is our way of existing; let existence be animated and intense. But while the aspects of it that are merely transient are to have their place, and may attract a lively interest, there are other aspects, other interests, other possibilities. All the transient interests have an outgate towards such as are eternal. Life is the experience of beings that have high capacities, and can rise to noble destinies. It is the experience of societies of such beings, who mould one another, exchanging influences continually. The changing experience of human life, when seen in the true light, is found to add to all its lower interests a play of interests that are more interesting as well as more worthy. It is iridescent with lights which it catches from the infinite and the eternal. Every step of it, every turn of it, asks questions, offers opportunities, calls for decisions, holds out treasures, which it is the business of a lifetime to recognise and to secure. It has gains, it has victories, it has accomplishments, it has glories, which need not lead us to deny its lower interests, but which we may reasonably feel to be far the higher. Endless shades, and forms, and types of goodness, of being good, getting good, doing good, gleam reflected to us from the changing experience. Goodness is not one monotonous category embodied in some solemn phrase, and exhausted when that is learned. There is no end to the rich variety in which it is offered, and in which it is to be caught, understood, appropriated. And life, through all the manifoldness of its legitimate interests, and its illegitimate possibilities, is the scene in which all this passes before us, and asks to be made ours. The Apostle says to us, Think on these things. Take account, that is, of what they are, and what their worth is. Lay forth on these the care and pains which spent themselves before on mere pain and pleasure, loss and gain. Reckon what these are, search out their nature, prove their capabilities, appropriate and enjoy them. Think on these things. So earthly life, through all its busy processes, shall acquire a nobler interest; and it shall begin, at the same time, to minister with unexpected readiness to your true welfare. Enter then, or press on, in this wide field. Be this your passion and pursuit; that which unifies your life, and draws all its resources towards one result.

We may be helped to fix more firmly the point of view from which this striking catalogue of good things is drawn up, if we observe that the Apostle collects all these excellences under the notion of "a virtue and a praise." Let us consider how men are trained to progressive conceptions of virtue and praise. For virtue and praise, both name and notion, have had a large place in men's minds and a great influence on their actions. How has this influence been sustained and made to grow?

Men are conscious of obligations; and they are aware, more dimly or more clearly, that the standard of those obligations must exist somehow above themselves. It is a standard not of their own creation, but such as claims them by an antecedent right. Yet if each individual could hold himself apart, forming his own conceptions of fit and right for himself without regard to others, the standard would tend downwards rapidly, because moral judgment would be warped by each man's selfishness and passion, excusing evil in his own case and putting it for good. Even as it is, this has taken place only too widely. But yet the tendency is powerfully counteracted by the fact that men do not exist, nor form their notions, in that separate way. A principle within them prompts them to seek one another's approbation, and to value one another's good opinion. Indeed the consciousness that what is law for me is law for others, and that they are judging as well as I, is one of the forms in which we realise that duty descends upon us all, from some august and holy source.

This principle of regarding the judgment and seeking the approbation of others, has had an enormous effect on men and on society. For though men are skilful enough, in their own case, in averting or silencing the admonition of the monitor within, they have little reluctance to make full use of their sense of right in scrutinising one another. They judge, in their thoughts about each other, with far more clearness, shrewdness, and certainty than they do about themselves. Men do in this way make requirements of one another, which each of them might be slow to make from himself. This is a great operative force in all cases; and in those cases in which, in any society, vivid convictions about truth and duty have taken possession of some minds, the principle we are speaking of propagates an influence through the whole mass, with effects that are very striking.

This mutual criticism of men "accusing or else excusing one another," has had a great effect in sustaining what we call common morals. But especially let it be observed that this criticism, and the consciousness of it, stimulating the higher class of minds, sustain and develop the finer perceptions of morality. There are minds that eminently strive for distinction in things that are counted for a virtue and a praise. And through them is developed in the general mind the approving perception of more delicate shades of worthy conduct, which in a coarser age were unperceived or unheeded. These come up in men's mutual judgments; they are scrutinised; they interest the mind and take hold of it. So,

whether in the case of those who begin to pay respect to such forms of good because they perceive that others approve of them, or in the case of those who, when those forms of good are thus presented, perceive a worth in them and take a pride in living up to them for their own sake,—in both cases, the creating and sustaining of the higher standard depends on the principle we have now before us.

Thus there arises, for example, the code of honour, the fine perception of what is socially right, becoming, and graceful. Men, no doubt, are always to be found who cultivate the nicest sense of this, not from a mere desire that others should know it, but because they see it to be desirable in itself, and because they shun the sense of inward disgrace that follows when they fall below their own standard. Yet it is the process of mutual criticism which develops the consciousness, and it is this which, on the whole, sustains it.

Thus we find in the world not merely a sense of duty, but something that has spurred men on to things counted for a virtue and a praise. Outside of all Christian influences, wonderful examples are found of self-sacrificing devotion to the noble and the true. Men have eagerly pursued the nicest discriminations of duty and honour, that they might be, and might show themselves to be, accomplished, finished, not merely in some things, but in whatever things were counted to be the proper tokens of a noble mind.

Well now, the Apostle is not shutting out from his plan of mental life the attainments made in this way in the true or the good, even apart from Christian teaching. Far less is he excluding the human social method, in which mind whets mind, and one stirs another to discern and appropriate what is for a virtue and for a praise. He supposes this mode of influence to go on in Christianity more successfully than ever. And he is not at all excluding the natural life of men; for that is the scene, and that yields the materials, for the whole process. But he does suppose that now all old attainment shall be set in a new light, and acquire a new life and grace, and that new attainment shall come wonderfully into view by reason of the new element which for us has entered into the situation. And what is this element? Is it that we recognise around us a society of Christians with whom we share a higher standard, and with whom we can give and take the contagion of a nobler conception of life? Yes, no doubt; but far before that, the great new element in the situation is the Lord—in whom we trust and rejoice.

It is always human duty to have regard to the will of God, however it may reach us. But when you are called to know the Lord and to rejoice in Him, when He vouchsafes Himself to be yours, when you begin to enjoy His peace, and to walk with Him in love, and to have it for your hope to be with Him for ever, then you are placed in a new relation to Him. And it is such a near and dear relation on both sides that much may be expected from you in it. If this be so, you are now dealing with Him always; not merely in direct acts of worship, but in your thoughts, your feelings, your words, your business, your common intercourse with men, and all your daily life, you walk with Him. You cannot repudiate having so much to do with Him, unless you will repudiate your Christianity. Then, if so, something new is expected. A new test of the becoming, of that which is for a virtue and for a praise, has come into operation, and has become intelligible to you; and it is a test of new delicacy and new force. It is expected we should recognise it. Not now the mutual judgments merely of erring men, but His mind and His will, what He delights in and approves,—this begins to solicit us and press upon us, for we walk with Christ. That this "walk" of ours may escape being mean, coarse, offensive, we have great lessons to learn. We have to learn what, in His judgment, as seen by His eye, as tried by the sensibilities of His heart, are the things that are true and venerable and just, what with Him counts for a virtue and a praise.

And here, indeed, is our crown. The crown of honour which man cast away when sin gained him, was the approbation of the Lord. But now we are set on afresh to seek it, testing our ways by the perception of that which He approves; or, on the other hand, what He counts to be mean and degrading, fit to be recoiled from and rejected. It is our calling (whatever our attainment may be) to be more sensitive to the nicest touches of truth and honour towards our Lord than ever we were towards men. And this does not apply only to some narrow field of life. It goes through all relations, up to God and Christ, and out through all duties and ties. The great calling reaches wide and far; it is very high and noble: we cannot pretend to disclaim it, unless we disclaim the Lord. This way lies God's crown. Win it; wear it; let no man take thy crown.

When our Lord's mind and heart are said to be the test, this does not exclude our profiting by our fellows, accepting the admonition contained in human judgments, and especially in those of Christian people. Great good comes to us in such channels. Only now the judgment of our fellows is to refer itself always to a further standard; and a new Presence brings new tenderness and grace, new depth and significance, to every suggestion of right feeling and worthy life. This is the light and this the influence under which we are to learn what shall be counted for a virtue and for a praise. And we must bend our mind to think upon it, if we are to learn our lesson.

We must think upon it. For, on the one hand, it is not "some things," but "whatsoever things." What should we say of a man who proposed in his dealings with others to do "some things" that are honourable, but not all things, not "whatsoever things"? And, on the other hand, we may be further off from even a small measure of attainment in this field than we are disposed to think. Christians who, as to all social excellence, as that is commonly understood between man and man, are unexceptionable, may be sadly blind to the requirements of an honourable walk with God; may be sadly wanting even in the conception of what is due in all love and honour to Christ, and to men for His sake. Men may be the soul of honour and delicacy in their ways, judged from the world's point of view; yet not far from a savage coarseness in the manner of their life, judged by Christ's standard. We would not needlessly wound another's feelings; but with what indifference have we "grieved the Spirit." We would shrink from saying anything to our fellows that is deceitful and hypocritical: can we say as much

for our prayers? In our common life we maintain truth in the ordinary sense between men; but do we loyally express and act out the truth by which God's children live in our speech and action among men? Is there that fine congruity of our bearing to the truth we live by, which becomes a child of God?

We are greatly hindered here by the assumption we make, that when we have mastered the form of knowledge concerning the will of God, we then know all about our calling. It is a great delusion. We must not only sit down at the feet of Christ to learn from Him; but also, with a watchful eye on the phases of life, catching the lessons which things and men afford, we must be trained to know and sharpened to loving discernment as to our Master's mind, and so, as to what is honourable and right-minded, refined and noble, in a walk with God. We do not easily emerge from the meanness of our spirits; we do not easily shake off that insensibility to what is spiritually fair and fit, on which the angels look down with pity and wonder.

Therefore, says the Apostle, think on these things, the things which in the Lord's kingdom and under the Lord's eye are well-pleasing, and count for a virtue and a praise; think on those things which are related to His esteem, and to the esteem of persons who learn of Him, as various excellences are to the common judgment of the world. Do so, for here you are close to the genuinely and supremely true and good; and this, as was said before, is your crown.

The Apostle is thinking of a perception of duty and privilege attained not merely by studying a catalogue of virtues, but by a far finer and more living process—by life that is instinct with observant watchfulness, that is frank in self-criticism, that is recipient of the light flashing from the experience and the censure of others: all this under constant regard to the Lord, and leading us into fuller sympathy with Him.

That this is so appears from the Apostle's way of arranging the particulars of his exhortation. He does not merely desire his disciples to discern what is right in general: but he would have them grow into a vital knowledge, so as to feel the right in those matters where the shading becomes delicate; where it may be difficult to distinguish argumentatively an absolute right and wrong, but where a mind purged and trained in the Master's school can well discern a difference. "Whatsoever things are true"—which includes not only veracity and fidelity, but also whatever in conduct and temper God's truth requires as agreeable to itself; and then "Whatsoever things are venerable"—the character that emerges when all that is congruous to truth, in its finest filaments and ramifications, has been developed, and has assumed its own place. "Whatsoever things are just"—rightfully due on all hands to God and to man; and then "Whatsoever things are pure"—the character that recoils from all that sullies, from the smallest shade or infecton of iniquity. "Whatsoever things are lovely"—the dear or amiable, whatever draws out love, cherishes it, befits it; and then "Whatsoever things are of good report"—actions that can hardly be more discriminatingly classified than by saying that the heart is pleased to hear of them; it confesses that they are of a good name, of a welcome sound; they are like some delicate sound or odour on which you dwell with delight, but cannot definitely describe it. In a word, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Study them, look out for them, learn to recognise them, to know their worth, to pursue them lovingly through all their manifestations.

Thus, let it be said once more, the Apostle is not open to the objection that he calls us to a mere retreat from energetic life. To such a call men have always replied that they find in themselves capacities wonderfully adapted to grapple with life, and to do so with interest and with energy. Virtually the Apostle says, Yes, true; and life has aspects to interest the mind, and results to engage the will, which are its noble and its imperative possibilities: for the followers of Christ these become dominant; they afford noble scope for all human faculty; and all forms of life are dignified as they become subservient to these supreme interests and aims. Now, lay forth the care and pains that fastened before on mere joy and sorrow, hope and fear, on a certain thinking and making account of the true, the venerable, the just, the pure, the lovely, that which is of good report. Reckon what they are; search out their nature; make them your serious object. "O man of God, flee those things; but follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

But progress is not to be made in this line by mere subtle refining and contemplation. If there was any danger that the Apostle's call to "think" might be interpreted that way, presently it is corrected. The thinking is to be practical thinking, bending itself to action. "What things ye have received and learned"—those practical points in which the Apostle always taught his Gentile converts to put to proof the grace of Christ; and "What ye have heard and seen in me"—in a man poor, tried, persecuted, a man whose life was rough and real, who knew weakness and sorrow, who bore heavy burdens, that were not proudly paraded, but which brought him lowly and weary to Christ's feet,—these things do. That is the road to the attainments on which I bid you think.

"And the God of peace shall be with you." In those ways (for they are His own ways) God walks with men; and peace with God, spreading out into peace with men, becomes the atmosphere in which such wayfarers move.

CHAPTER XIX.

GIFTS AND SACRIFICES.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 10-23 (R. V.).

THE Apostle had urged joy in the Lord, and a moderation visible to all men. If any one supposes that in doing so he recommended a stoical temper, insensible to the impressions of passing things, the passage which now comes before us will correct that error. It shows us how the Apostle could "rejoice in the Lord," and yet reap great satisfaction from providential incidents. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your thought for me," or, as in the older version, "that your care for me has flourished again."

Worldly eagerness, and worldly care and anxiety about persons and things, are rebuked by the spirit of rejoicing in the Lord. But the persons and the things about us all have a con-

nection with the Lord, if we have eyes to see it, and hearts to mark it; and that is the chief thing about them. They are in the Lord's world, the Lord calls us to have to do with them: as for the persons, they are, some of them, the Lord's servants, and all of them the Lord calls us to love and to benefit; as for the things, the Lord appoints our lot among them, and they are full of a meaning which He puts into them. So regard to the Lord and a spirit of rejoicing in Him may pervade our earthly life. The worldly eagerness and worldly care must be controlled. There is no avoiding that conflict. But now—shall we in faith give ourselves to learn the true rejoicing in the Lord? If not, our Christianity must be at best low and comfortless. But if we do, we shall be rewarded by a growing liberty. The more that joy possesses us, the more will it give occasion to the finest and freest play of feeling in reference to passing things; and some of these which, on other accounts, might seem insignificant, will begin to yield us an abounding consolation.

These Philippians, who had given early proof of attachment to the gospel, had lately, for some reason or other, been unable, "lacked opportunity," to minister to the wants of Paul. Now the winter, whatever it was, that hindered the expression of their good will was gone, and their care of Paul flourished again. Did the Apostle think it needful to freeze up the feelings of satisfaction which this incident awakened? No: but in his case those feelings, having spiritual elevation, became so much the more deep and glad. He rejoiced greatly in this; and still, he was rejoicing in the Lord. Let us mark how this comes out both when we consider what was not the spring of his gladness, and what it was.

"Not that I speak in respect of want." It was not the change from want to comparative plenty that explained the nature of his feelings. Yet he evidently implies that he had been in want, strange as that may seem in a city where there was a Christian congregation. But though the removal of that pressure would no doubt be thankfully taken, yet for a man whose gladness was in the Lord no mere change of that kind would lead to "rejoicing greatly." "I speak not in respect of want: I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret (have been initiated) both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me."

"Therewith to be content." Paul had learned to be so minded that, in trying circumstances, he did not anxiously cast about for help, but was sufficed: his desires were brought down to the facts of his condition. In that state he counted himself to have enough. He knew how to suit himself to abasement, that common experience of the indigent and friendless; and he knew how to suit himself to abundance, when that was sent: each as a familiar state in which he made himself at home—not overgrieved or overjoyed, not greatly elevated or greatly depressed. "I have been instructed," or initiated (the word used by the heathen of introduction to the mysteries), "not only into the experience of those conditions, but into the way of taking kindly with them both." Mark how his words follow one another: "I have learned"—been put through a course of teaching and have had a teacher; "I know"—it has become familiar to me, I understand it; "I am initiated"—if there is a secret in it, something hidden from the natural man, I have been led into that, out and in, through and through.

If we would know by what discipline the Lord trained Paul to this mind, we may listen to what Paul himself says of it (1 Cor. iv. 9-13): "I think God hath set forth us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world. . . . Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and we toil, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, unto this day" (see also 2 Cor. vi. 4, xi. 23). If, again, we would know the manner of his training in such experiences, take 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9: "Concerning this thing I besought thrice that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." Also how his faith wrought and gathered strength in all these, we may see from Rom. viii. 24-28: "We are saved by hope. . . . If we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Also the Spirit helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us. . . . And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." So "being strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, to all patience and long suffering with joyfulness" (Col. i. 11), he was able to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This was the course, and this the fruit, of Paul's biography. But each Christian has his own life, the tenor and the upshot of which should not be wholly estranged from Paul's.

Now what it was that did move him so to rejoice is explained when he speaks of the Philippians "holding fellowship with his affliction"; and, again, when he says, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account." He saw in their succour the blessed unity of Christ's living Church, the members having mutual interest, so that if one suffers all suffer. The Philippians claimed a right to take part as fellow-members in the Apostle's state and wants, and to communicate with his affliction. And this was only a continuation of their former practice in the beginning of the gospel. This, as a fruit of Christ's work and of the presence of His Spirit, refreshed the Apostle. It was a manifestation in the sphere of temporal things of the working of a high principle, communion with the common Lord. And it betokened the progress of the work of grace, in that the Philippians were not weary in well-doing. So it was fruit that abounded to their account.

It may be noticed that the directness and frankness of the Apostle's speech to the Philippians on these matters convey a testimony to the generous Christian feeling which prevailed among them. He speaks as one who feared no misconstruction. He does not fear that they will either mistake his meaning or do wrong to his motives; as he, on the other side, puts no other than a loving construction upon their

action. He could not so trust all the Churches. In some there was so little of large Christian sympathy that a complaining tone in such matters was forced on him. But in the case of the Philippians he has no difficulty in interpreting their gift simply as embodying their earnest claim to be counted "partakers of the benefit," and therefore entitled to bear the burdens and alleviate the sufferings of Paul. Gladly he admits and welcomes this claim. It is worth observing that the way of giving vent to Christian feeling here exemplified was apparent at Philippi from the very first. Not only did it appear when Paul departed from Macedonia (ver. 15); but, before that, the earliest convert, Lydia, struck the keynote,—"If ye judge me faithful in the Lord, come into my house" (Acts xvi. 15). Both in individuals and in Churches, the style of feeling and action embraced at the outset of Christianity, under the first impressions, often continues to prevail long after.

Now, in virtue of this liberality, Paul had all and abounded. He had desired to see the old spirit flourish again, and he had his wish. "I have all: I feel greatly enriched since I received the things sent by Epaphroditus." What gladdened him was not the outward comfort which these gifts supplied, but much more, the spiritual meaning they carried in their bosom. Let us see how he reads that meaning.

This gift comes to him. As it comes, what is it? From its destination and its motives it takes on a blessed character. It is "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God." This was what came to the Apostle: something that was in a peculiar manner God's own, something which He regarded, set value on, and counted precious. Further, it turned out to be something in connection with which the assurance ought to go forth, "My God shall fulfil every need of yours." They had ministered to Paul's need, in faith, love, thankfulness, and loyal care of Christ's servant. Christ counted it done to Him: as such He would surely repay it, supplying their need with that considerate liberality which it becomes Him to exhibit. Observe, then, the position in which the Apostle finds himself. He is himself the object of Christian kindness; affections wrought in the Philippians by the Holy Ghost are clinging to him and caring for him. He is also one so linked with God's great cause that offerings sent to him, in the spirit described, become an "odour of a sweet smell, an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord." Also this supply of his need is so directly a service done to Christ, that when it is done, God, as it were, stands forth directly on His servant's behalf: He will repay it, supplying the need of those who supplied His servant. Poor though Paul may be, and sometimes sad, yet see how the resources of God must be pledged to requite the kindness done to him. All this made him very glad. His heart warmed under it. What a blessed, happy, secure, and, looking forward, what a hopeful state was his! This came home to him all at once with the Philippians' gift. No wonder that he says, "I have all and abound."

If any one chooses to say that all this was true about the Apostle, and he might have known it, apart from the gift, and even if it had never come, that may be a kind of truth, but it signifies exactly nothing to the purpose. It is one thing to have a doctrine which one knows: it is another thing to have the Holy Spirit setting it home with a warmth and glory that fills the man with joy. The spirit of God may do this without means, but often He uses means, and, indeed, what we esteem little means; by little things carrying home great impressions, as out of the mouths of babes and sucklings He perfects praise. When a child of God is cast down, no one can tell out of how small a thing the Spirit of God may cause to arise a peace that passeth all understanding.

Christianity confers great weight and dignity on little things. This gift, not in itself very great, passing between Christians at Philippi and an Apostle imprisoned at Rome, belongs after all to an unearthly sphere. Paul sees its connection with all spiritual things, and with the heavenly places where Christ is. And it comes to him carrying a rich meaning, preaching everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

Mark, again, the illustration of the truth that the members have need of one another, and are compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part. The strong may benefit by the weak, as well as the weak by the strong. This Apostle, who could do all things through Christ who strengthens him, might be very far more advanced as a Christian than any one in Philippi. Possibly there was nothing any of them could say, no advice they could tender to him in words, that would have been of material benefit to the Apostle. But that which, following the impulse of their faith and love, they did, was of material benefit. It filled his heart with a joyful sense of the relation in which he stood to them, to Christ, to God. It welled up for him like a waterspring in a dry land. No one can tell how it may have conduced to enable him to go forward with more liberty and power, testifying in Rome the gospel of God.

Nor must we omit the comfort to all who serve God in their generation arising from the view which the Apostle is here led to take. There may be trials from without and trials from within. Still God careth for His servant. God will provide for him out of that which is peculiarly His own. God so identifies him with Himself, that He must needs requite all who befriend him out of His own riches in glory.

So far for the bearing of the case on Paul. We have still to look a little into the view given of this Philippian gift on its own account. It is emphatically called a sweet savour, an offering acceptable and well-pleasing to God. We have seen already (chap. ii. 17) that believers are called upon to offer themselves as a sacrifice; and now we see also that their obedience, or that which they do for Christ's sake, is reckoned as an offering to God. So it is said (Heb. xiii. 16) "to do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." It need hardly be said they are not sacrifices to atone for sin. But they are offerings accepted by God, at His altar, from His children's hands. They suitably express both the gratitude of believers to God, and the sincerity of their Christianity in general. God grants us this way of expressing the earnestness of our regard to Him: and He expects that we shall gladly avail ourselves of it; our obedience is to assume the character of a glad and willing offering. The expressions used by the Apostle here assure us

that there is a Divine complacency in the manifestation of this spirit on the part of God's children. The heart of Him who has revealed Himself in Christ, of Him who rested and was refreshed on the seventh day over His good and fair works, counts for a sweet savour, acceptable and well-pleasing, the works of faith and love willingly done for His name's sake.

In this connection it is fit we should remember that the view we take of money, and the use we make of it, are referred to with extraordinary frequency in the New Testament, as a decisive test of Christian sincerity. This feature of Bible teaching is very faintly realised by many.

The other point noteworthy in relation to this Philippian gift is the assurance that it shall be recompensed. God will not be unfaithful to reward their work and labour of love, in that they have ministered to His servant.

We are not to shrink from the doctrine of reward because it has been perverted. It is true the good works of a Christian cannot be the foundation of his title to life eternal. They proceed from the grace of God; they are imperfect and mixed at their best. Yet they are precious fruits of Christ's death, and of God's grace, arising through the faith and love of souls renewed and liberated. When a penitent and believing man is found devoting to God what he is and has, doing so freely and lovingly, that is a blessed thing. God sets value on it. It is accepted as fruit which the man brings, as the offering which he yields. The heart of Christ rejoices over it. Now it is fit that the value set on this fruit should be shown, and the way God takes to show it is to reward the service. Such a man "shall in no wise lose his reward." God orders the administration of His mercy so that it really comes in a way of recompense for works of faith and labours of love.

This may well convince us that the kindness of our Father is measureless. He omits nothing that can win His children's love, and bind them to Himself. Might not those servants who have gone furthest and done most, feel it almost a bitter thing to hear reward spoken of? For if their service could be far more worthy, it could not amount to an adequate expression of gratitude for all their Father has done for them. Yet He will certainly reward. Cups of cold water given to disciples shall have remembrance made of them, by Him who reckons all those gifts to be bestowed upon Himself. Every way God overwhelms His children with His goodness. There is no dealing with this God, otherwise than by confessing that every way we are debtors. It is vain to think of paying the debt, or relieving oneself of any of the weight of obligation. Only we may with all our hearts give glory to Him to whom we owe all.

Accordingly the Apostle closes in a doxology: "Now unto our God and Father be glory for ever."

Among the salutations with which the Epistle winds up, every one must be struck with that which goes in the name of "those of Cæsar's household." Bishop Lightfoot has annexed to his Commentary an essay on this topic, which collects, with his usual skill, the available information. It was remarked in connection with chap. i. 12, that Cæsar's household was an immense establishment, comprehending thousands of persons, employed in all sorts of functions, and composed chiefly, either of slaves, or of those who had emerged from slavery into the condition of freedmen. Indications have been gathered from ancient mortuary inscriptions tending to show that a notable proportion of Christians, whose names are preserved in this way, had probably been connected with the household. At the end of the first century, a whole branch of the Flavian imperial family became Christian; and it is possible, as indicated in an earlier page, that they may have done so under the influence of Christian servants. This, however, fell later. The Apostle wrote in Nero's days. It is certain that at this time singularly profligate persons exercised great sway in the household. It is also certain that powerful Jewish influences had got a footing; and these would in all likelihood act against the gospel. Yet there were also Christian brethren. We may believe that Paul's own work had operated notably to produce this result (chap. i. 12). At all events, there they were. Amid all that was vile and unscrupulous, the word of God had its course; men were converted and were sanctified by the washing of water by the word. Then, as now, the Lord gathered His elect from unlikely quarters: how secure soever the strong man's goods seemed to be, his defences went down before the might of a stronger than he. Probably the Christians in the household belonged chiefly or exclusively to the lower grades of the service, and might be partly protected by their obscurity. Yet surely entanglements and perplexities, fears and sorrows, must often have been the portion of the saints of Nero's household. Out of all these the Lord delivered them. This glimpse lets us see the process going on which by-and-by made so strange a revolution in the heathen world. It reminds us also for what peculiarities of trial God's grace has been found sufficient.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." This is the parting benediction; certainly an appropriate one, for the whole Epistle breathes the same atmosphere. The Epistle would not fail of its effect, if their spirit retained the consciousness of the grace of Christ; if throughout their life they owned its sway, and felt its attraction, its charm, its power to elevate and purify and comfort.

In following the course of thought and feeling which this letter embodies, we have seen the Apostle touch various topics. They rise into view as pastoral care, or friendly feeling, as outward circumstances suggest them. The demands of Christian friendship, the responsibilities of the Christian ministry, the trials of Christian endurance; what is due from an apostle, or from a Church member; how life and death are to be confronted; what is to be done about dangers and faults; how pride and self-will are to be judged and remedied; how the narrow heart is to be rebuked and enlarged; how the life of a disciple is to become luminous and edifying,—in reference to all, and all alike, he speaks from the same central position, and with the same fulness of resource. In Christ revealed, in Christ received and known, he finds the light and the strength and the salve which every case requires. Each new demand unlocks new resources, new conceptions of goodness and of victory.

So, in one great passage, in the third chapter, catching fire, as it were, from the scorn with

which a religion of externals fills him, he breaks forth into a magnificent proclamation of the true Christianity. He celebrates its reality and intensity as life in Christ—Christ known, found, gained—Christ in the righteousness of faith and in the power of resurrection. He depicts vividly the aspiration and endeavour of that life as it continually presses onward from faith to experience and achievement, as it verifies relations to a world unseen, and looks and hastes towards a world to come. Then the wave of thought and feeling subsides; but its force is felt in the last wavelets of loving counsel that ripple to the shore.

One feels that for Paul, who was rich in doctrine, doctrine is after all but the measure of mighty forces which are alive in his own experience. No doctrine, not one, is for the intellect alone: all go out into heart and conscience and life. More than this: he lets us see that, for Christians, Christ Himself is the great abiding means of grace. He is not only the pledge and guarantee that holiness shall be reached: He is Himself our way of reaching it. He is so for the Christian societies, as well as for the individual Christian soul.

One cannot but wonder sometimes in reading Paul's Epistles what manner of congregations they were to whom such remarkable letters were sent. Did they understand the deeper and loftier passages? Were Paul and they on common ground? But the answer may be, that whatever they failed to attain, they at least apprehended a new world created for them by the interposition of Christ—new horizons, new possibilities, new hopes and fears, new motives, new consolations, new friendships, and a new destiny. The grace of Christ has made all new—in which process they themselves were new. The "spirit" had become like a lyre new-strung to render new harmonies. And the great thoughts of the Apostle, if not always grasped or followed, yet made every string vibrate—so much on his part and so much on theirs being sensitive to the grace of our Lord Jesus.

Ere long they all passed away: Paul beheaded at Rome, as the story goes; the Philippian converts dying out; and the world changing in manners, thought, and speech, in all directions. But the message entrusted to Paul lives still, and awakens the same response in the hearts of Christians to-day as it did among the Philippians when first read among them. It still assures us that the highest thing in life has been found,—that it meets us in Him who came among us meek, and having salvation.

THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON

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THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL TO THE COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D. D.

CHAPTER I.

THE WRITER AND THE READERS.

COLOSSIANS i. 1, 2 (R. V.).

WE may say that each of Paul's greater epistles has in it one salient thought. In that to the Romans, it is justification by faith; in Ephesians, it is the mystical union of Christ and His Church; in Philippians, it is the joy of Christian progress; in this epistle, it is the dignity and sole sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the Mediator and Head of all creation and of the Church.

Such a thought is emphatically a lesson for the day.

The Christ whom the world needs to have proclaimed in every deaf ear and lifted up before blind and reluctant eyes, is not merely the perfect man, nor only the meek sufferer, but the Source of creation and its Lord, Who from the beginning has been the life of all that has lived, and before the beginning was in the bosom of the Father. The shallow and starved religion which contents itself with mere humanitarian conceptions of Jesus of Nazareth needs to be deepened and filled out by these lofty truths before it can acquire solidity and steadfastness sufficient to be the unmoved foundation of sinful and mortal lives. The evangelistic teaching which concentrates exclusive attention on the cross as "the work of Christ," needs to be led to the contemplation of them, in order to understand the cross, and to have its mystery as well as its meaning declared. This letter itself dwells upon two applications of its principles to two classes of error which, in somewhat changed forms, exist now as then —the error of the ceremonialist, to whom religion was mainly a matter of ritual, and the error of the speculative thinker, to whom the universe was filled with forces which left no room for the working of a personal Will. The vision of the living Christ Who fills all things, is held up before each of these two, as the antidote to his poison; and that same vision must be made clear to-day to the modern representatives of these ancient errors. If we are able to grasp with heart and mind the principles of this epistle for ourselves, we shall stand at the centre of things, seeing order where from any other position confusion only is apparent, and being at the point of rest instead of being hurried along by the wild whirl of conflicting opinions.

I desire, therefore, to present the teachings of this great epistle in a series of expositions.

Before advancing to the consideration of these verses, we must deal with one or two introductory matters, so as to get the frame and the background for the picture.

(1) First, as to the Church of Colossæ to which the letter is addressed.

Perhaps too much has been made of late years of geographical and topographical elucidations of Paul's epistles. A knowledge of the place to which a letter was sent cannot do much to help in understanding the letter, for local circumstances leave very faint traces, if any, on the Apostle's writings. Here and there an allusion may be detected, or a metaphor may gain in point by such knowledge; but, for the most part, local colouring is entirely absent. Some slight indication, however, of the situation and circumstances of the Colo sian Church may help to give vividness to our conceptions of the little community to which this rich treasure of truth was first entrusted.

Colossæ was a town in the heart of the modern Asia Minor, much decayed in Paul's time from its earlier importance. It lay in a valley of Phrygia, on the banks of a small stream, the Lycus, down the course of which, at a distance of some ten miles or so, two very much more important cities fronted each other, Hierapolis on the north, and Laodicea on the south bank of the river. In all three cities were Christian Churches, as we know from this letter, one of which has attained the bad eminence of having become the type of tepid religion for all the world. How strange to think of the tiny community in a remote valley of Asia Minor, eighteen centuries since, thus gibbeted for ever! These stray beams of light which fall upon the people in the New Testament, showing them fixed for ever in one attitude, like a lightning flash in the darkness, are solemn precursors of the last Apocalypse, when all men shall be revealed in "the brightness of His coming."

Paul does not seem to have been the founder of these Churches, or ever to have visited them at the date of this letter. That opinion is based on several of its characteristics, such, for instance, as the absence of any of those kindly greetings to individuals which in the Apostle's other letters are so abundant, and reveal at once the warmth and the delicacy of his affection: and the allusions which occur more than once to his having only "heard" of their faith and love, and is strongly supported by the expression in the second chapter where he speaks of the conflict in spirit which he had for "you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." Probably the teacher who planted the gospel at Colossæ was that Epaphras, whose visit to Rome occasioned the letter, and who is referred to in verse 7 of this chapter in terms which seem to suggest that he had first made known to them the fruit-producing "word of the truth of the gospel."

(2) Note the occasion and subject of the letter. Paul is a prisoner, in a certain sense, in Rome; but the word prisoner conveys a false impression of the amount of restriction of personal liberty to which he was subjected. We know from the last words of the Acts of the Apostles, and from the Epistle to the Philippians, that his "imprisonment" did not in the least interfere with his liberty of preaching, nor

with his intercourse with friends. Rather, in the view of the facilities it gave that by him "the preaching might be fully known," it may be regarded, as indeed the writer of the Acts seems to regard it, as the very climax and top-stone of Paul's work, wherewith his history may fitly end, leaving the champion of the gospel at the very heart of the world, with unhindered liberty to proclaim his message by the very throne of Cæsar. He was sheltered rather than confined beneath the wing of the imperial eagle. His imprisonment, as we call it, was, at all events at first, detention in Rome under military supervision rather than incarceration. So to his lodgings in Rome there comes a brother from this decaying little town in the far-off valley of the Lycus, Epaphras by name. Whether his errand was exclusively to consult Paul about the state of the Colossian Church, or whether some other business also had brought him to Rome, we do not know; at all events, he comes and brings with him bad news, which burdens Paul's heart with solicitude for the little community, which had no remembrances of his own authoritative teaching to fall back upon. Many a night would he and Epaphras spend in deep converse on the matter, with the stoli ' Roman legionary, to whom Paul was chained, sitting wearily by, while they two eagerly talked.

The tidings were that a strange disease, hatched in that hotbed of religious fancies, the dreamy East, was threatening the faith of the Colossian Christians. A peculiar form of heresy, singularly compounded of Jewish ritualism and Oriental mysticism—two elements as hard to blend in the foundation of a system as the heterogeneous iron and clay on which the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream stood unstably—had appeared among them, and though at present confined to a few, was being vigorously preached. The characteristic Eastern dogma, that matter is evil and the source of evil, which underlies so much Oriental religion, and crept in so early to corrupt Christianity, and crops up to-day in so many strange places and unexpected ways, had begun to infect them. The conclusion was quickly drawn: "Well, then, if matter be the source of all evil, then, of course, God and matter must be antagonistic," and so the creation and government of this material universe could not be supposed to have come directly from Him. The endeavour to keep the pure Divinity and the gross world as far apart as possible, while yet an intellectual necessity forbade the entire breaking of the bond between them, led to the busy working of the imagination, which spanned the void gulf between God Who is good, and matter which is evil, with a bridge of cobwebs—a chain of intermediate beings, emanations, abstractions, each approaching more nearly to the material than his precursor, till at last the intangible and infinite were confined and curdled into actual earthly matter, and the pure was darkened thereby into evil.

Such notions, fantastic and remote from daily life as they look, really led by a very short cut to making wild work with the plainest moral teachings both of the natural conscience and of Christianity. For if matter be the source of all evil, then the fountain of each man's sin is to be found, not in his own perverted will, but in his body, and the cure of it is to be reached, not by faith which plants a new life in a sinful spirit, but simply by ascetic mortification of the flesh.

Strangely united with these mystical Eastern teachings, which might so easily be perverted to the coarsest sensuality, and had their heads in the clouds and their feet in the mud, were the narrowest doctrines of Jewish ritualism, insisting on circumcision, laws regulating food, the observance of feast days, and the whole cumbrous apparatus of a ceremonial religion. It is a monstrous combination, a cross between a Talmudical rabbi and a Buddhist priest, and yet it is not unnatural that, after soaring in these lofty regions of speculation where the air is too thin to support life, men should be glad to get hold of the externals of an elaborate ritual. It is not the first nor the last time that a misplaced philosophical religion has got close to a religion of outward observances, to keep it from shivering itself to death. Extremes meet. If you go far enough east, you are west.

Such, generally speaking, was the error that was beginning to lift its head in Colossæ. Religious fanaticism was at home in that country, from which, both in heathen and in Christian times, wild rites and notions emanated, and the Apostle might well dread the effect of this new teaching, as of a spark on hay, on the excitable natures of the Colossian converts.

Now we may say, "What does all this matter to us? We are in no danger of being haunted by the ghosts of these dead heresies." But the truth which Paul opposed to them is all-important for every age. It was simply the Person of Christ as the only manifestation of the Divine, the link between God and the universe, its Creator and Preserver, the Light and Life of men, the Lord and Inspirer of the Church, Christ has come, laying His hand upon both God and man, therefore there is no need nor place for a misty crowd of angelic beings or shadowy abstractions to bridge the gulf across which His incarnation flings its single solid arch. Christ has been bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, therefore that cannot be the source of evil in which the fulness of the Godhead has dwelt as in a shrine. Christ has come, the fountain of life and holiness, therefore there is no more place for ascetic mortifications on the one hand, nor for Jewish scrupulosities on the other. These things might detract from the completeness of faith in the complete redemption which Christ has wrought, and must becloud the truth that simple faith in it is all which a man needs.

To urge these and the like truths this letter is written. Its central principle is the sovereign and exclusive mediation of Jesus Christ, the God-man, the victorious antagonist of these dead speculations, and the destined conqueror of all the doubts and confusions of this day. If we grasp with mind and heart that truth, we can possess our souls in patience, and in its light see light where else are darkness and uncertainty.

So much then for introduction, and now a few words of comment on the superscription of the letter contained in these verses.

I. Notice the blending of lowliness and authority in Paul's designation of himself. "An Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God."

He does not always bring his apostolic authority to mind at the beginning of his letters. In his earliest epistles, those to the Thessalonians, he has not yet adopted the practice. In the loving and joyous letter to the Philippians, he has no need to urge his authority, for no man among them ever gainsaid it. In that to Philemon, friendship is uppermost, and though, as he says, he might be much bold to enjoin, yet he prefers to beseech, and will not command as "Apostle," but pleads as "the prisoner of Christ Jesus." In his other letters he put his authority in the foreground as here, and it may be noticed that it and its basis in the will of God are asserted with greatest emphasis in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he has to deal with more defiant opposition than elsewhere encountered him.

Here he puts forth his claim to the apostolate, in the highest sense of the word. He asserts his equality with the original Apostles, the chosen witnesses for the reality of Christ's resurrection. He, too, had seen the risen Lord, and heard the words of His mouth. He shared with them the prerogative of certifying from personal experience that Jesus is risen and lives to bless and rule. Paul's whole Christianity was built on the belief that Jesus Christ had actually appeared to him. That vision on the road to Damascus revolutionised his life. Because he had seen his Lord and heard his duty from His lips, he had become what he was.

"Through the will of God" is at once an assertion of Divine authority, a declaration of independence of all human teaching or appointment, and a most lowly disclaimer of individual merit, or personal power. Few religious teachers have had so strongly marked a character as Paul, or have so constantly brought their own experience into prominence; but the weight which he expected to be attached to his words was to be due entirely to their being the words which God spoke through him. If this opening clause were to be paraphrased it would be: I speak to you because God has sent me. I am not an Apostle by my own will, nor by my own merit. I am not worthy to be called an Apostle. I am a poor sinner like yourselves, and it is a miracle of love and mercy that God should put His words into such lips. But He does speak through me; my words are neither mine nor learned from any other man, but His. Never mind the cracked pipe through which the Divine breath makes music, but listen to the music.

So Paul thought of his message; so the uncompromising assertion of authority was united with deep humility. Do we come to his words, believing that we hear God speaking through Paul? Here is no formal doctrine of inspiration, but here is the claim to be the organ of the Divine will and mind, to which we ought to listen as indeed the voice of God.

The gracious humility of the man is further seen in his association with himself, as joint senders of the letter, of his young brother Timothy, who has no apostolic authority, but whose concurrence in its teaching might give it some additional weight. For the first few verses he remembers to speak in the plural, as in the name of both—"we give thanks," "Epaphras declared to us your love," and so on; but in the fiery sweep of his thoughts Timothy is soon left out of sight, and Paul alone pours out the wealth of his Divine wisdom and the warmth of his fervid heart.

II. We may observe the noble ideal of the Christian character set forth in the designations of the Colossian Church, as "saints and faithful brethren in Christ."

In his earlier letters Paul addresses himself to "the Church;" in his later, beginning with the Epistle to the Romans, and including the three great epistles from his captivity, namely, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, he drops the word Church, and uses expressions which regard the individuals composing the community rather than the community which they compose. The slight change thus indicated in the Apostle's point of view is interesting, however it may be accounted for. There is no reason to suppose it done of set purpose, and certainly it did not arise from any lowered estimate of the sacredness of "the Church," which is nowhere put on higher ground than in the letter to Ephesus, which belongs to the later period; but it may be that advancing years and familiarity with his work, with his position of authority, and with his auditors, all tended to draw him closer to them, and insensibly led to the disuse of the more formal and official address to "the Church" in favour of the simpler and more affectionate superscription, to "the brethren."

Be that as it may, the lessons to be drawn from the names here given to the members of the Church are the more important matter for us. It would be interesting and profitable to examine the meaning of all the New Testament names for believers, and to learn the lessons which they teach; but we must for the present confine ourselves to those which occur here.

"Saints"—a word that has been woefully misapplied both by the Church and the world. The former has given it as a special honour to a few, and "decorated" with it mainly the possessors of a false ideal of sanctity—that of the ascetic and monastic sort. The latter uses it with a sarcastic intonation, as if it implied much cry and little wool, loud professions and small performance, not without a touch of hypocrisy and crafty self-seeking.

Saints are not people living in cloisters after a fantastic ideal, but men and women immersed in the vulgar work of every-day life and worried by the small prosaic anxieties which fret us all, who amidst the whirr of the spindle in the mill, and the clink of the scales on the counter, and the hubbub of the market-place and the jangle of the courts, are yet living lives of conscious devotion to God. The root idea of the word, which is an Old Testament word, is not moral purity, but separation to God. The holy things of the old covenant were things set apart from ordinary use for His service. So, on the high priest's mitre was written Holiness to the Lord. So the Sabbath was kept "holy," because set apart from the week in obedience to Divine command.

Sanctity, and saint, are used now mainly with the idea of moral purity, but that is a secondary meaning. The real primary signification is separation to God. Consecration to Him is the root from which the white flower of purity springs most surely. There is a deep lesson in the word as to the true method of attaining cleanness of life and spirit. We cannot make

ourselves pure, but we can yield ourselves to God and the purity will come.

But we have not only here the fundamental idea of holiness, and the connection of purity of character with self-consecration to God, but also the solemn obligation on all so-called Christians thus to separate and devote themselves to Him. We are Christians as far as we give ourselves up to God, in the surrender of our wills and the practical obedience of our lives —so far and not one inch further. We are not merely bound to this consecration if we are Christians, but we are not Christians unless we thus consecrate ourselves. Pleasing self, and making my own will my law, and living for my own ends, is destructive of all Christianity. Saints are not an eminent sort of Christians, but all Christians are saints, and he who is not a saint is not a Christian. The true consecration is the surrender of the will, which no man can do for us, which needs no outward ceremonial, and the one motive which will lead us selfish and stubborn men to bow our necks to that gentle yoke, and to come out of the misery of pleasing self into the peace of serving God, is drawn from the great love of Him Who devoted Himself to God and man, and bought us for His own by giving Himself utterly to be ours. All sanctity begins with consecration to God. All consecration rests upon the faith of Christ's sacrifice. And if, drawn by the great love of Christ to us unworthy, we give ourselves away to God in Him, then He gives Himself in deep sacred communion to us. "I am thine" has ever for its chord which completes the fulness of its music, "Thou art mine." And so "saint" is a name of dignity and honour, as well as a stringent requirement. There is implied in it, too, safety from all that would threaten life or union with Him. He will not hold His possessions with a slack hand that negligently lets them drop, or with a feeble hand that cannot keep them from a foe. "Thou wilt not suffer him who is consecrated to Thee to see corruption." If I belong to God, having given myself to Him, then I am safe from the touch of evil and the taint of decay. "The Lord's portion is His people," and He will not lose even so worthless a part of that portion as I am. The great name "saints" carries with it the prophecy of victory over all evil, and the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God, or pluck us from His hand.

But these Colossian Christians are "faithful" as well as saints. That may either mean trustworthy and true to their stewardship, or trusting. In the parallel verses in the Epistle to the Ephesians (which presents so many resemblances to this epistle) the latter meaning seems to be required, and here it is certainly the more natural, as pointing to the very foundation of all Christian consecration and brotherhood in the act of believing. We are united to Christ by our faith. The Church is a family of faithful, that is to say of believing, men. Faith underlies consecration and is the parent of holiness, for he only will yield himself to God who trustfully grasps the mercies of God and rests on Christ's great gift of Himself. Faith weaves the bond that unites men in the brotherhood of the Church, for it brings all who share it into a common relation to the Father. He who is faithful, that is, believing, will be faithful in the sense of being worthy of confidence and true to his duty, his profession, and his Lord.

They were brethren too. That strong new bond of union among men the most unlike, was a strange phenomenon in Paul's time, when the Roman world was falling to pieces, and rent by deep clefts of hatreds and jealousies such as modern society scarcely knows; and men might well wonder as they saw the slave and his master sitting at the same table, the Greek and the barbarian learning the same wisdom in the same tongue, the Jew and the Gentile bowing the knee in the same worship, and the hearts of all fused into one great glow of helpful sympathy and unselfish love.

But "brethren" means more than this. It points not merely to Christian love, but to the common possession of a new life. If we are brethren, it is because we have one Father, because in us all there is one life. The name is often regarded as sentimental and metaphorical. The obligation of mutual love is supposed to be the main idea in it, and there is a melancholy hollowness and unreality in the very sound of it as applied to the usual average Christians of to-day. But the name leads straight to the doctrine of regeneration, and proclaims that all Christians are born again through their faith in Jesus Christ, and thereby partake of a common new life, which makes all its possessors children of the Highest, and therefore brethren one of another. If regarded as an expression of the affection of Christians for one another, "brethren" is an exaggeration, ludicrous or tragic, as we view it; but if we regard it as the expression of the real bond which gathers all believers into one family, it declares the deepest mystery and mightiest privilege of the gospel that "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God."

They are "in Christ." These two words may apply to all the designations or to the last only. They are saints in Him, believers in Him, brethren in Him. That mystical but most real union of Christians with their Lord is never far away from the Apostle's thoughts, and in the twin Epistle to the Ephesians is the very burden of the whole. A shallower Christianity tries to weaken that great phrase to something more intelligible to the unspiritual temper and the poverty-stricken experience proper to it; but no justice can be done to Paul's teaching unless it be taken in all its depth as expressive of that same mutual indwelling and interlacing of spirit with spirit which is so prominent in the writings of the Apostle John. There is one point of contact between the Pauline and the Johannean conceptions on the differences between which so much exaggeration has been expended: to both the inmost essence of the Christian life is union to Christ, and abiding in Him. If we are Christians, we are in Him, in yet profounder sense than creation lives and moves and has its being in God. We are in Him as the earth with all its living things is in the atmosphere, as the branch is in the vine, as the members are in the body. We are in Him as inhabitants in a house, as hearts that love in hearts that love, as parts in the whole. If we are Christians, He is in us, as life in every vein, as the fruit-producing sap and energy of the vine are in every branch, as the air is in every lung, as the sunlight in every planet.

This is the deepest mystery of the Christian life. To be "in Him" is to be complete. "In Him" we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings." "In Him," we are "chosen." "In Him," God "freely bestows His grace upon us." "In Him" we "have redemption through His blood." "In Him" "all things in heaven and earth are gathered." "In Him we have obtained an inheritance." In Him is the better life of all who live. In Him we have peace though the world be seething with change and storm. In Him we conquer though earth and our own evil be all in arms against us. If we live in Him, we live in purity and joy. If we die in Him, we die in tranquil trust. If our gravestones may truly carry the sweet old inscription carved on so many a nameless slab in the catacombs, "In Christo," they will also bear the other "In pace" (In peace). If we sleep in Him, our glory is assured, for them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him.

III. A word or two only can be devoted to the last clause of salutation, the apostolic wish, which sets forth the high ideal to be desired for Churches and individuals: "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father." The Authorised Version reads, "and the Lord Jesus Christ," but the Revised Version follows the majority of recent text-critics and their principal authorities in omitting these words, which are supposed to have been imported into our passage from the parallel place in Ephesians. The omission of these familiar words which occur so uniformly in the similar introductory salutations of Paul's other Epistles, is especially singular here, where the main subject of the letter is the office of Christ as channel of all blessings. Perhaps the previous word, "brethren" was lingering in his mind, and so instinctively he stopped with the kindred word "Father."

"Grace and peace"—Paul's wishes for those whom he loves, and the blessings which he expects every Christian to possess, blend the Western and the Eastern forms of salutation, and surpass both. All that the Greek meant by his "Grace," all that the Hebrew meant by his "Peace," the ideally happy condition which differing nations have placed in different blessings, and which all loving words have vainly wished for dear ones, is secured and conveyed to every poor soul that trusts in Christ.

"Grace"—what is that? The word means first—love in exercise to those who are below the lover, or who deserve something else; stooping love that condescends, and patient love that forgives. Then it means the gifts which such love bestows, and then it means the effects of these gifts in the beauties of character and conduct developed in the receivers. So there are here invoked, or we may call it, proffered and promised, to every believing heart, the love and gentleness of that Father whose love to us sinful atoms is a miracle of lowliness and longsuffering; and, next, the outcome of that love which never visits the soul emptyhanded, in all varied spiritual gifts, to strengthen weakness, to enlighten ignorance, to fill the whole being; and as last result of all, every beauty of mind, heart, and temper which can adorn the character, and refine a man into the likeness of God. That great gift will come in continuous bestowment if we are "saints in Christ." Of His fulness we all receive and grace for grace, wave upon wave as the ripples press shoreward and each in turn pours its tribute on the beach, or as pulsation after pulsation makes one golden beam of unbroken light, strong-winged enough to come all the way from the sun, gentle enough to fall on the sensitive eyeball without pain. That one beam will decompose into all colours and brightnesses. That one "grace" will part into sevenfold gifts and be the life in us of whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.

"Peace be unto you." That old greeting, the witness of a state of society when every stranger seen across the desert was probably an enemy, is also a witness to the deep unrest of the heart. It is well to learn the lesson that peace comes after grace, that for tranquillity of soul we must go to God, and that He gives it by giving us His love and its gifts, of which, and of which only, peace is the result. If we have that grace for ours, as we all may if we will, we shall be still, because our desires are satisfied and all our needs met. To seek is unnecessary when we are conscious of possessing. We may end our weary quest, like the dove when it had found the green leaf, though little dry land may be seen as yet, and fold our wings and rest by the cross. We may be lapped in calm repose, even in the midst of toil and strife, like John resting on the heart of his Lord. There must be, first of all, peace with God, that there may be peace from God. Then, when we have been won from our alienation and enmity by the power of the cross, and have learned to know that God is our Lover, Friend, and Father, we shall possess the peace of those whose hearts have found their home, the peace of spirits no longer at war within—conscience and choice tearing them asunder in their strife, the peace of obedience which banishes the disturbance of self-will, the peace of security shaken by no fears, the peace of a sure future across the brightness of which no shadows of sorrow nor mists of uncertainty can fall, the peace of a heart in amity with all mankind. So living in peace, we shall lay ourselves down and die in peace, and enter into "that country, afar beyond the stars," where "grows the flower of peace."

"The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress and thy ease."

All this may be ours. Paul could only wish it for these Colossians. We can only long for it for our dearest. No man can fulfil his wishes or turn them into actual gifts. Many precious things we can give, but not peace. But our brother, Jesus Christ, can do more than wish it. He can bestow it, and when we need it most, He stands ever beside us, in our weakness and unrest, with His strong arm stretched out to help, and on His calm lips the old words—"My grace is sufficient for thee," "My peace I give unto you."

Let us keep ourselves in Him, believing in Him and yielding ourselves to God for His dear sake, and we shall find His grace ever flowing into our emptiness and His settled "peace keeping our hearts and mind in Christ Jesus."

CHAPTER II.

THE PRELUDE.

COLOSSIANS i. 3-8 (R. V.).

THIS long introductory section may at first sight give the impression of confusion, from the variety of subjects introduced. But a little thought about it shows it to be really a remarkable specimen of the Apostle's delicate tact, born of his love and earnestness. Its purpose is to prepare a favourable reception for his warnings and arguments against errors which had crept in, and in his judgment were threatening to sweep away the Colossian Christians from their allegiance to Christ, and their faith in the gospel as it had been originally preached to them by Epaphras. That design explains the selection of topics in these verses, and their weaving together.

Before he warns and rebukes, Paul begins by giving the Colossians credit for all the good which he can find in them. As soon as he opens his mouth, he asserts the claims and authority, the truth and power of the gospel which he preaches, and from which all this good in them had come, and which had proved that it came from God by its diffusiveness and fruitfulness. He reminds them of their beginnings in the Christian life, with which this new teaching was utterly inconsistent, and he flings his shield over Epaphras, their first teacher, whose words were in danger of being neglected now for newer voices with other messages.

Thus skilfully and lovingly these verses touch a prelude which naturally prepares for the theme of the epistle. Remonstrance and rebuke would more often be effective if they oftener began with showing the rebuker's love, and with frank acknowledgment of good in the rebuked.

I. We have first a thankful recognition of Christian excellence as introductory to warnings and remonstrances.

Almost all Paul's letters begin with similar expressions of thankfulness for the good that was in the Church he is addressing. Gentle rain softens the ground and prepares it to receive the heavier downfall which would else mostly run off the hard surface. The exceptions are, 2 Corinthians; Ephesians, which was probably a circular letter; and Galatians, which is too hot throughout for such praises. These expressions are not compliments, or words of course. Still less are they flattery used for personal ends. They are the uncalculated and uncalculating expression of affection which delights to see white patches in the blackest character, and of wisdom which knows that the nauseous medicine of blame is most easily taken if administered wrapped in a capsule of honest praise.

All persons in authority over others, such as masters, parents, leaders of any sort, may be the better for taking the lesson—"provoke not your"—inferiors, dependents, scholars—"to wrath, lest they be discouraged"—and deal out praise where you can, with a liberal hand. It is nourishing food for many virtues, and a powerful antidote to many vices.

This praise is cast in the form of thanksgiving to God, as the true fountain of all that is good in men. How all that might be harmful in direct praise is strained out of it, when it becomes gratitude to God! But we need not dwell on this, nor on the principle underlying these thanks, namely that Christian men's excellences are God's gift, and that therefore, admiration of the man should ever be subordinate to thankfulness to God. The fountain, not the pitcher filled from it, should have the credit of the crystal purity and sparkling coolness of the water. Nor do we need to do more than point to the inference from that phrase "having heard of your faith," an inference confirmed by other statements in the letter, namely, that the Apostle himself had never seen the Colossian Church. But we briefly emphasise the two points which occasioned his thankfulness. They are the familiar two, faith and love.

Faith is sometimes spoken of in the New Testament as "towards Christ Jesus," which describes that great act of the soul by its direction, as if it were a going out or flight of the man's nature to the true goal of all active being. It is sometimes spoken of as "on Christ Jesus," which describes it as reposing on Him as the end of all seeking, and suggests such images as that of a hand that leans or of a burden borne, or a weakness upheld by contact with Him. But more sweet and great is the blessedness of faith considered as "in Him," as its abiding place and fortress-home, in union with, and indwelling in whom the seeking spirit may fold its wings, and the weak heart may be strengthened to lift its burden cheerily, heavy though it be, and the soul may be full of tranquillity and soothed into a great calm. Towards, on, and in—so manifold are the phases of the relation between Christ and our faith.

In all, faith is the same,—simple confidence, precisely like the trust which we put in one another. But how unlike are the objects!—broken reeds of human nature in the one case, and the firm pillar of that Divine power and tenderness in the other, and how unlike, alas! is the fervency and constancy of the trust we exercise in each other and in Christ! "Faith" covers the whole ground of man's relation to God. All religion, all devotion, everything which binds us to the unseen world is included in or evolved from faith. And mark that this faith is, in Paul's teaching, the foundation of love to men and of everything else good and fair. We may agree or disagree with that thought, but we can scarcely fail to see that it is the foundation of all his moral teaching. From that fruitful source all good will come. From that deep fountain sweet water will flow, and all drawn from other sources has a tang of bitterness. Goodness of all kinds is most surely evolved from faith—and that faith lacks its best warrant of reality which does not lead to whatsoever things are lovely and of good report. Barnabas was a "good man," because, as Luke goes on to tell us by way of analysis of the sources of his goodness, he was "full of the Holy Ghost," the author of all goodness, "and of faith" by which that Inspirer of all beauty of purity dwells in men's hearts. Faith then is the germ of goodness, not because of anything in itself, but because by it we come under the influence of the Divine Spirit whose breath is life and holiness.

Therefore we say to every one who is seeking to train his character in excellence, begin with trusting Christ, and out of that will come

all lustre and whiteness, all various beauties of mind and heart. It is hard and hopeless work to cultivate our own thorns into grapes, but if we will trust Christ, He will sow good seed in our field and "make it soft with showers and bless the springing thereof."

As faith is the foundation of all virtue, so it is the parent of love, and as the former sums up every bond that knits men to God, so the latter includes all relations of men to each other, and is the whole law of human conduct packed into one word. But the warmest place in a Christian's heart will belong to those who are in sympathy with his deepest self, and a true faith in Christ, like a true loyalty to a prince, will weave a special bond between all fellow-subjects. So the sign, on the surface of earthly relations, of the deep-lying central fire of faith to Christ, is the fruitful vintage of brotherly love, as the vineyards bear the heaviest clusters on the slopes of Vesuvius. Faith in Christ and love to Christians—that is the Apostle's notion of a good man. That is the ideal of character which we have to set before ourselves. Do we desire to be good? Let us trust Christ. Do we profess to trust Christ? Let us show it by the true proof—our goodness and especially our love.

So we have here two members of the familiar triad, Faith and Love, and their sister Hope is not far off. We read in the next clause, "because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens." The connection is not altogether plain. Is the hope the reason for the Apostle's thanksgiving, or the reason in some sense of the Colossians' love? As far as the language goes, we may either read "We give thanks . . . because of the hope," or "the love which ye have . . . because of the hope." But the long distance which we have to go back for the connection, if we adopt the former explanation, and other considerations which need not be entered on here, seem to make the latter the preferable construction if it yields a tolerable sense. Does it? Is it allowable to say that the hope which is laid up in heaven is in any sense a reason or motive for brotherly love? I think it is.

Observe that "hope" here is best taken as meaning not the emotion, but the object on which the emotion is fixed; not the faculty, but the thing hoped for; or in other words, that it is objective, not subjective; and also that the ideas of futurity and security are conveyed by the thought of this object of expectation being laid up. This future blessedness, grasped by our expectant hearts as assured for us, does stimulate and hearten to all well-doing. Certainly it does not supply the main reason; we are not to be loving and good because we hope to win heaven thereby. The deepest motive for all the graces of Christian character is the will of God in Christ Jesus, apprehended by loving hearts. But it is quite legitimate to draw subordinate motives for the strenuous pursuit of holiness from the anticipation of future blessedness, and it is quite legitimate to use that prospect to reinforce the higher motives. He who seeks to be good only for the sake of the heaven which he thinks he will get for his goodness—if there be any such a person existing anywhere but in the imaginations of the caricaturists of Christian teaching—is not good and will not get his heaven; but he who feeds his devotion to Christ and his earnest cultivation of holiness with the animating hope of an unfading crown will find in it a mighty power to intensify and ennoble all life, to bear him up as on angels' hands that lift over all stones of stumbling, to diminish sorrow and dull pain, to kindle love to men into a brighter flame, and to purge holiness to a more radiant whiteness. The hope laid up in heaven is not the deepest reason or motive for faith and love—but both are made more vivid when it is strong. It is not the light at which their lamps are lit, but it is the odorous oil which feeds their flame.

II. The course of thought passes on to a solemn reminder of the truth and worth of that Gospel which was threatened by the budding heresies of the Colossian Church.

That is contained in the clauses from the middle of the fifth verse to the end of the sixth, and is introduced with significant abruptness, immediately after the commendation of the Colossians' faith. The Apostle's mind and heart are so full of the dangers which he saw them to be in, although they did not know it, that he cannot refrain from setting forth an impressive array of considerations, each of which should make them hold to the gospel with an iron grasp. They are put with the utmost compression. Each word almost might be beaten out into a long discourse, so that we can only indicate the lines of thought. This somewhat tangled skein may, on the whole, be taken as the answer to the question, Why should we cleave to Paul's gospel, and dread and war against tendencies of opinion that would rob us of it? They are preliminary considerations adapted to prepare the way for a patient and thoughtful reception of the arguments which are to follow, by showing how much is at stake, and how the readers would be poor indeed if they were robbed of that great Word.

He begins by reminding them that to that gospel they owed all their knowledge and hope of heaven—the hope "whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." That great word alone gives light on the darkness. The sole certainty of a life beyond the grave is built on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the sole hope of a blessed life beyond the grave for the poor soul that has learned its sinfulness is built on the Death of Christ. Without this light, that land is a land of darkness, lighted only by glimmering sparks of conjectures and peradventures. So it is to-day, as it was then; the centuries have only made more clear the entire dependence of the living conviction of immortality on the acceptance of Paul's gospel "how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised again the third day." All around us we see those who reject the fact of Christ's resurrection finding themselves forced to surrender their faith in any life beyond. They cannot sustain themselves on that height of conviction unless they lean on Christ. The black mountain wall that rings us poor mortals round about is cloven in one place only. Through one narrow cleft there comes a gleam of light. There and there only is the frowning barrier passable. Through that grim cañon, narrow and black, where there is only room for the dark river to run, bright-eyed Hope may travel, letting out her golden thread as she goes, to guide us. Christ has cloven the rock, "the Breaker has gone up before" us, and by His

resurrection alone we have the knowledge which is certitude, and the hope which is confidence, of an inheritance in light. If Paul's gospel goes, that goes like morning mist. Before you throw away "the word of the truth of the gospel," at all events understand that you fling away all assurance of a future life along with it.

Then, there is another motive touched in these words just quoted. The gospel is a word of which the whole substance and content is truth. You may say that is the whole question, whether the gospel is such a word? Of course it is; but observe how here, at the very outset, the gospel is represented as having a distinct dogmatic element in it. It is of value, not because it feeds sentiment or regulates conduct only, but first and foremost because it gives us true though incomplete knowledge concerning all the deepest things of God and man about which, but for its light, we know nothing. That truthful word is opposed to the argumentations and speculations and errors of the heretics. The gospel is not speculation, but fact. It is truth, because it is the record of a Person who is the Truth. The history of His life and death is the one source of all certainty and knowledge with regard to man's relations to God, and God's loving purposes to man. To leave it and Him of whom it speaks in order to listen to men who spin theories out of their own brains is to prefer will-o'-the-wisps to the sun. If we listen to Christ, we have the truth; if we turn from Him, our ears are stunned by a Babel. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Further, this gospel had been already received by them. Ye heard before, says he, and again he speaks of the gospel as "come unto" them, and reminds them of the past days in which they "heard and knew the grace of God." That appeal is, of course, no argument except to a man who admits the truth of what he had already received, nor is it meant for argument with others, but it is equivalent to the exhortation, "You have heard that word and accepted it, see that your future be consistent with your past." He would have the life a harmonious whole, all in accordance with the first glad grasp which they had laid on the truth. Sweet and calm and noble is the life which preserves to its close the convictions of its beginning, only deepened and expanded. Blessed are they whose creed at last can be spoken in the lessons they learned in childhood, to which experience has but given new meaning! Blessed they who have been able to store the treasure of a life's thought and learning in the vessels of the early words, which have grown like the magic coffers in a fairy tale, to hold all the increased wealth that can be lodged in them! Beautiful is it when the little children and the young men and the fathers possess the one faith, and when he who began as a child, "knowing the Father," ends as an old man with the same knowledge of the same God, only apprehended now in a form which has gained majesty from the fleeting years, as "Him that is from the beginning." There is no need to leave the Word long since heard in order to get novelty. It will open out into all new depths, and blaze in new radiance as men grow. It will give new answers as the years ask new questions. Each epoch of individual experience, and each phase of society, and all changing forms of opinion will find what meets them in the gospel as it is in Jesus. It is good for Christian men often to recall the beginnings of their faith, to live over again their early emotions, and when they may be getting stunned with the din of controversy, and confused as to the relative importance of different parts of Christian truth, to remember what it was that first filled their heart with joy like that of the finder of a hidden treasure, and with what a leap of gladness they first laid hold of Christ.

That spiritual discipline is no less needful than is intellectual, in facing the conflicts of this day.

Again, this gospel was filling the world: "it is in all the world bearing fruit, and increasing." There are two marks of life—it is fruitful and it spreads. Of course such words are not to be construed as if they occurred in a statistical table. "All the world" must be taken with an allowance for rhetorical statement; but making such allowance, the rapid spread of Christianity in Paul's time, and its power to influence character and conduct among all sorts and conditions of men, were facts that needed to be accounted for, if the gospel was not true.

That is surely a noteworthy fact, and one which may well raise a presumption in favour of the truth of the message, and make any proposal to cast it aside for another gospel a serious matter. Paul is not suggesting the vulgar argument that a thing must be true because so many people have so quickly believed it. But what he is pointing to is a much deeper thought than that. All schisms and heresies are essentially local, and partial. They suit coteries and classes. They are the product of special circumstances acting on special casts of mind, and appeal to such. Like parasitical plants, they each require a certain species to grow on, and cannot spread where these are not found. They are not for all time, but for an age. They are not for all men, but for a select few. They reflect the opinions or wants of a layer of society or of a generation, and fade away. But the gospel goes through the world and draws men to itself out of every land and age. Dainties and confections are for the few, and many of them are like pickled olives to unsophisticated palates, and the delicacies of one country are the abominations of another; but everybody likes bread and lives on it, after all.

The gospel which tells of Christ belongs to all and can touch all, because it brushes aside superficial differences of culture and position, and goes straight to the depths of the one human heart, which is alike in us all, addressing the universal sense of sin, and revealing the Saviour of us all, and in Him the universal Father. Do not fling away a gospel that belongs to all, and can bring forth fruit in all kinds of people, for the sake of accepting what can never live in the popular heart, nor influence more than a handful of very select and "superior persons." Let who will have the dainties, do you stick to the wholesome wheaten bread.

Another plea for adherence to the gospel is based upon its continuous and universal fruitfulness. It brings about results in conduct and character which strongly attest its claim to be from God. That is a rough and ready test, no doubt, but a sensible and satisfactory one. A system which says that it will make men good and pure is reasonably judged of by its fruits,

and Christianity can stand the test. It did change the face of the old world. It has been the principal agent in the slow growth of "nobler manners, purer laws" which give the characteristic stamp to modern as contrasted with pre-Christian nations. The threefold abominations of the old world—slavery, war, and the degradation of woman—have all been modified, one of them abolished, and the others growingly felt to be utterly un-Christian. The main agent in the change has been the gospel. It has wrought wonders, too, on single souls; and though all Christians must be too conscious of their own imperfections to venture on putting themselves forward as specimens of its power, still the gospel of Jesus Christ has lifted men from the dungheaps of sin and self to "set them with princes," to make them kings and priests; has tamed passions, ennobled pursuits, revolutionised the whole course of many a life, and mightily works to-day in the same fashion, in the measure in which we submit to its influence. Our imperfections are our own; our good is its. A medicine is not shown to be powerless, though it does not do as much as is claimed for it, if the sick man has taken it irregularly and sparingly. The failure of Christianity to bring forth full fruit arises solely from the failure of professing Christians to allow its quickening powers to fill their hearts. After all deductions we may still say with Paul, "it bringeth forth fruit in all the world." This rod has budded, at all events; have any of its antagonists' rods done the same? Do not cast it away, says Paul, till you are sure you have found a better.

This tree not only fruits, but grows. It is not exhausted by fruit-bearing, but it makes wood as well. It is "increasing" as well as "bearing fruit," and that growth in the circuit of its branches that spread through the world, is another of its claims on the faithful adhesion of the Colossians.

Again, they have heard a gospel which reveals the "true grace of God," and that is another consideration urging to steadfastness.

In opposition to it there were put then, as there are put to-day, man's thoughts, and man's requirements, a human wisdom and a burdensome code. Speculations and arguments on the one hand, and laws and rituals on the other, look thin beside the large free gift of a loving God and the message which tells of it. They are but poor bony things to try to live on. The soul wants something more nourishing than such bread made out of sawdust. We want a loving God to live upon, whom we can love because He loves us. Will anything but the gospel give us that? Will anything be our stay, in all weakness, weariness, sorrow, and sin, in the fight of life and the agony of death, except the confidence that in Christ we "know the grace of God in truth"?

So, if we gather together all these characteristics of the gospel, they bring out the gravity of the issue when we are asked to tamper with it, or to abandon the old lamp for the brand-new ones which many eager voices are proclaiming as the light of the future. May any of us who are on the verge of the precipice lay to heart these serious thoughts! To that gospel we owe our peace; by it alone can the fruit of lofty devout lives be formed and ripened; it has filled the world with its sound, and is revolutionising humanity; it and it only brings to men the good news and the actual gift of the love and mercy of God. It is not a small matter to fling away all this.

We do not prejudge the question of the truth of Christianity; but, at all events, let there be no mistake as to the fact that to give it up is to give up the mightiest power that has ever wrought for the world's good, and that if its light be quenched there will be darkness that may be felt, not dispelled, but made more sad and dreary by the ineffectual flickers of some poor rushlights that men have lit, which waver and shine dimly over a little space for a little while, and then die out.

III. We have the Apostolic endorsement of Epaphras, the early teacher of the Colossian Christians.

Paul points his Colossian brethren, finally, to the lessons which they had received from the teacher who had first led them to Christ. No doubt his authority was imperilled by the new directions of thought in the Church, and Paul was desirous of adding the weight of his attestation to the complete correspondence between his own teaching and that of Epaphras.

We know nothing about this Epaphras except from this letter and that to Philemon. He is "one of you," a member of the Colossian Church (iv. 12), whether a Colossian born or not. He had come to the prisoner in Rome, and had brought the tidings of their condition which filled the Apostle's heart with strangely mingled feelings—of joy for their love and Christian walk (verses 4, 8), and of anxiety lest they should be swept from their steadfastness by the errors that he heard were assailing them. Epaphras shared this anxiety, and during his stay in Rome was much in thought, and care, and prayer for them (iv. 12). He does not seem to have been the bearer of this letter to Colossæ. He was in some sense Paul's fellow-servant, and in Philemon he is called by the yet more intimate, though somewhat obscure, name of his fellow-prisoner. It is noticeable that he alone of all Paul's companions receives the name of "fellow-servant," which may perhaps point to some very special piece of service of his, or may possibly be only an instance of Paul's courteous humility, which ever delighted to lift others to his own level—as if he had said, Do not make differences between your own Epaphras and me, we are both slaves of one Master.

The further testimony which Paul bears to him is so emphatic and pointed as to suggest that it was meant to uphold an authority that had been attacked, and to eulogise a character that had been maligned. "He is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." In these words the Apostle endorses his teaching, as a true representation of his own. Probably Epaphras founded the Colossian Church and did so in pursuance of a commission given him by Paul. He "also declared to us your love in the Spirit." As he had truly represented Paul and his message to them, so he lovingly represented them and their kindly affection to him. Probably the same people who questioned Epaphras' version of Paul's teaching would suspect the favourableness of his report of the Colossian Church, and hence the double witness borne from the Apostle's generous heart to both parts of his brother's work. His unstinted praise is ever ready. His shield is swiftly flung over any

of his helpers who are maligned or assailed. Never was a leader truer to his subordinates, more tender of their reputation, more eager for their increased influence, and freer from every trace of jealousy, than was that lofty and lowly soul.

It is a beautiful though a faint image which shines out on us from these fragmentary notices of this Colossian Epaphras—a true Christian bishop, who had come all the long way from his quiet valley in the depths of Asia Minor, to get guidance about his flock from the great Apostle, and who bore them on his heart day and night, and prayed much for them, while so far away from them. How strange the fortune which has made his name and his solicitudes and prayers immortal! How little he dreamed that such embalming was to be given to his little services, and that they were to be crowned with such exuberant praise!

The smallest work done for Jesus Christ lasts for ever, whether it abide in men's memories or no. Let us ever live as those who, like painters in fresco, have with swift hand to draw lines and lay on colours which will never fade, and let us, by humble faith and holy life, earn such a character from Paul's Master. He is glad to praise, and praise from His lips is praise indeed. If He approves of us as faithful servants on His behalf, it matters not what others may say. The Master's "Well done" will outweigh labours and toils, and the depreciating tongues of fellow-servants, or of the Master's enemies.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRAYER.

COLOSSIANS i. 9-12 (R. V.).

WE have here to deal with one of Paul's prayers for his brethren. In some respects these are the very topmost pinnacles of his letters. Nowhere else does his spirit move so freely, in no other parts are the fervour of his piety and the beautiful simplicity and depth of his love more touchingly shown. The freedom and heartiness of our prayers for others are a very sharp test of both our piety to God and our love to men. Plenty of people can talk and vow who would find it hard to pray. Paul's intercessory prayers are the high-water mark of the epistles in which they occur. He must have been a good man and a true friend of whom so much can be said.

This prayer sets forth the ideal of Christian character. What Paul desired for his friends in Colossæ is what all true Christian hearts should chiefly desire for those whom they love, and should strive after and ask for themselves. If we look carefully at these words we shall see a clear division into parts which stand related to each other as root, stem, and fourfold branches, or as fountain, undivided stream, and "four heads" into which this "river" of Christian life "is parted." To be filled with the knowledge of God's will is the root or fountain-source of all. From it comes a walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing—the practical life being the outcome and expression of the inward possession of the will of God. Then we have four clauses, evidently co-ordinate, each beginning with a participle, and together presenting an analysis of this worthy walk. It will be fruitful in all outward work. It will be growing in all inward knowledge of God. Because life is not all doing and knowing, but is suffering likewise, the worthy walk must be patient and long-suffering, because strengthened by God Himself. And to crown all, above work and knowledge and suffering it must be thankfulness to the Father. The magnificent massing together of the grounds of gratitude which follows, we must leave for future consideration, and pause, however abruptly, yet not illogically, at the close of the enumeration of these four branches of the tree, the four sides of the firm tower of the true Christian life.

I. Consider the Fountain or Root of all Christian character—"that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

One or two remarks in the nature of verbal exposition may be desirable. Generally speaking, the thing desired is the perfecting of the Colossians in religious knowledge, and the perfection is forcibly expressed in three different aspects. The idea of completeness up to the height of their capacity is given in the prayer that they may be "filled," like some jar charged with sparkling water to the brim. The advanced degree of the knowledge desired for them is given in the word here employed, which is a favourite in the Epistles of the Captivity, and means additional or mature knowledge, that deeper apprehension of God's truth which perhaps had become more obvious to Paul in the quiet growth of his spirit during his life in Rome. And the rich variety of forms which that advanced knowledge would assume is set forth by the final words of the clause, which may either be connected with its first words, so meaning "filled . . . so that ye may abound in . . . wisdom and understanding;" or with "the knowledge of His will," so meaning a "knowledge which is manifested in." That knowledge will blossom out into every kind of "wisdom" and "understanding," two words which it is hard to distinguish, but of which the former is perhaps the more general and the latter the more special, the former the more theoretical and the latter the more practical; and both are the work of the Divine Spirit whose sevenfold perfection of gifts illuminates with perfect light each waiting heart. So perfect, whether in regard to its measure, its maturity, or its manifoldness, is the knowledge of the will of God, which the Apostle regards as the deepest good which his love can ask for these Colossians.

Passing by many thoughts suggested by the words, we may touch one or two large principles which they involve. The first is, that the foundation of all Christian character and conduct is laid in the knowledge of the will of God. Every revelation of God is a law. What it concerns us to know is not abstract truth, or a revelation for speculative thought, but God's will. He does not show Himself to us in order merely that we may know, but in order that, knowing, we may do, and, what is more than either knowing or doing, in order that we may be. No revelation from God has accomplished its purpose when a man has simply understood it, but every fragmentary flash of light which comes from Him in nature and providence, and

still more the steady radiance that pours from Jesus, is meant indeed to teach us how we should think of God, but to do that mainly as a means to the end that we may live in conformity with His will. The light is knowledge, but it is a light to guide our feet, knowledge which is meant to shape practice.

If that had been remembered, two opposite errors would have been avoided. The error that was threatening the Colossian Church, and has haunted the Church in general ever since, was that of fancying Christianity to be merely a system of truth to be believed, a rattling skeleton of abstract dogmas, very many and very dry. An unpractical heterodoxy was their danger. An unpractical orthodoxy is as real a peril. You may swallow all the creeds bodily, you may even find in God's truth the food of very sweet and real feeling: but neither knowing nor feeling is enough. The one all-important question for us is—does our Christianity work? It is knowledge of His will, which becomes an ever active force in our lives! Any other kind of religious knowledge is windy food; as Paul says, it "puffeth up;" the knowledge which feeds the soul with wholesome nourishment is the knowledge of His will.

The converse error to that of unpractical knowledge, that of an unintelligent practice, is quite as bad. There is always a class of people, and they are unusually numerous to-day, who profess to attach no importance to Christian doctrines, but to put all the stress on Christian morals. They swear by the "Sermon on the Mount," and are blind to the deep doctrinal basis laid in that "sermon" itself, on which its lofty moral teaching is built. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. Why pit the parent against the child? why wrench the blossom from its stem? Knowledge is sound when it moulds conduct. Action is good when it is based on knowledge. The knowledge of God is wholesome when it shapes the life. Morality has a basis which makes it vigorous and permanent when it rests upon the knowledge of His will.

Again: Progress in knowledge is the law of the Christian life. There should be a continual advancement in the apprehension of God's will, from that first glimpse which saves, to the mature knowledge which Paul here desires for his friends. The progress does not consist in leaving behind old truths, but in a profounder conception of what is contained in these truths. How differently a Fijian just saved, and a Paul on earth, or a Paul in heaven, look at that verse, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"! The truths which are dim to the one, like stars seen through a mist, blaze to the other like the same stars to an eye that has travelled millions of leagues nearer them, and sees them to be suns. The law of the Christian life is continuous increase in the knowledge of the depths that lie in the old truths, and of their far-reaching applications. We are to grow in knowledge of the Christ by coming ever nearer to Him, and learning more of the infinite meaning of our earliest lesson that He is the Son of God who has died for us. The constellations that burn in our nightly sky looked down on Chaldean astronomers, but though these are the same, how much more is known about them at Greenwich than was dreamed at Babylon!

II. Consider the River or Stem of Christian conduct.

The purpose and outcome of this full knowledge of the will of God in Christ is to "walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing." By "walk" is of course meant the whole active life; so that the principle is brought out here very distinctly, that the last result of knowledge of the Divine will is an outward life regulated by that will. And the sort of life which such knowledge leads to is designated in most general terms as "worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," in which we have set forth two aspects of the true Christian life.

"Worthily of the Lord!" The "Lord" here, as generally, is Christ, and "worthily" seems to mean, in a manner corresponding to what Christ is to us, and has done for us. We find other forms of the same thought in such expressions as "worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. iv. 1), "worthily of saints" (Rom. xvi. 2), "worthy of the gospel" (Phil. i. 27), "worthily of God" (1 Thess. ii. 12), in all of which there is the idea of a standard to which the practical life is to be conformed. Thus the Apostle condenses into one word all the manifold relations in which we stand to Christ, and all the multifarious arguments for a holy life which they yield.

These are mainly two. The Christian should "walk" in a manner corresponding to what Christ has done for him. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise?" was the mournful wondering question of the dying Moses to his people, as he summed up the history of unbroken tenderness and love on the one side, and of disloyalty almost as uninterrupted on the other. How much more pathetically and emphatically might the question be asked of us! We say that we are not our own, but bought with a price. Then how do we repay that costly purchase? Do we not requite His blood and tears, His unquenchable, unalterable love, with a little tepid love which grudges sacrifices and has scarcely power enough to influence conduct at all, with a little trembling faith which but poorly corresponds to His firm promises, with a little reluctant obedience? The richest treasure of heaven has been freely lavished for us, and we return a sparing expenditure of our hearts and ourselves, repaying fine gold with tarnished copper, and the flood of love from the heart of Christ with a few niggard drops grudgingly squeezed from ours. Nothing short of complete self-surrender, perfect obedience, and unwavering, unfaltering love can characterise the walk that corresponds with our profound obligations to Him. Surely there can be no stronger cord with which to bind us as sacrifices to the horns of the altar than the cords of love. This is the unique glory and power of Christian ethics, that it brings in this tender personal element to transmute the coldness of duty into the warmth of gratitude, so throwing rosy light over the snowy summits of abstract virtue. Repugnant duties become tokens of love, pleasant as every sacrifice made at its bidding ever is. The true Christian spirit says: Thou hast given Thyself wholly for me: help me to yield myself to Thee. Thou hast loved me perfectly: help me to love Thee with all my heart.

The other side of this conception of a worthy walk is, that the Christian should act in a man-

ner corresponding to Christ's character and conduct. We profess to be His by sacredest ties: then we should set our watches by that dial, being conformed to His likeness, and in all our daily life trying to do as He has done, or as we believe He would do if He were in our place. Nothing less than the effort to tread in His footsteps is a walk worthy of the Lord. All unlikeness to His pattern is a dishonour to Him and to ourselves. It is neither worthy of the Lord, nor of the vocation wherewith we are called, nor of the name of saints. Only when these two things are brought about in my experience—when the glow of His love melts my heart and makes it flow down in answering affection, and when the beauty of His perfect life stands ever before me, and though it be high above me, is not a despair, but a stimulus and a hope—only then do I "walk worthy of the Lord."

Another thought as to the nature of the life in which the knowledge of the Divine will should issue, is expressed in the other clause —"unto all pleasing," which sets forth the great aim as being to please Christ in everything. That is a strange purpose to propose to men, as the supreme end to be ever kept in view, to satisfy Jesus Christ by their conduct. To make the good opinion of men our aim is to be slaves; but to please this Man ennobles us and exalts life. Who or what is He, whose judgment of us is thus all-important, whose approbation is praise indeed, and to win whose smile is a worthy object for which to use life, or even to lose it? We should ask ourselves, Do we make it our ever present object to satisfy Jesus Christ? We are not to mind about other people's approbation. We can do without that. We are not to hunt after the good word of our fellows. Every life into which that craving for man's praise and good opinion enters is tarnished by it. It is a canker, a creeping leprosy, which eats sincerity and nobleness and strength out of a man. Let us not care to trim our sails to catch the shifting winds of this or that man's favour and eulogium, but look higher and say, "With me it is a very small matter to be judged of man's judgment." "I appeal unto Cæsar." He, the true Commander and Emperor, holds our fate in His hands; we have to please Him and Him only. There is no thought which will so reduce the importance of the babble around us, and teach us such brave and wholesome contempt for popular applause, and all the strife of tongues, as the constant habit of trying to act as ever in our great Taskmaster's eye. What does it matter who praise, if He frowns? or who blame, if His face lights with a smile? No thought will so spur us to diligence, and make all life solemn and grand as the thought that "we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be well pleasing to Him." Nothing will so string the muscles for the fight, and free us from being entangled with the things of this life, as the ambition to "please Him who has called us to be soldiers."

Men have willingly flung away their lives for a couple of lines of praise in a despatch, or for a smile from some great commander. *Let us try to live and die so as to get "honourable mention" from our captain. Praise from His lips is praise indeed. We shall not know how much it is worth, till the smile lights His face, and the love comes into His eyes, as He looks at us, and says, "Well done! good and faithful servant."

III. We have finally the fourfold streams or branches into which this general conception of Christian character parts itself.

There are four participial clauses here, which seem all to stand on one level, and to present an analysis in more detail of the component parts of this worthy walk. In general terms it is divided into fruitfulness in work, increase in knowledge, strength for suffering, and, as the climax of all, thankfulness.

The first element is—"bearing fruit in every good work." These words carry us back to what was said in ver. 6 about the fruitfulness of the gospel. Here the man in whom that word is planted is regarded as the producer of the fruit, by the same natural transition by which, in our Lord's Parable of the Sower, the men in whose hearts the seed was sown are spoken of as themselves on the one hand, bringing no fruit to perfection, and on the other, bringing forth fruit with patience. The worthy walk will be first manifested in the production of a rich variety of forms of goodness. All profound knowledge of God, and all lofty thoughts of imitating and pleasing Christ, are to be tested at last by their power to make men good, and that not after any monotonous type, nor on one side of their nature only.

One plain principle implied here is that the only true fruit is goodness. We may be busy, as many a man in our great commercial cities is busy, from Monday morning till Saturday night for a long lifetime, and may have had to build bigger barns for our "fruits and our goods," and yet, in the high and solemn meaning of the word here, our life may be utterly empty and fruitless. Much of our work and of its results is no more fruit than the galls on the oak-leaves are. They are a swelling from a puncture made by an insect, a sign of disease, not of life. The only sort of work which can be called fruit, in the highest meaning of the word, is that which corresponds to a man's whole nature and relations; and the only work which does so correspond is a life of loving service of God, which cultivates all things lovely and of good report. Goodness, therefore, alone deserves to be called fruit—as for all the rest of our busy lives, they and their toils are like the rootless, lifeless chaff that is whirled out of the threshing-floor by every gust. A life which has not in it holiness and loving obedience, however richly productive it may be in lower respects, is in inmost reality blighted and barren, and is "nigh unto burning." Goodness is fruit; all else is nothing but leaves.

Again: the Christian life is to be "fruitful in every good work." This tree is to be like that in the apocalyptic vision, which "bare twelve manner of fruits," yielding every month a different sort. So we should fill the whole circuit of the year with various holiness, and seek to make widely different forms of goodness our own. We have all certain kinds of excellence which are more natural and easier for us than others are. We should seek to cultivate the kind which is hardest for us. The thorny stock of our own character should bear not only grapes, but figs too, and olives as well, being grafted upon the true olive tree, which is Christ. Let us aim at this all-round and multiform virtue, and not be like a scene for a stage,

all gay and bright on one side, and dirty canvas and stretchers hung with cobwebs on the other.

The second element in the analysis of the true Christian life is—"increasing in the knowledge of God." The figure of the tree is probably continued here. If it fruits, its girth will increase, its branches will spread, its top will mount, and next year its shadow on the grass will cover a larger circle. Some would take the "knowledge" here as the instrument or means of growth, and would render "increasing by the knowledge of God," supposing that the knowledge is represented as the rain or the sunshine which ministers to the growth of the plant. But perhaps it is better to keep to the idea conveyed by the common rendering, which regards the words "in knowledge" as the specification of that region in which the growth enjoined is to be realised. So here we have the converse of the relation between work and knowledge which we met in the earlier part of the chapter. There, knowledge led to a worthy walk; here, fruitfulness in good works leads to, or at all events is accompanied with, an increased knowledge. And both are true. These two work on each other a reciprocal increase. All true knowledge which is not mere empty notions, naturally tends to influence action, and all true action naturally tends to confirm the knowledge from which it proceeds. Obedience gives insight: "If any man wills to do My will, he shall know of the doctrine." If I am faithful up to the limits of my present knowledge, and have brought it all to bear on character and conduct, I shall find that in the effort to make my every thought a deed, there have fallen from my eyes as it were scales, and I see some things clearly which were faint and doubtful before. Moral truth becomes dim to a bad man. Religious truth grows bright to a good one, and whosoever strives to bring all his creed into practice, and all his practice under the guidance of his creed, will find that the path of obedience is the path of growing light.

Then comes the third element in this resolution of the Christian character into its component parts—"strengthened with all power, according to the might of His glory, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Knowing and doing are not the whole of life: there are sorrow and suffering too.

Here again we have the Apostle's favourite "all," which occurs so frequently in this connection. As he desired for the Colossians all wisdom, unto all pleasing, and fruitfulness in every good work, so he prays for all power to strengthen them. Every kind of strength which God can give and man can receive, is to be sought after by us, that we may be "girded with strength," cast like a brazen wall all round our human weakness. And that Divine power is to flow into us, having this for its measure and limit—"the might of His glory." His "glory" is the lustrous light of His self-revelation; and the far-flashing energy revealed in that self-manifestation is the immeasurable measure of the strength that may be ours. True, a finite nature can never contain the infinite, but man's finite nature is capable of indefinite expansion. Its elastic walls stretch to contain the increasing gift. The more we desire the more we receive, and the more we receive the more we are able to receive. The amount which filled our hearts to-day should not fill them to-morrow. Our capacity is at each moment the working limit of the measure of the strength given us. But it is always shifting, and may be continually increasing. The only real limit is "the might of His glory," the limitless omnipotence of the self-revealing God. To that we may indefinitely approach, and till we have exhausted God we have not reached the furthest point to which we should aspire.

And what exalted mission is destined for this wonderful communicated strength? Nothing that the world thinks great: only helping some lone widow to stay her heart in patience, and flinging a gleam of brightness, like sunrise on a stormy sea, over some tempest-tossed life. The strength is worthily employed and absorbed in producing "all patience and long-suffering with joy." Again the favourite "all" expresses the universality of the patience and long-suffering. Patience here is not merely passive endurance. It includes the idea of perseverance in the right course, as well as that of uncomplaining bearing of evil. It is the "steering right onward," without bating one jot of heart or hope; the temper of the traveller who struggles forward, though the wind in his face dashes the sleet in his eyes, and he has to wade through deep snow. While "patience" regards the evil mainly as sent by God, and as making the race set before us difficult, "long-suffering" describes the temper under suffering when considered as a wrong or injury done by man. And whether we think of our afflictions in the one or the other light, God's strength will steal into our hearts, if we will, not merely to help us to bear them with perseverance and with meekness as unruffled as Christ's, but to crown both graces—as the clouds are sometimes rimmed with flashing gold—with a great light of joy. That is the highest attainment of all. "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Flowers beneath the snow, songs in the night, fire burning beneath the water, "peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation," cool airs in the very crater of Vesuvius—all these paradoxes may be surpassed in our hearts if they are strengthened with all might by an indwelling Christ.

The crown of all, the last of the elements of the Christian character, is thankfulness—"giving thanks unto the Father." This is the summit of all; and is to be diffused through all. All our progressive fruitfulness and insight, as well as our perseverance and unrufled meekness in suffering, should have a breath of thankfulness breathed through them. We shall see the grand enumeration of the reasons for thankfulness in the next verses. Here we pause for the present, with this final constituent of the life which Paul desired for the Colossian Christians. Thankfulness should mingle with all our thoughts and feelings, like the fragrance of some perfume penetrating through the common scentless air. It should embrace all events. It should be an operating motive in all actions. We should be clear-sighted and believing enough to be thankful for pain and disappointment and loss. That gratitude will add the crowning consecration to service and knowledge and endurance. It will touch our spirits to the finest of all issues, for it will lead to glad self-surrender, and make of our whole life a sacrifice of praise. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." Our lives will then exhale in fragrance and shoot

up in flashing tongues of ruddy light and beauty, when kindled into a flame of gratitude by the glow of Christ's great love. Let us lay our poor selves on that altar, as sacrifices of thanksgiving; for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FATHER'S GIFTS THROUGH THE SON.

COLOSSIANS i. 12-14 (R. V.).

WE have advanced thus far in this Epistle without having reached its main subject. We now, however, are on its verge. The next verses to those now to be considered lead us into the very heart of Paul's teaching, by which he would oppose the errors rife in the Colossian Church. The great passages describing the person and work of Jesus Christ are at hand, and here we have the immediate transition to them.

The skill with which the transition is made is remarkable. How gradually and surely the sentences, like some hovering winged things, circle more and more closely round the central light, till in the last words they touch it, . . . "the Son of His love"! It is like some long procession heralding a king. They that go before cry Hosanna, and point to him who comes last and chief. The affectionate greetings which begin the letter, pass into prayer; the prayer into thanksgiving. The thanksgiving, as in these words, lingers over and recounts our blessings, as a rich man counts his treasures, or a lover dwells on his joys. The enumeration of the blessings leads, as by a golden thread, to the thought and name of Christ, the fountain of them all, and then, with a burst and a rush, the flood of the truths about Christ which he had to give them sweeps through Paul's mind and heart, carrying everything before it. The name of Christ always opens the floodgates in Paul's heart.

We have here then the deepest grounds for Christian thanksgiving, which are likewise the preparations for a true estimate of the worth of the Christ who gives them. These grounds of thanksgiving are but various aspects of the one great blessing of "Salvation." The diamond flashes greens and purples, and yellows and reds, according to the angle at which its facets catch the eye.

It is also to be observed that all these blessings are the present possession of Christians. The language of the first three clauses in the verses before us points distinctly to a definite past act by which the Father, at some definite point of time, made us meet, delivered and translated us, while the present tense in the last clause shows that "our redemption" is not only begun by some definite act in the past, but is continuously and progressively possessed in the present.

We notice, too, the remarkable correspondence of language with that which Paul heard when he lay prone on the ground, blinded by the flashing light, and amazed by the pleading remonstrance from heaven which rung in his ears. "I send thee to the Gentiles . . . that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified." All the principal phrases are there, and are freely recombined by Paul, as if unconsciously his memory was haunted still by the sound of the transforming words heard so long ago.

I. The first ground of thankfulness which all Christians have is, that they are fit for the inheritance. Of course the metaphor here is drawn from the "inheritance" given to the people of Israel, namely, the land of Canaan. Unfortunately, our use of "heir" and "inheritance" confines the idea to possession by succession on death, and hence some perplexity is popularly experienced as to the force of the word in Scripture. There, it implies possession by lot, if anything more than the simple notion of possession; and points to the fact that the people did not win their land by their own swords, but because "God had a favour unto them." So the Christian inheritance is not won by our own merit, but given by God's goodness. The words may be literally rendered, "fitted us for the portion of the lot," and taken to mean the share or portion which consists in the lot; but perhaps it is clearer, and more accordant with the analogy of the division of the land among the tribes, to take them as meaning "for our (individual) share in the broad land which, as a whole, is the allotted possession of the saints." This possession belongs to them, and is situated in the world of "light." Such is the general outline of the thoughts here. The first question that arises is, whether this inheritance is present or future. The best answer is that it is both; because, whatever additions of power and splendour as yet unspeakable may wait to be revealed in the future, the essence of all which heaven can bring is ours to-day, if we live in the faith and love of Christ. The difference between a life of communion with God here and yonder is one of degree and not of kind. True, there are differences of which we cannot speak, in enlarged capacities, and a "spiritual body," and sins cast out, and nearer approach to "the fountain itself of heavenly radiance;" but he who can say, while he walks amongst the shadows of earth, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance," will neither leave his treasures behind him when he dies, nor enter on the possession of a wholly new inheritance, when he passes into the heavens. But while this is true, it is also true that that future possession of God will be so deepened and enlarged that its beginnings here are but the "earnest," of the same nature indeed as the estate, but limited in comparison as is the tuft of grass which used to be given to a new possessor, when set against the broad lands from which it was plucked. Here certainly the predominant idea is that of a present fitness for a mainly future possession.

We notice again—where the inheritance is situated—"in the light." There are several possible ways of connecting that clause with the preceding. But without discussing these, it may be enough to point out that the most satisfactory seems to be to regard it as specifying the region in which the inheritance lies. It lies in a realm where purity and knowledge and gladness dwell undimmed and unbounded by an envious ring of darkness. For these three are the triple rays into which, according to the Biblical use of the figure, that white beam may be resolved.

From this there follows that it is capable of being possessed only by saints. There is no merit or desert which makes men worthy of the inheritance, but there is a congruity, or correspondence between character and the inheritance. If we rightly understand what the essential elements of "heaven" are, we shall have no difficulty in seeing that the possession of it is utterly incompatible with anything but holiness. The vulgar ideas of what heaven is hinder people from seeing how to get there. They dwell upon the mere outside of the thing, they take symbols for realities and accidents for essentials, and so it appears an arbitrary arrangement that a man must have faith in Christ to enter heaven. If it be a kingdom of light, then only souls that love the light can go thither, and until owls and bats rejoice in the sunshine, there will be no way of being fit for the inheritance which is light, but by ourselves being "light in the Lord." Light itself is a torture to diseased eyes. Turn up any stone by the roadside and we see how unwelcome light is to crawling creatures that have lived in the darkness till they have come to love it.

Heaven is God and God is heaven. How can a soul possess God, and find its heaven in possessing Him? Certainly only by likeness to Him and loving Him. The old question, "Who shall stand in the Holy Place?" is not answered in the gospel by reducing the conditions, or negativing the old reply. The common sense of every conscience answers, and Christianity answers, as the Psalmist does, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

One more step has to be taken to reach the full meaning of these words, namely, the assertion that men who are not yet perfectly pure are already fit to be partakers of the inheritance. The tense of the verb in the original points back to a definite act by which the Colossians were made meet, namely, their conversion; and the plain emphatic teaching of the New Testament is that incipient and feeble faith in Christ works a change so great, that through it we are fitted for the inheritance by the impartation of a new nature, which, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, shapes from henceforth the very inmost centre of our personal being. In due time that spark will convert into its own fiery brightness the whole mass, however green and smokily it begins to burn. Not the absence of sin, but the presence of faith working by love, and longing for the light, makes fitness. No doubt flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and we must put off the vesture of the body which has wrapped us during the wild weather here, before we can be fully fit to enter the banqueting hall; nor do we know how much evil which has not its seat in the soul may drop away therewith—but the spirit is fit for heaven as soon as a man turns to God in Christ. Suppose a company of rebels, and one of them, melted by some reason or other, is brought back to loyalty. He is fit by that inward change, although he has not done a single act of loyalty, for the society of loyal subjects and unfit for that of traitors. Suppose a prodigal son away in the far off land. Some remembrance comes over him of what home used to be like, and of the bountiful housekeeping that is still there; and though it may begin with nothing more exalted than an empty stomach, if it ends in "I will arise and go to my Father," at that instant a gulf opens between him and the riotous living of "the citizens of that country," and he is no longer fitted for their company. He is meet for the fellowship of his father's house, though he has a weary journey before he gets there, and needs to have his rags changed, and his filth washed off him, ere he can sit down at the feast.

So whoever turns to the love of God in Christ, and yields in the inmost part of his being to the power of His grace, is already "light in the Lord." The true home and affinities of his real self are in the kingdom of the light, and he is ready for his part in the inheritance, either here or yonder. There is no breach of the great law, that character makes fitness for heaven—might we not say that character makes heaven?—for the very roots of character lie in disposition and desire, rather than in action. Nor is there in this principle anything inconsistent with the need for continual growth in congruity of nature with that land of light. The light within, if it be truly there, will, however slowly, spread, as surely as the grey of twilight brightens to the blaze of noonday. The heart will be more and more filled with it, and the darkness driven back more and more to brood in remote corners, and at last will vanish utterly. True fitness will become more and more fit. We shall grow more and more capable of God. The measure of our capacity is the measure of our possession, and the measure in which we have become light is the measure of our capacity for the light. The land was parted among the tribes of Israel according to their strength; some had a wider, some a narrower strip of territory. So, as there are differences in Christian character here, there will be differences in Christian participation in the inheritance hereafter. "Star differeth from star." Some will blaze in brighter radiance and glow with more fervent heat because they move in orbits closer to the sun.

But, thank God, we are "fit for the inheritance," if we have ever so humbly and poorly trusted ourselves to Jesus Christ and received His renewing life into our spirits. Character alone fits for heaven. But character may be in germ or in fruit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Do we trust ourselves to Him? Are we trying, with His help, to live as children of the light? Then we need not droop or despair by reason of evil that may still haunt our lives. Let us give it no quarter, for it diminishes our fitness for the full possession of God; but let it not cause our tongue to falter in "giving thanks to the Father who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

II. The second ground of thankfulness is, the change of king and country. God "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." These two clauses embrace the negative and positive sides of the same act which is referred to in the former ground of thankfulness, only stated now in reference to our allegiance and citizenship in the present rather than in the future. In the "deliverance" there may be a reference to God's bringing Israel out of Egypt, suggested by the previous mention of the inheritance, while the "translation" into the other kingdom may be an illustration drawn from the well-known practice of ancient warfare, the de-

portation of large bodies of natives from conquered kingdoms to some other part of the conqueror's realm.

We notice then the two kingdoms and their kings. "The power of darkness," is an expression found in Luke's Gospel (xxii. 18), and it may be used here as a reminiscence of our Lord's solemn words. "Power" here seems to imply the conception of harsh, arbitrary dominion, in contrast with the gracious rule of the other kingdom. It is a realm of cruel and grinding sway. Its prince is personified in an image that Æschylus or Dante might have spoken. Darkness sits sovereign there, a vast and gloomy form on an ebon throne, wielding a heavy sceptre over wide regions wrapped in night. The plain meaning of that tremendous metaphor is just this—that the men who are not Christians live in a state of subjection to darkness of ignorance, darkness of misery, darkness of sin. If I am not a Christian man, that black three-headed hound of hell sits baying on my door-step.

What a wonderful contrast the other kingdom and its King present! "The kingdom of"—not "the light," as we are prepared to hear, in order to complete the antithesis, but—"the Son of His love," who is the light. The Son who is the object of His love, on whom it all and ever rests, as on none besides. He has a kingdom in existence now, and not merely hoped for, and to be set up at some future time. Wherever men lovingly obey Christ, there is His kingdom. The subjects make the kingdom, and we may to-day belong to it, and be free from all other dominion because we bow to His. There then sit the two kings, like the two in the old story, "either of them on his throne, clothed in his robes, at the entering in of the gate of the city." Darkness and Light, the ebon throne and the white throne, surrounded each by their ministers; there Sorrow and Gloom, here Gladness and Hope; there Ignorance with blind eyes and idle aimless hands, here Knowledge with the sunlight on her face, and Diligence for her handmaid; here Sin, the pillar of the gloomy realm, there Righteousness, in robes so as no fuller on earth could white them. Under which king, my brother?

We notice the transference of subjects. The sculptures on Assyrian monuments explain this metaphor for us. A great conqueror has come, and speaks to us as Sennacherib did to the Jews (2 Kings xviii. 31, 32), "Come out to me . . . and I will take you away to a land of corn and wine, that ye may live and not die."

If we listen to His voice, He will lead away a long string of willing captives and plant them, not as pining exiles, but as happy naturalised citizens, in the kingdom which the Father has appointed for "the Son of His love."

That transference is effected on the instant of our recognising the love of God in Jesus Christ, and yielding up the heart to Him. We too often speak as if the "entrance ministered at last to" a believing soul "into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour," were its first entrance therein, and forget that we enter it as soon as we yield to the drawings of Christ's love and take service under the king. The change then is greater than at death. When we die, we shall change provinces, and go from an outlying colony to the mother city and seat of empire, but we shall not change kingdoms. We shall be under the same government, only then we shall be nearer the King and more loyal to Him. That change of king is the real fitness for heaven. We know little of what profound changes death may make, but clearly a physical change cannot effect a spiritual revolution. They who are not Christ's subjects will not become so by dying. If here we are trying to serve a King who has delivered us from the tyranny of darkness, we may be very sure that He will not lose His subjects in the darkness of the grave. Let us choose our king. If we take Christ for our heart's Lord, every thought of Him here, every piece of partial obedience and stained service, as well as every sorrow and every joy, our fading possessions and our undying treasures, the feeble new life that wars against our sins, and even the very sins themselves as contradictory of our deepest self, unite to seal to us the assurance, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off."

III. The heart and centre of all occasions for thankfulness is the Redemption which we receive in Christ.

"In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." The Authorised Version reads "redemption through His blood," but these words are not found in the best manuscripts, and are regarded by the principal modern editors as having been inserted from the parallel place in Ephesians (i. 7), where they are genuine. The very heart then of the blessings which God has bestowed, is "redemption," which consists primarily, though not wholly, in "forgiveness of sins," and is received by us in "the Son of His love."

"Redemption," in its simplest meaning, is the act of delivering a slave from captivity by the payment of ransom. So that it contains in its application to the effect of Christ's death, substantially the same figure as in the previous clause which spoke of a deliverance from a tyrant, only that what was there represented as an act of Power is here set forth as the act of self-sacrificing Love which purchases our freedom at a heavy cost. That ransom price is said by Christ Himself to be "His life," and His Incarnation to have the paying of that price as one of its two chief objects. So the words added here by quotation from the companion Epistle are in full accordance with New Testament teaching; but even omitting them, the meaning of the clause is unmistakable. Christ's death breaks the chains which bind us, and sets us free. By it He acquires us for Himself. That transcendent act of sacrifice has such a relation to the Divine government on the one hand, and to the "sin of the world," as a whole, on the other, that by it all who trust in Him are delivered from the most real penal consequences of sin and from the dominion of its darkness over their natures. We freely admit that we cannot penetrate to the understanding of how Christ's death thus avails. But just because the *rationale* of the doctrine is avowedly beyond our limits, we are barred from asserting that it is incompatible with God's character, or with common justice, or that it is immoral, and the like. When we know God through and through, to all the depths and heights and lengths and breadths of His nature, and when we know man in like manner, and when, consequently, we know the relation between God and

man as perfectly, and not till then, we shall have a right to reject the teaching of Scripture on this matter, on such grounds. Till then, let our faith lay hold on the fact, though we do not understand the "how" of the fact, and cling to that cross which is the great power of God unto salvation, and the heart-changing exponent of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

The essential and first element in this redemption is "the forgiveness of sins." Possibly some misconception of the nature of redemption may have been associated with the other errors which threatened the Colossian Church, and thus Paul may have been led to this emphatic declaration of its contents. Forgiveness, and not some mystic deliverance by initiation or otherwise from the captivity of flesh and matter, is redemption. There is more than forgiveness in it, but forgiveness lies on the threshold; and that not only the removal of legal penalties inflicted by a specific act, but the forgiveness of a father. A sovereign pardons when he remits the sentence which law has pronounced. A father forgives when the free flow of his love is unhindered by his child's fault, and he may forgive and punish at the same moment. The truest "penalty" of sin is that death which consists in separation from God; and the conceptions of judicial pardon and fatherly forgiveness unite when we think of the "remission of sins" as being the removal of that separation, and the deliverance of heart and conscience from the burden of guilt and of a father's wrath.

Such forgiveness leads to that full deliverance from the power of darkness, which is the completion of redemption. There is deep meaning in the fact that the word here used for "forgiveness," means literally, "sending away." Pardon has a mighty power to banish sin, not only as guilt, but as habit. The waters of the Gulf Stream bear the warmth of the tropics to the icy north, and lave the foot of the glaciers on its coast till they melt and mingle with the liberating waves. So the flow of the forgiving love of God thaws the hearts frozen in the obstinacy of sin, and blends our wills with itself in glad submission and grateful service.

But we must not overlook the significant words in which the condition of possessing this redemption is stated: "in Whom." There must be a real living union with Christ, by which we are truly "in Him" in order to our possession of redemption. "Redemption through His blood" is not the whole message of the Gospel; it has to be completed by "In Whom we have redemption through His blood." That real living union is effected by our faith, and when we are thus "in Him," our wills, hearts, spirits joined to Him, then, and only then, are we borne away from "the kingdom of the darkness" and partake of redemption. We cannot get His gifts without Himself.

We observe, in conclusion, how redemption appears here as a present and growing possession. There is emphasis on "we have." The Colossian Christians had by one definite act in the past been fitted for a share in the inheritance, and by the same act had been transferred to the kingdom of Christ. Already they possess the inheritance, and are in the kingdom, although both are to be more gloriously manifested in the future. Here, however, Paul contemplates rather the reception, moment by moment, of redemption. We might almost read "we are having," for the present tense seems used on purpose to convey the idea of a continual communication from Him to Whom we are to be united by faith. Daily we may draw what we daily need—daily forgiveness for daily sins, the washing of the feet which even he who has been bathed requires after each day's march through muddy roads, daily bread for daily hunger, and daily strength for daily effort. So day unto day may, in our narrow lives, as in the wide heavens with all their stars, utter speech, and night unto night show knowledge of the redeeming love of our Father. Like the rock that followed the Israelites in the wilderness, according to Jewish legend, and poured out water for their thirst, His grace flows ever by our sides and from its bright waters we may daily draw with joy.

And so let us lay to heart humbly these two lessons; that all our Christianity must begin with forgiveness, and that, however far advanced we may be in the Divine life, we never get beyond the need for a continual bestowal upon us of God's pardoning mercy.

Many of us, like some of these Colossians, are ready to call ourselves in some sense followers of Christ. The speculative side of Christian truth may have attractions for some of us, its lofty morality for others. Some of us may be mainly drawn to it by its comforts for the weary; some may be looking to it chiefly in hope of a future heaven. But whatever we are, and however we may be disposed to Christ and His Gospel, here is a plain message for us; we must begin by going to Him for pardon. It is not enough for any of us to find in Him "wisdom," or even "righteousness," for we need "redemption" which is "forgiveness," and unless He is to us forgiveness, He will not be either righteousness or wisdom.

We can climb a ladder that reaches to heaven, but its foot must be in "the horrible pit and miry clay" of our sins. Little as we like to hear it, the first need for us all is forgiveness. Everything begins with that. "The inheritance of the saints," with all its wealth of glory, its immortal life and unfading joys, its changeless security, and its unending progress deeper and deeper into the light and likeness of God, is the goal, but the only entrance is through the strait gate of penitence. Christ will forgive on our cry for pardon, and that is the first link of a golden chain unwinding from His hand by which we may ascend to the perfect possession of our inheritance in God. "Whom He justified, them," and them only, He will glorify.

CHAPTER V.

THE GLORY OF THE SON IN HIS RELATION TO THE FATHER, THE UNIVERSE, AND THE CHURCH.

COLOSSIANS i. 15-18 (R. V.).

As has already been remarked, the Colossian Church was troubled by teachers who had grafted on Jewish belief many of the strange speculations about matter and creation which have always had such a fascination for the Eastern mind. To us, they are apt to seem

empty dreams, baseless and bewildering; but they had force enough to shake the early Church to its foundation, and in some forms they still live.

These teachers in Colossæ seem to have held that all matter was evil and the seat of sin; that therefore the material creation could not have come directly from a good God, but was in a certain sense opposed to Him, or, at all events, was separated from Him by a great gulf. The void space was bridged by a chain of beings, half abstractions and half persons, gradually becoming more and more material. The lowest of them had created the material universe and now governed it, and all were to be propitiated by worship.

Some such opinions must be presupposed in order to give point and force to these great verses in which Paul opposes the solid truth to these dreams, and instead of a crowd of Powers and angelic Beings, in whom the effulgence of Deity was gradually darkened, and the spirit became more and more thickened into matter, lifts high and clear against that background of fable, the solitary figure of the one Christ. He fills all the space between God and man. There is no need for a crowd of shadowy beings to link heaven with earth. Jesus Christ lays His hand upon both. He is the head and source of creation; He is the head and fountain of life to His Church. Therefore He is first in all things, to be listened to, loved, and worshipped by men. As when the full moon rises, so when Christ appears, all the lesser stars with which Alexandrian and Eastern speculation had peopled the abysses of the sky are lost in the mellow radiance, and instead of a crowd of flickering ineffectual lights there is one perfect orb, "and heaven is overflowed." "We see no creature any more save Jesus only."

We have outgrown the special forms of error which afflicted the Church at Colossæ, but the truths which are here set over against them are eternal, and are needed to-day in our conflicts of opinion as much as then. There are here three grand conceptions of Christ's relations. We have Christ and God, Christ and Creation, Christ and the Church, and, built upon all these, the triumphant proclamation of His supremacy over all creatures in all respects.

I. We have the relation of Christ to God set forth in these grand words, "the image of the invisible God."

Apparently Paul is here using for his own purposes language which was familiar on the lips of his antagonists. We know that Alexandrian Judaism had much to say about the "Word," and spoke of it as the Image of God: and probably some such teaching had found its way to Colossæ. An "image" is a likeness or representation, as of a king's head on a coin, or of a face reflected in a mirror. Here it is that which makes the invisible visible. The God who dwells in the thick darkness, remote from sense and above thought, has come forth and made Himself known to man, even in a very real way has come within the reach of man's senses, in the manhood of Jesus Christ. Where then is there a place for the shadowy abstractions and emanations with which some would bind together God and man?

The first thought involved in this statement is, that the Divine Being in Himself is inconceivable and unapproachable. "No man hath seen God at any time nor can see Him." Not only is He beyond the reach of sense, but above the apprehension of the understanding. Direct and immediate knowledge of Him is impossible. There may be, there is, written on every human spirit a dim consciousness of His presence, but that is not knowledge. Creatural limitations prevent it, and man's sin prevents it. He is "the King invisible," because He is the "Father of Lights" dwelling in "a glorious privacy of light," which is to us darkness because there is in it "no darkness at all."

Then, the next truth included here is, that Christ is the perfect manifestation and image of God. In Him we have the invisible becoming visible. Through Him we know all that we know of God, as distinguished from what we guess or imagine or suspect of Him. On this high theme, it is not wise to deal much in the scholastic language of systems and creeds. Few words, and these mainly His own, are best, and he is least likely to speak wrongly who confines himself most to Scripture in his presentation of the truth. All the great streams of teaching in the New Testament concur in the truth which Paul here proclaims. The conception in John's Gospel of the Word which is the utterance and making audible of the Divine mind, the conceptions in the Epistle to the Hebrews of the effulgence or forthshining of God's glory, and the very image, or stamped impress of His substance, are but other modes of representing the same facts of full likeness and complete manifestation, which Paul here asserts by calling the man Christ Jesus, the image of the Invisible God. The same thoughts are involved in the name by which our Lord called Himself, the Son of God; and they cannot be separated from many words of His, such as "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In Him the Divine nature comes near to us in a form that once could be grasped in part by men's senses, for it was "that of the Word of life" which they saw with their eyes and their hands handled, and which is to-day and for ever a form that can be grasped by mind and heart and will. In Christ we have the revelation of a God who can be known, and loved, and trusted, with a knowledge which, though it be not complete, is real and valid, with a love which is solid enough to be the foundation of a life, with a trust which is conscious that it has touched rock and builds secure. Nor is that fact that He is the revealer of God, one that began with His incarnation, or ends with His earthly life. From the beginning and before the creatural beginning, as we shall see in considering another part of these great verses, the Word was the agent of all Divine activity, the "arm of the Lord," and the source of all Divine illumination, "the face of the Lord," or, as we have the thought put in the remarkable words of the Book of Proverbs, where the celestial and pure Wisdom is more than a personification, though not yet distinctly conceived as a person, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way. I was by Him as one brought up—or as a master worker—with Him, and I was daily His delight . . . and My delights were with the sons of men." And after the veils of flesh and sense are done away, and we see face to face, I believe that the face which we shall see, and seeing, shall have beauty born of the vision pass-

ing into our faces, will be the face of Jesus Christ, in which the light of the glory of God shall shine for the redeemed and perfected sons of God, even as it did for them when they groped amid the shows of earth. The law for time and for eternity is, "I have declared Thy name unto My brethren and will declare it." That great fathomless, shoreless ocean of the Divine nature is like a "closed sea"—Christ is the broad river which brings its waters to men, and "everything liveth whithersoever the river cometh."

In these brief words on so mighty a matter, I must run the risk of appearing to deal in unsupported statements. My business is not so much to try to prove Paul's words as to explain them, and then to press them home. Therefore I would urge that thought, that we depend on Christ for all true knowledge of God. Guesses are not knowledge. Speculations are not knowledge. Peradventures, whether of hope or fear, are not knowledge. What we poor men need is a certitude of a God who loves us and cares for us, has an arm that can help us, and a heart that will. The God of "pure theism" is little better than a phantom, so unsubstantial that you can see the stars shining through the pale form, and when a man tries to lean on him for support, it is like leaning on a wreath of mist. There is nothing. There is no certitude firm enough for us to find sustaining power against life's trials in resting upon it, but in Christ. There is no warmth of love enough for us to thaw our frozen limbs by, apart from Christ. In Him, and in Him alone, the far off, awful, doubtful God becomes a God very near, of Whom we are sure, and sure that He loves and is ready to help and cleanse and save.

And that is what we each need. "My soul crieth out for God, for the living God." And never will that orphaned cry be answered, but in the possession of Christ, in Whom we possess the Father also. No dead abstractions —no reign of law—still less the dreary proclamation, "Behold we know not anything," least of all, the pottage of material good, will hush that bitter wail that goes up unconsciously from many an Esau's heart—"My father, my father!" Men will find Him in Christ. They will find Him nowhere else. It seems to me that the only refuge for this generation from atheism—if it is still allowable to use that unfashionable word—is the acceptance of Christ as the revealer of God. On any other terms religion is rapidly becoming impossible for the cultivated class. The great word which Paul opposed to the cobwebs of Gnostic speculation is the word for our own time with all its perplexities—Christ is the Image of the Invisible God.

II. We have the relation of Christ to Creation set forth in that great name, "the firstborn of all creation," and further elucidated by a magnificent series of statements which proclaim Him to be agent or medium, and aim or goal of creation, prior to it in time and dignity, and its present upholder and bond of unity.

"The firstborn of all creation." At first sight, this name seems to include Him in the great family of creatures as the eldest, and clearly to treat Him as one of them, just because He is declared to be in some sense the first of them. That meaning has been attached to the words; but it is shown not to be their intention by the language of the next verse, which is added to prove and explain the title. It distinctly alleges that Christ was "before" all creation, and that He is the **agent** of all creation. To insist that the words must be explained so as to include Him in "creation" would be to go right in the teeth of the Apostle's own justification and explanation of them. So that the true meaning is that He is the firstborn, in comparison with, or in reference to, all creation. Such an understanding of the force of the expression is perfectly allowable grammatically, and is necessary unless this verse is to be put in violent contradiction to the next. The **same** construction is found in Milton's

> "Adam, the goodliest man of men since born,
> His sons, the fairest of her daughters, Eve,"

where "of" distinctly means "in comparison with," and not "belonging to."

The title implies priority in existence, and supremacy. It substantially means the same thing as the other title of "the only begotten Son," only that the latter brings into prominence the relation of the Son to the Father, while the former lays stress on His relation to Creation. Further it must be noted, that this name applies to the Eternal Word and not to the incarnation of that Word, or to put it in another form, the divinity and not the humanity of the Lord Jesus is in the Apostle's view. Such is the briefest outline of the meaning of this great name.

A series of clauses follow, stating more fully the relation of the firstborn Son to Creation, and so confirming and explaining the title.

The whole universe is, as it were, set in one class, and He alone over against it. No language could be more emphatically all-comprehensive. Four times in one sentence we have "all things"—the whole universe—repeated, and traced to Him as Creator and Lord. "In the heavens and the earth" is quoted from Genesis, and is intended here, as there, to be an exhaustive enumeration of the creation according to place. "Things visible or invisible" again includes the whole under a new principle of division—there are visible things in heaven, as sun and stars, there may be invisible on earth, but whatever and of whatever sort they are, He made them. "Whether thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers," an enumeration evidently alluding to the dreamy speculations about an angelic hierarchy filling the space between the far off God, and men immersed in matter. There is a tone of contemptuous impatience in Paul's voice as he quotes the pompous list of sonorous titles which a busy fancy had coined. It is as if he had said, You are being told a great deal about these angel hierarchies, and know all about their ranks and gradations. I do not know anything about them; but this I know, that if, amid the unseen things in the heavens or the earth, there be any such, my Lord made them, and is their master. So he groups together the whole universe of created beings, actual or imaginary, and then high above it, separate from it, its Lord and Creator, its upholder and end, he points to the majestic person of the only begotten Son of God, His Firstborn, higher than all the rulers of the earth, whether human or superhuman.

The language employed brings into strong relief the manifold variety of relations which the Son sustains to the universe, by the variety of the prepositions used in the sentence. The whole sum of created things (for the Greek means not only "all things," but "all things considered as a unity") was in the original act, created in Him, through Him, and unto Him. The first of these words, "in Him," regards Him as the creative centre, as it were, or element in which as in a storehouse or reservoir all creative force resided, and was in a definite act put forth. The thought may be parallel with that in the prologue to John's Gospel, "In Him was life." The Word stands to the universe as the incarnate Christ does to the Church; and as all spiritual life is in Him, and union to Him is its condition, so all physical takes its origin within the depths of His Divine nature. The error of the Gnostics was to put the act of creation and the thing created as far away as possible from God, and it is met by this remarkable expression, which brings creation and the creatures in a very real sense within the confines of the Divine nature, as manifested in the Word, and asserts the truth of which pantheism so called is the exaggeration, that all things are in Him, like seeds in a seed vessel, while yet they are not identified with Him.

The possible dangers of that profound truth, which has always been more in harmony with Eastern than with Western modes of thought, are averted by the next preposition used, "all things have been created through Him." That presupposes the full, clear demarcation between creature and creator, and so on the one hand extricates the person of the Firstborn of all creation from all risk of being confounded with the universe, while on the other it emphasises the thought that He is the medium of the Divine energy, and so brings into clear relief His relation to the inconceivable Divine nature. He is the image of the invisible God, and accordingly, through Him have all things been created. The same connection of ideas is found in the parallel passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the words, "through Whom also He made the worlds," stand in immediate connection with "being the effulgence of His glory."

But there remains yet another relation between Him and the act of creation. "For Him" they have been made. All things come from and tend towards Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. All things spring from His will, draw their being from that fountain, and return thither again. These relations which are here declared of the Son, are in more than one place declared of the Father. Do we face the question fairly—what theory of the person of Jesus Christ explains that fact?

But further, His existence before the whole creation is repeated, with a force in both the words, "He is," which can scarcely be given in English. The former is emphatic—He Himself—and the latter emphasises not only pre-existence, but absolute existence. "He *was* before all things" would not have said so much as "He *is* before all things." We are reminded of His own words, "Before Abraham was, I am."

"In Him all things consist" or hold together. He is the element in which takes place and by which is caused that continued creation which is the preservation of the universe, as He is the element in which the original creative act took place of old. All things came into being and form an ordered unity in Him. He links all creatures and forces into a co-operant whole, reconciling their antagonisms, drawing all their currents into one great tidal wave, melting all their notes into music which God can hear, however discordant it may sometimes sound to us. He is "the bond of perfectness," the keystone of the arch, the centre of the wheel.

Such, then, in merest outline is the Apostle's teaching about the Eternal Word and the Universe. What sweetness and what reverential awe such thoughts should cast around the outer world and the providences of life! How near they should bring Jesus Christ to us! What a wonderful thought that is, that the whole course of human affairs and of natural processes is directed by Him who died upon the cross! The helm of the universe is held by the hands which were pierced for us. The Lord of Nature and the Mover of all things is that Saviour on whose love we may pillow our aching heads.

We need these lessons to-day, when many teachers are trying hard to drive all that is spiritual and Divine out of creation and history, and to set up a merciless law as the only God. Nature is terrible and stern sometimes, and the course of events can inflict crushing blows; but we have not the added horror of thinking both to be controlled by no will. Christ is King in either region, and with our elder brother for the ruler of the land, we shall not lack corn in our sacks, nor a Goshen to dwell in. We need not people the void, as these old heretics did, with imaginary forms, nor with impersonal forces and laws—nor need we, as so many are doing to-day, wander through its many mansions as through a deserted house, finding nowhere a Person who welcomes us; for everywhere we may behold our Saviour, and out of every storm and every solitude hear His voice across the darkness saying, "It is I; be not afraid."

III. The last of the relations set forth in this great section is that between Christ and His Church. "He is the head of the body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

A parallel is plainly intended to be drawn between Christ's relation to the material creation and to the Church, the spiritual creation. As the Word of God before incarnation is to the universe, so is the incarnate Christ to the Church. As in the former, He is prior in time and superior in dignity, so is He in the latter. As in the universe He is source and origin of all being, so in the Church He is the beginning, both as being first and as being origin of all spiritual life. As the glowing words which described His relation to creation began with the great title "the Firstborn," so those which describe His relation to the Church close with the same name in a different application. Thus the two halves of His work are as it were moulded into a golden circle, and the end of the description bends round towards the beginning.

Briefly, then, we have here first, Christ the head, and the Church His body. In the lower realm the Eternal Word was the power which held all things together, and similar but higher in fashion is the relation between Him

and the whole multitude of believing souls. Popular physiology regards the head as the seat of life. So the fundamental idea in the familiar metaphor, when applied to our Lord, is that of the source of the mysterious spiritual life which flows from Him into all the members, and is sight in the eye, strength in the arm, swiftness in the foot, colour in the cheek, being richly various in its manifestations but one in its nature, and all His. The same mysterious derivation of life from Him is taught in His own metaphor of the Vine, in which every branch, however far away from the root, lives by the common life circulating through all, which clings in the tendrils, and reddens in the clusters, and is not theirs though it be in them.

That thought of the source of life leads necessarily to the other, that He is the centre of unity, by Whom the "many members" become "one body," and the maze of branches one vine. The "head," too, naturally comes to be the symbol for authority—and these three ideas of seat of life, centre of unity, and emblem of absolute power, appear to be those principally meant here.

Christ is further the beginning to the Church. In the natural world He was before all, and source of all. The same double idea is contained in this name, "the Beginning." It does not merely mean the first member of a series who begins it, as the first link in a chain does, but it means the power which causes the series to begin. The root is the beginning of the flowers which blow in succession through the plant's flowering time, though we may also call the first flower of the number the beginning. But Christ is root; not merely the first flower, though He is also that.

He is head and beginning to His Church by means of His resurrection. He is the firstborn from the dead, and His communication of spiritual life to His Church requires the historical fact of His resurrection as its basis, for a dead Christ could not be the source of life; and that resurrection completes the manifestation of the incarnate Word, by our faith in which His spiritual life flows into our spirits. Unless He has risen from the dead, all His claims to be anything else than a wise teacher and fair character crumble into nothing, and to think of Him as a source of life is impossible.

He is the beginning through His resurrection, too, in regard of His raising us from the dead. He is the first-fruits of them that slept, and bears the promise of a mighty harvest. He has risen from the dead, and therein we have not only the one demonstration for the world that there is a life after death, but the irrefragable assurance to the Church that because He lives it shall live also. A dead body and a living head cannot be. We are knit to Him too closely for the Fury "with the abhorred shears" to cut the thread. He has risen that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

So the Apostle concludes that in all things He is first—and all things are, that He may be first. Whether in nature or in grace, that pre-eminence is absolute and supreme. The end of all the majesty of creation and of all the wonders of grace is that His solitary figure may stand clearly out as centre and lord of the universe, and His name be lifted high over all.

So the question of questions for us all is, What think ye of Christ? Our thoughts now have necessarily been turned to subjects which may have seemed abstract and remote—but these truths which we have been trying to make clear, and to present in their connection, are not the mere terms or propositions of a half mystical theology far away from our daily life, but bear most gravely and directly on our deepest interests. I would fain press on every conscience the sharp-pointed appeal—What is this Christ to us? Is He anything to us but a name? Do our hearts leap up with a joyful Amen when we read these great words of this text. Are we ready to crown Him Lord of all? Is He our head, to fill us with vitality, to inspire and to command? Is He the goal and the end of our individual life? Can we each say—I live by Him, in Him, and for Him?

Happy are we, if we give to Christ the pre-eminence, and if our hearts set "Him first, Him last, Him midst and without end."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RECONCILING SON.

COLOSSIANS i. 19-22 (R. V.).

THESE words correspond to those which immediately precede them, inasmuch as they present the same sequence, and deal with Christ in His relation to God, to the universe, and to the Church. The strata of thought are continuous, and lie here in the same order as we found them there. There we had set forth the work of the pre-incarnate Word as well as of the incarnate Christ; here we have mainly the reconciling power of His cross proclaimed as reaching to every corner of the universe, and as culminating in its operations on the believing souls to whom Paul speaks. There we had the fact that He was the image of God laid as basis of His relation to men and creatures; here that fact itself apprehended in somewhat different manner, namely, as the dwelling in Him of all "fulness," is traced to its ground in the "good pleasure" of the Father, and the same Divine purpose is regarded as underlying Christ's whole reconciling work. We observe, also, that all this section with which we have now to deal is given as the explanation and reason of Christ's pre-eminence. These are the principal links of connection with the previous words, and having noted them, we may proceed to attempt some imperfect consideration of the overwhelming thoughts here contained.

I. As before, we have Christ in relation to God. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell."

Now we may well suppose from the use of the word "fulness" here, which we know to have been a very important term in later full-blown Gnostic speculations, that there is a reference to some of the heretical teachers' expressions, but such a supposition is not needed either to explain the meaning or to account for the use of the word.

"The fulness"—what fulness? I think, although it has been disputed, that the language of the next chapter (ii. 9), where we read "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," should settle that.

It seems most improbable that with two out of three significant words the same, the ellipse

should be supplied by anything but the third. The meaning then will be—the whole abundance, or totality of Divine powers and attributes. That is, to put it in homelier words, that all that Divine nature in all its sweet greatness, in all its infinite wealth of tenderness and power and wisdom, is embodied in Jesus Christ. We have no need to look to heavens above or to earth beneath for fragmentary revelations of God's character. We have no need to draw doubtful inferences as to what God is from the questionable teachings of nature, or from the mysteries of human history with its miseries. No doubt these do show something of Him to observant hearts, and most to those who have the key to their meaning by their faith in a clearer revelation. At sundry times and in divers manners, God has spoken to the world by these partial voices, to each of which some syllables of His name have been committed. But He has put His whole name in that messenger of a New Covenant by whom He has finally declared His whole character to us, even His Son, in whom "it was the good pleasure of the Father that all the fulness should dwell."

The word rendered "dwell" implies a permanent abode, and may have been chosen in order to oppose a view which we know to have prevailed later, and may suspect to have been beginning to appear thus early, namely, that the union of the Divine and the human in the person of Christ was but temporary. At all events, emphasis is placed here on the opposite truth that that indwelling does not end with the earthly life of Jesus, and is not like the shadowy and transient incarnations of Eastern mythology or speculation—a mere assumption of a fleshly nature for a moment, which is dropped from the re-ascending Deity, but that, for evermore, manhood is wedded to divinity in the perpetual humanity of Jesus Christ.

And this indwelling is the result of the Father's good pleasure. Adopting the supplement in the Authorised and Revised Versions, we might read "the Father pleased"—but without making that change, the force of the words remains the same. The Incarnation and whole work of Christ are referred to their deepest ground in the will of the Father. The word rendered "pleased" implies both counsel and complacency; it is both pleasure and good pleasure. The Father determined the work of the Son, and delighted in it. Caricatures intentional or unintentional of New Testament teaching have often represented it as making Christ's work the means of pacifying an unloving God and moving Him to mercy. That is no part of the Pauline doctrine. But he, as all his brethren, taught that the love of God is the cause of the mission of Christ, even as Christ Himself had taught that "God so loved the world that He sent His Son." On that Rock-foundation of the will—the loving will of the Father, is built the whole work of His Incarnate Son. And as that work was the issue of His eternal purpose, so it is the object of His eternal delight. That is the wonderful meaning of the word which fell gently as the dove descending on His head, and lay on His locks wet from His baptism, like a consecrating oil—"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God willed that so He should be; He delighted that so He was. Through Christ, the Father purposed that His fulness should be communicated to us, and through Christ the Father rejoices to pour His abundance into our emptiness, that we may be filled with all the fulness.

II. Again, we have here, as before, Christ and the Universe, of which He is not only Maker, Sustainer, and Lord, but through "the blood of His cross" reconciles "all things unto Himself."

Probably these same false teachers had dreams of reconciling agents among the crowd of shadowy phantoms with which they peopled the void. Paul lifts up in opposition to all these the one Sovereign Mediator, whose cross is the bond of peace for all the universe.

It is important for the understanding of these great words to observe their distinct reference to the former clauses which dealt with our Lord's relation to the universe as Creator. The same words are used in order to make the parallelism as close as may be. "Through Him" was creation; "through Him" is reconciliation. "All things"—or as the Greek would rather suggest, "the universe"—all things considered as an aggregate—were made and sustained through Him and subordinated to Him; the same "all things" are reconciled. A significant change in the order of naming the elements of which these are composed is noticeable. When creation is spoken of the order is "in the heavens and upon the earth"—the order of creation; but when reconciliation is the theme the order is reversed, and we read "things upon the earth and things in the heavens"—those coming first which stand nearest to the reconciling cross, and are first to feel the power which streams from it.

This obvious intentional correspondence between these two paragraphs shows us that whatever be the nature of the "reconciliation" spoken of here, it is supposed to affect not only rational and responsible creatures who alone in the full sense of the word can be reconciled, as they only in the full sense of the word can be enemies, but to extend to things, and to send its influence through the universe. The width of the reconciliation is the same as that of the creation; they are conterminous. That being the case, "reconciliation" here must have a different shade of meaning when applied to the sum total of created things from what it has when applied to persons. But not only are inanimate creatures included in the expression; it may even be made a question whether the whole of mankind is not excluded from it, not only by the phrase "all things," but also from the consideration that the effect of Christ's death on men is the subject of the following words, which are not an explanation of this clause, but an addition to it, introducing an entirely different department of Christ's reconciling work. Nor should we lose sight of the very significant omission in this section of the reference to the angelic beings who were named in the creation section. We hear nothing now about thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. The division into "visible and invisible" is not reproduced. I suggest the possibility that the reason may be the intention to represent this "reconciliation" as taking effect exclusively on the regions of creation below the angelic and below the human, while the "reconciliation," properly so called, which is brought to pass on alienated men is dealt with first in the following words.

If this be so, then these words refer mainly to the restitution of the material universe to its primal obedience, and represent Christ the Creator removing by His cross the shadow which has passed over nature by reason of sin. It has been well said, "How far this restoration of universal nature may be subjective, as involved in the changed perceptions of man thus brought into harmony with God, and how far it may have an objective and independent existence, it were vain to speculate." *

Scripture seems to teach that man's sin has made the physical world "subject to vanity"; for, although much of what it says on this matter is unquestionably metaphor only, portraying the Messianic blessings in poetical language never meant for dogmatic truth, and although unquestionably physical death reigned among animals, and storms and catastrophes swept over the earth long before man or sin were here, still—seeing that man by his sin has compelled dead matter to serve his lusts and to be his instrument in acts of rebellion against God, making "a league with the stones of the field" against his and their Master—seeing that he has used earth to hide heaven and to shut himself out from its glories, and so has made it an unwilling antagonist to God and temptress to evil—seeing that he has actually polluted the beauty of the world and has stained many a lovely scene with his sin, making its rivers run red with blood—seeing that he has laid unnumbered woes on the living creatures—we may feel that there is more than poetry in the affirmation that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together," and may hear a deep truth, the extent of which we cannot measure, in Milton's majestic lines:

> "Disproportioned Sin
> Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
> Brake the fair music that all creatures made
> To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed."

Here we have held forth in words, the extent of which we can measure as little, the counter-hope that wherever and however any such effect has come to pass on the material universe, it shall be done away by the reconciling power of the blood shed on the cross. That reconciling power goes as far as His creative power. The universe is one, not only because all created by the one personal Divine Word, nor because all upheld by Him, but because in ways to us unknown, the power of the cross pierces its heights and depths. As the impalpable influences of the sun bind planets and comets into one great system, so from Him on His cross may stream out attractive powers which knit together far off regions, and diverse orders, and bring all in harmonious unity to God, who has made peace by the blood shed on the cross, and has thereby been pleased to reconcile all things to Himself.

> "And a Priest's hand through creation
> Waveth calm and consecration."

It may be that the reference to things in heaven is like the similar reference in the previous verses, occasioned by some dreams of the heretical teachers. He may merely mean to say: You speak much about heavenly things, and have filled the whole space between God's throne and man's earth with creatures thick as the motes in the sunbeam. I know nothing about them; but this I know, that, if they are, Christ made them, and that if among them there be antagonism to God, it can be overcome by the cross. As to reconciliation proper,—in the heavens, meaning by that, among spiritual beings who dwell in that realm, it is clear there can be no question of it. There is no enmity among the angels of heaven, and no place for return to union with God among their untroubled bands, who "hearken to the voice of His word." But still, if the hypothetical form of the clause and the use of the neuter gender permit any reference to intelligent beings in the heavens, we know that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the cross has been the teacher of before unlearned depths in the Divine nature and purposes, the knowledge of which has drawn them nearer the heart of God, and made even their blessed union with Him more blessed and more close.

On no subject is it more necessary to remember the limitations of our knowledge than on this great theme. On none is confident assertion more out of place. The general truth taught is clear, but the specific application of it to the various regions of the universe is very doubtful. We have no source of knowledge on that subject but the words of Scripture, and we have no means of verifying or checking the conclusions we may draw from them. We are bound, therefore, if we go beyond the general principle, to remember that it is one thing, and our reckoning up of what it includes is quite another. Our inferences have not the certainty of God's word. It comes to us with "Verily, verily." We have no right to venture on more than Perhaps.

Especially is this the case when we have but one or two texts to build on, and these most general in their language. And still more, when we find other words of Scripture which seem hard to reconcile with them, if pressed to their utmost meaning. In such a case our wisdom is to recognise that God has not been pleased to give us the means of constructing a dogma on the subject, and rather to seek to learn the lessons taught by the obscurity that remains than rashly and confidently to proclaim our inferences from half of our materials as if they were the very heart of the gospel.

Sublime and great beyond all our dreams, we may be sure, shall be the issue. Certain as the throne of God is it that His purposes shall be accomplished—and at last this shall be the fact for the universe, as it has ever been the will of the Father—"Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever." To that highest hope and ultimate vision for the whole creation, who will not say, Amen? The great sight which the seer beheld in Patmos is the best commentary on our text. To him the eternal order of the universe was unveiled—the great white throne, a snowy Alp in the centre; between the throne and the creatures, the Lamb, through Whom blessing and life passed outwards to them, and their incense and praise passed inwards to the throne; and all around the "living creatures," types of the aggregate of creatural life, the "elders," representatives of the Church redeemed from among men, and myriads of the firstborn of heaven. The eyes of all alike wait upon that slain Lamb. In Him they see God

* Bp. Lightfoot, "On Coloss." p. 226.

in clearest light of love and gentlest might—and as they look and learn and are fed, each according to his hunger, from the fulness of Christ, "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," will be heard saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

III. Christ, and His Reconciling Work in the Church. We have still the parallel kept up between the reconciling and the creative work of Christ. As in verse 18 He was represented as the giver of life to the Church, in a higher fashion than to the universe, so, and probably with a similar heightening of the meaning of "reconciliation." He is here set forth as its giver to the Church.

Now observe the solemn emphasis of the description of the condition of men before that reconciling work has told upon their hearts. They are "alienated"—not "aliens," as if that were their original condition, but "alienated," as having become so. The same thought that man's sin and separation from God is a fall, something abnormal and superinduced on humanity, which is implied in "reconciliation" or restoration to an original concord, is implied in this expression. "And enemies in your mind"—the seat of the enmity is in that inner man which thinks, reflects, and wills, and its sphere of manifestation is "in evil works" which are religiously acts of hostility to God because morally they are bad. We should not read "*by* wicked works" as the Authorised Version does, for the evil deeds have not made them enemies, but the enmity has originated the evil deeds, and is witnessed to by them.

That is a severe indictment, a plain, rough, and as it is thought now-a-days, a far too harsh description of human nature. Our forefathers no doubt were tempted to paint the "depravity of human nature" in very black colours—but I am very sure that we are tempted just in the opposite direction. It sounds too harsh and rude to press home the old-fashioned truth on cultured, respectable ladies and gentlemen. The charge is not that of conscious, active hostility, but of practical want of affection, as manifested by habitual disobedience or inattention to God's wishes, and by indifference and separation from Him in heart and mind.

And are these not the habitual temper of multitudes? The signs of love are joy in the company of the beloved, sweet memories and longings if parted, eager fulfilment of their lightest wish, a quick response to the most slender association recalling them to our thoughts. Have we these signs of love to God? If not, it is time to consider what temper of heart and mind towards the most loving of Hearts and the most unwearied of Givers, is indicated by the facts that we scarcely ever think of Him, that we have no delight in His felt presence, that most of our actions have no reference whatever to Him and would be done just the same if there were no God at all. Surely such a condition is liker hostility than love.

Further, here, as uniformly, God Himself is the Reconciler. He"—that is, God, not Christ, "has reconciled us." Some, indeed, read "ye have been reconciled," but the preponderance of authority is in favour of the text as it stands, which yields a sense accordant with the usual mode of representation. It is we who are reconciled. It is God who reconciles. It is we who are enemies. The Divine patience loves on through all our enmity, and though perfect love meeting human sin must become wrath, which is consistent with love, it never becomes hatred, which is love's opposite.

Observe finally the great means of reconciliation: "In the body of His flesh" that is, of course, Christ's flesh—God has reconciled us. Why does the Apostle use this apparently needless exuberance of language—"the body of His flesh"? It may have been in order to correct some erroneous tendencies towards a doctrine which we know was afterwards eagerly embraced in the Eastern Churches, that our Lord's body was not truly flesh, but only a phantasm or appearance. It may have been to guard against risk of confounding it with His "body the Church," spoken of in the 18th verse, though that supposes a scarcely credible dulness in his readers. Or it may more naturally be accounted for as showing how full his own mind was of the overwhelming wonder of the fact that He, Whose majesty he has been setting forth in such deep words, should veil His eternal glories and limit His far-reaching energies within a fleshly body. He would point the contrast between the Divine dignity of the Eternal Word, the Creator and Lord of the universe, and the lowliness of His incarnation. On these two pillars, as on two solid piers, one on either continent, with a great gulf between, the Divinity of Christ on one side, His Manhood on the other, is built the bridge by which we pass over the river into the glory.

But that is not all. The Incarnation is not the whole gospel. The body of His flesh becomes the means of our reconciliation "through death." Christ's death has so met the requirements of the Divine law that the Divine love can come freely forth, and embrace and forgive sinful men. That fact is the very centre of the revelation of God in Christ, the very secret of His power. He has died. Voluntarily and of His own love, as well as in obedience to the Father's loving will, He has borne the consequences of the sin which He had never shared, in that life of sorrow and sympathy, in that separation from God which is sin's deepest penalty, and of which the solemn witness comes to us in the cry that rent the darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and in that physical death which is the parable in the material sphere of the true death of the spirit. We do not know all the incidents of Christ's death. The whole manner of its operation has not been told us, but the fact has been. It does not affect the Divine heart. That we know, for "God so loved the world, that He sent His Son." But it does affect the Divine government. Without it, forgiveness could not have been. Its influence extends to all the years before, as to all after, Calvary, for the fact that Man continued to be after Man had sinned, was because the whole Divine government from the first had respect to the sacrifice that was to be, as now it all is moulded by the merit of the sacrifice that has been. And in this aspect of the case, the previous thoughts as to the blood of the cross having power in the material universe derive a new meaning, if we regard the whole history of the world as shaped by Christ's

sacrifice, and the very continuance of humanity from the first moment of transgression as possible, because He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," whose cross, as an eternal fact in the Divine purpose, influenced the Divine government long before it was realised in time.

For us, that wondrous love—mightier than death, and not to be quenched by many waters—is the one power that can change our alienation to glad friendship, and melt the frost and hard-ribbed ice of indifference and dread into love. That, and that alone, is the solvent for stubborn wills, the magnet for distant hearts. The cross of Christ is the key-stone of the universe and the conqueror of all enmity.

If religion is to have sovereign power in our lives, it must be the religion built upon faith in the Incarnate Son of God, who reconciles the world to God upon His cross. That is the only faith which makes men love God and binds them to Him with bands which cannot be broken. Other types of Christianity are but tepid; and lukewarm water is an abomination. The one thing that makes us ground our rebellious arms and say, Lord, I surrender, Thou hast conquered, is to see in Christ's life the perfect image of God, and in His death the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

What does it avail for us that the far-reaching power of Christ's cross shoots out magnetic forces to the uttermost verge of the heavens, and binds the whole universe by silken blood-red cords to God, if it does not bind me to Him in love and longing? What does it avail that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, if I am unconscious of the enmity, and careless of the friendship? Each man has to ask Himself, Am I reconciled to God? Has the sight of His great love on the cross won me, body and soul, to His love and service? Have I flung away self-will, pride, and enmity, and yielded myself a glad captive to the loving Christ who died? His cross draws us, His love beckons us. God pleads with all hearts. He who has made peace by so costly means as the sacrifice of His Son, condescends to implore the rebels to come into amity with Him, and "prays us with much entreaty to receive the gift." God beseeches us to be reconciled to Himself.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF RECONCILIATION AND ITS HUMAN CONDITIONS.

COLOSSIANS i. 22, 23 (R. V.).

THE Apostle has been sketching in magnificent outline a vast system, which we may almost call the scheme of the universe. He has set forth Christ as its Lord and centre, through Whom all things at first came into being, and still continue to be. In parallel manner he has presented Christ as Lord and Centre of the Church, its lifegiving Head. And finally he has set forth Christ as the Reconciler of all discords in heaven and earth, and especially of that which parts sinful men from God.

And now he shows us here, in the first words of our text, the purpose of this whole manifestation of God in Christ to be the presenting of men perfect in purity, before the perfect judgment of God. He then appends the condition on which the accomplishment of this ultimate purpose in each man depends—namely, the man's continuance in the faith and hope of the Gospel. That leads him to gather up, in a series of clauses characterising the Gospel, certain aspects of it which constitute subordinate motives and encouragements to such steadfastness. That is, I think, the outline connection of the words before us, which at first sight seem somewhat tangled and difficult to unravel.

I. We have then, first, to consider the ultimate purpose of God in the work of Christ.

"To present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him." It may be a question whether these words should be connected with "now hath He reconciled," or whether we are to go farther back in the long paragraph, and make them dependent on "it was the good pleasure of the Father." The former seems the more natural—namely, to see here a statement of the great end contemplated in our reconciliation to God; which, indeed, whatever may be the grammatical construction preferred here, is also, of course, the ultimate object of the Father's good pleasure. In the word "present" there is possibly a sacrificial allusion, as there is unquestionably in its use in Rom. xii., "Present your bodies a living sacrifice"; or there may be another and even more eloquent metaphor implied, that of the bringing of the bride to the husband by the friend of the bridegroom. That lovely figure is found in two instances of the use of the word in Paul's epistle (2 Cor. ii. 2, "to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," and Eph. v. 27, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church"), and possibly in others. It certainly gives an appropriate and beautiful emblem here if we think of the presentation of the bride in virginal beauty and purity to her Lord at that last great day which is the bridal day of the perfected Church.

There is, however, no need to suppose any metaphor at all, nor any allusion beyond the general meaning of the word—to set in the presence of. The sacrificial reference is incongruous here, and the bridal one not indicated by anything in the context, as it is in the instances just quoted. One thing is clear, that the reference is to a future presentation in the day of judgment, as in another place, where Paul says, "He . . . shall raise up us also . . . and shall present us" (2 Cor. iv. 14). In the light of that revealing day, His purpose is that we shall stand "holy," that is, devoted to God and therefore pure—"without blemish," as the offerings had to be, and "unreprovable," against whom no charge can be brought. These three express a regular sequence; first, the inward principle of consecration and devotion to God, then its visible issue in stainless conduct and character, and then its last consequence, that in the judgment of God and of men we shall stand acquitted of blame, and every accusation drop away from our dazzling purity, like muddy water from the white wing of the sea-bird as it soars. And all this moral perfectness and unblamableness is to be not merely in the judgment of men, but "before Him," the light of whose "pure eyes and perfect judgment"

discovers all stains and evils. They must be spotless indeed who are "without fault before the throne of God."

Such, then, is the grand conception of the ultimate purpose and issue of Christ's reconciling work. All the lines of thought in the preceding section lead up to and converge in this peak. The meaning of God in creation and redemption cannot be fully fathomed without taking into view the future perfecting of men. This Christian ideal of the possibilities for men is the noblest vision that can animate our hopes. Absolute moral purity which shall be recognised as perfect by the perfect Judge, and a close approach to God, so as that we shall be "before Him" in a manner unknown here—are hopes as much brighter than those which any other systems of belief print on the dim canvas curtain of the future, as the Christian estimate of man's condition apart from Christ is sadder and darker than theirs. Christianity has a much more extended scale of colours than they have. It goes further down into blackness for the tints with which it paints man as he is, and further up into flashing glories of splendour for the gleaming hues with which it paints him as he may become. They move within narrow limits of neutral tints. The Gospel alone does not try to minimise man's evil, because it is triumphantly confident of its power to turn all that evil into good.

Nothing short of this complete purity and blamelessness satisfies God's heart. We may travel back to the beginning of this section, and connect its first words with these, "It pleased the Father, to present us holy and spotless and blameless." It delights Him thus to effect the purifying of sinful souls, and He is glad when He sees Himself surrounded by spirits thus echoing His will and reflecting His light. This is what He longs for. This is what He aims at in all His working—to make good and pure men. The moral interest is uppermost in His heart and in His doings. The physical universe is but the scaffolding by which the true house of God may be built. The work of Christ is the means to that end. and when God has got us, by such lavish expenditure, to be white like Himself, and can find nothing in us to condemn, then, and not till then, does He brood over us satisfied and glad at heart, resting in His love, and rejoicing over us with singing.

Nor will anything short of this complete purity exhaust the power of the Reconciling Christ. His work is like an unfinished column, or Giotto's Campanile, all shining with marbles and alabasters and set about with fair figures, but waiting for centuries for the glittering apex to gather its glories into a heaven-piercing point. His cross and passion reach no adequate result, short of the perfecting of saints, nor was it worth Christ's while to die for any less end. His cross and passion have evidently power to effect this perfect purity, and cannot be supposed to have done all that is in them to do, until they have done that with every Christian.

We ought then to keep very clear before us this as the crowning object of Christianity: not to make men happy, except as a consequence of holiness; not to deliver from penalty, except as a means to holiness; but to make them holy, and being holy, to set them close by the throne of God. No man understands the scope of Christianity, or judges it fairly, who does not give full weight to that as its own statement of its purpose. The more distinctly we, as Christians, keep that purpose prominent in our thoughts, the more shall we have our efforts stimulated and guided, and our hopes fed, even when we are saddened by a sense of failure. We have a power working in us which can make us white as the angels, pure as our Lord is pure. If it, being able to produce perfect results, has produced only such imperfect ones, we may well ask where the reason for the partial failure lies. If we believed more vividly that the real purpose and use of Christianity was to make us good men, we should surely labour more earnestly to secure that end, should take more to heart our own responsibility for the incompleteness with which it has been attained in us, and should submit ourselves more completely to the operation of the "might of the power" which worketh in us.

Nothing less than our absolute purity will satisfy God about us. Nothing less should satisfy ourselves. The only worthy end of Christ's work for us is to present us holy, in complete consecration, and without blemish, in perfect homogeneousness and uniformity of white purity and unreproachable in manifest innocence in His sight. If we call ourselves Christians let us make it our life's business to see that that end is being accomplished in us in some tolerable and growing measure.

II. We have next set forth the conditions on which the accomplishment of that purpose depends: "If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel."

The condition is, generally speaking, a steadfast adherence to the Gospel which the Colossians had received. "If ye continue in the faith," means, I suppose, if ye continue to live in the exercise of your faith. The word here has its ordinary subjective sense, expressing the act of the believing man, and there is no need to suppose that it has the later ecclesiastical objective sense, expressing the believer's creed, a meaning in which it may be questioned whether the word is ever employed in the New Testament. Then this continuance in the faith is further explained as to its manner, and that first positively, and then negatively. They are to be grounded, or more picturesquely and accurately, "founded," that is, built into a foundation, and therefore "steadfast," as banded into the firm rock, and so partaking of its fixedness. Then, negatively, they are not to be "moved away"; the word by its form conveying the idea that this is a process which may be continually going on, and in which, by some force constantly acting from without, they may be gradually and imperceptibly pushed off from the foundation—that foundation is the hope evoked or held out by the Gospel, a representation which is less familiar than that which makes the Gospel itself the foundation, but is substantially equivalent to it, though with a different colour.

One or two plain lessons may be drawn from these words. There is an "if," then. However great the powers of Christ and of His work, however deep the desire and fixed the purpose of God, no fulfilment of these is possible except on condition of our habitual exercise of faith. The Gospel does not work on men by

magic. Mind, heart, and will must be exercised on Christ, or all His power to purify and bless will be of no avail to us. We shall be like Gideon's fleece, dry when the dew is falling thick, unless we are continually putting forth living faith. That attracts the blessing and fits the soul to receive it. There is nothing mystical about the matter. Common sense tells us, that if a man never thinks about any truth, that truth will do him no good in any way. If it does not find its road into his heart through his mind, and thence into his life, it is all one as if there were no such truth, or as if he did not believe it. If our creed is made up of truths which we do not think about, we may just as well have no creed. If we do not bring ourselves into contact with the motives which the Gospel brings to bear on character, the motives will not mould our character. If we do not, by faith and meditation, realise the principles which flow from the truth as it is in Jesus, and obtain the strength which is stored in Him, we shall not grow by Him or like Him. No matter how mighty be the renewing powers of the Gospel wielded by the Divine Spirit, they can only work on the nature that is brought into contact with and continues in contact with them by faith. The measure in which we trust Jesus Christ will be the measure in which He helps us. "He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief." He cannot do what He can do, if we thwart Him by our want of faith. God will present us holy before Him if we continue in the faith.

And it must be present faith which leads to present results. We cannot make an arrangement by which we exercise faith wholesale once for all, and secure a delivery of its blessings in small quantities for a while after, as a buyer may do with goods. The moment's act of faith will bring the moment's blessings; but to-morrow will have to get its own grace by its own faith. We cannot lay up a stock for the future. There must be present drinking for present thirst; we cannot lay in a reserve of the water of life, as a camel can drink at a draught enough for a long desert march. The Rock follows us all through the wilderness, but we have to fill our pitchers day by day. Many Christians seem to think that they can live on past acts of faith. No wonder that their Christian character is stunted, and their growth stopped, and many a blemish visible, and many a "blame" to be brought against them. Nothing but continual exercise of faith, day by day, moment by moment, in every duty, and every temptation, will secure the continual entrance into our weakness of the strength which makes strong and the purity which makes pure.

Then again, if we and our lives are to be firm and stable, we must have a foundation outside of ourselves on which to rest. That thought is involved in the word "grounded" or "founded." It is possible that this metaphor of the foundation is carried on into the next clause, in which case "the hope of the Gospel" would be the foundation. Strange to make a solid foundation out of so unsubstantial a thing as "hope"! That would be indeed to build a castle on the air, a palace on a soap-bubble, would it not? Yes, it would, if this hope were not "the hope produced by the Gospel," and therefore as solid as the ever-enduring Word of the Lord on which it is founded. But, more probably, the ordinary application of the figure is preserved here, and Christ is the foundation, the Rock, on which builded, our fleeting lives and our fickle selves may become rock-like too, and every impulsive and changeable Simon Bar Jonas rise to the mature steadfastness of a Peter, the pillar of the Church.

Translate that image of taking Christ for our foundation into plain English, and what does it come to? It means, let our minds find in Him in His Word, and whole revealing life, the basis of our beliefs, the materials for thought; let our hearts find in Him their object, which brings calmness and unchangeableness into their love; let our practical energies take Him as their motive and pattern, their strength and their aim, their stimulus and their reward; let all hopes and joys, emotions and desires, fasten themselves on Him; let Him occupy and fill our whole nature, and mould and preside over all our actions. So shall we be "founded" on Christ.

And so "founded," we shall, as Paul here beautifully puts it, be "steadfast." Without that foundation to give stability and permanence, we never get down to what abides, but pass our lives amidst fleeting shadows, and are ourselves transient as they. The mind whose thoughts about God and the unseen world are not built on the personal revelation of God in Christ will have no solid certainties which cannot be shaken, but, at the best, opinions which cannot have more fixedness than belongs to human thoughts upon the great problem. If my love does not rest on Christ, it will flicker and flutter, lighting now here and now there, and even where it rests most secure in human love, sure to have to take wing some day, when Death with his woodman's axe fells the tree where it nestles. If my practical life is not built on Him, the blows of circumstance will make it reel and stagger. If we are not well joined to Jesus Christ, we shall be driven by gusts of passion and storms of trouble, or borne along on the surface of the slow stream of all-changing time like thistle-down on the water. If we are to be stable, it must be because we are fastened to something outside of ourselves that is stable, just as they have to lash a man to the mast or other fixed things on deck, if he is not to be washed overboard in the gale. If we are lashed to the unchangeable Christ by the "cords of love" and faith, we too shall, in our degree, be steadfast.

And, says Paul, that Christ-derived steadfastness will make us able to resist influences that would move us away from the hope of the Gospel. That process which their steadfastness would enable the Colossians successfully to resist is described by the language of the Apostle as continuous, and as one which acted on them from without. Intellectual dangers arose from false teachings. The ever-acting tendencies of worldliness pressed upon them, and they needed to make a distinct effort to keep themselves from being overcome by these.

If we do not take care that imperceptible, steady pressure of the all-surrounding worldliness, which is continually acting on us, will push us right off the foundation without ou. knowing that we have shifted at all. If we do not look well after our moorings we shall drift away down stream, and never know that we are moving, so smooth is the motion, till we wake up to see that everything round about

is changed. Many a man is unaware how completely his Christian faith has gone till some crisis comes when he needs it, and when he opens the jar there is nothing. It has evaporated.

When white ants eat away all the inside of a piece of furniture, they leave the outside shell apparently solid, and it stands till some weight is laid upon it, and then goes down with a crash. Many people lose their Christianity in that fashion, by its being nibbled away in tiny flakes by a multitude of secretly working little jaws, and they never know that the pith is out of it till they want to lean on it, and then it gives under them.

The only way to keep firm hold of hope is to keep fast on the foundation. If we do not wish to slide imperceptibly away from Him who alone will make our lives steadfast and our hearts calm with the peacefulness of having found our All, we must continuously make an effort to tighten our grasp on Him, and to resist the subtle forces which, by silent pressure or by sudden blows, seek to get us off the one foundation.

III. Then lastly, we have a threefold motive for adherence to the Gospel.

The three clauses which close these verses seem to be appended as secondary and subordinate encouragements to steadfastness, which encouragements are drawn from certain characteristics of the Gospel. Of course, the main reason for a man's sticking to the Gospel, or to anything else, is that it is true. And unless we are prepared to say that we believe it true, we have nothing to do with such subordinate motives for professing adherence to it, except to take care that they do not influence us. And that one sole reason is abundantly wrought out in this letter. But then, its truth being established, we may fairly bring in other subsidiary motives to reinforce this, seeing that there may be a certain coldness of belief which needs the warmth of such encouragements.

The first of these lies in the words, "the Gospel, which ye heard." That is to say, the Apostle would have the Colossians, in the face of these heretical teachers, remember the beginning of their Christian life, and be consistent with that. They had heard it at their conversion. He would have them recall what they had heard then, and tamper with no teaching inconsistent with it. He also appeals to their experience. "Do you remember what the Gospel did for you? Do you remember the time when it first dawned upon your astonished hearts, all radiant with heavenly beauty, as the revelation of a Heart in heaven that cared for you, and of a Christ Who, on earth, had died for you? Did it not deliver you from your burden? Did it not set new hope before you? Did it not make earth as the very portals of heaven? And have these truths become less precious because familiar? Be not moved away from the Gospel 'which ye have heard.'"

To us the same appeal comes. This word has been sounding in our ears ever since childhood. It has done everything for some of us, something for all of us. Its truths have sometimes shone out for us like suns, in the dark, and brought us strength when nothing else could sustain us. If they are not truths, of course they will have to go. But they are not to be abandoned easily. They are interwoven with our very lives. To part with them is a resolution not to be lightly undertaken.

The argument of experience is of no avail to convince others, but is valid for ourselves. A man has a perfect right to say, "I have heard Him myself, and I know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." A Christian may wisely decline to enter on the consideration of many moot questions which he may feel himself incompetent to handle, and rest upon the fact that Christ has saved his soul. The blind man beat the Pharisees in logic when he sturdily took his stand on experience, and refused to be tempted to discuss subjects which he did not understand, or to allow his ignorance to slacken his grasp of what he did know. "Whether this man be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." There was no answering that, so by excommunicating him they confessed themselves beaten.

A second encouragement to steadfast adherence to the Gospel lies in the fact that it "was preached in all creation under heaven." We need not be pedantic about literal accuracy, and may allow that the statement has a rhetorical colouring. But what the Apostle means is, that the gospel has spread so widely, through so many phases of civilisation, and has proved its power by touching men so unlike each other in mental furniture and habits, that it had showed itself to be a word for the whole race. It is the same thought as we have already found in verse 6. His implied exhortation is, "Be not moved away from what belongs to humanity by teachings which can only belong to a class." All errors are transient in duration and limited in area. One addresses itself to one class of men, another to another. Each false, or exaggerated, or partial representation of religious truth, is congenial to some group with idiosyncrasies of temperament or mind. Different tastes like different spiced meats, but the gospel, "human nature's daily food," is the bread of God that everybody can relish, and which everybody must have for healthy life. What only a certain class or the men of one generation or of one stage of culture can find nourishment in, cannot be meant for all men. But the great message of God's love in Jesus Christ commends itself to us because it can go into any corner of the world, and there, upon all sorts of people, work its wonders. So we will sit down with the women and children upon the green grass, and eat of it, however fastidious people whose appetites have been spoiled by high-spiced meat, may find it coarse and insipid. It would feed them too, if they would try—but whatever they may do, let us take it as more than our necessary food.

The last of these subsidiary encouragements to steadfastness lies in, "whereof I Paul was made a minister." This is not merely an appeal to their affection for him, though that is perfectly legitimate. Holy words may be holier because dear lips have taught them to us, and even the truth of God may allowably have a firmer hold upon our hearts because of our love for some who have ministered it to us. It is a poor commentary on a preacher's work if, after long service to a congregation, his words do not come with power given to them by old affection and confidence. The humblest teacher who has done his Master's errand will have some

to whom he can appeal as Paul did, and urge them to keep hold of the message which he has preached.

But there is more than that in the Apostle's mind. He was accustomed to quote the fact that he, the persecutor, had been made the messenger of Christ, as a living proof of the infinite mercy and power of that ascended Lord, whom his eyes saw on the road to Damascus. So here, he puts stress on the fact that he became a minister of the gospel, as being an "evidence of Christianity." The history of his conversion is one of the strongest proofs of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. You know, he seems to say, what turned me from being a persecutor into an apostle. It was because I saw the living Christ, and "heard the words of His mouth," and, I beseech you, listen to no words which make His dominion less sovereign, and His sole and all-sufficient work on the cross less mighty as the only power that knits earth to heaven.

So the sum of this whole matter is—abide in Christ. Let us root and ground our lives and characters in Him, and then God's inmost desire will be gratified in regard to us, and He will bring even us stainless and blameless into the blaze of His presence. There we shall all have to stand, and let that all-penetrating light search us through and through. How do we expect to be then "found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless"? There is but one way—to live in constant exercise of faith in Christ, and grip Him so close and sure that the world, the flesh, and the devil cannot make us loosen our fingers. Then He will hold us up, and His great purpose, which brought Him to earth, and nailed Him to the cross, will be fulfilled in us, and at last we shall lift up voices of wondering praise "to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

CHAPTER VIII.

JOY IN SUFFERING, AND TRIUMPH IN THE MANIFESTED MYSTERY.

COLOSSIANS i. 24-27 (R. V.).

THERE are scarcely any personal references in this Epistle, until we reach the last chapter. In this respect it contrasts strikingly with another of Paul's epistles of the captivity, that to the Philippians, which is running over with affection and with allusions to himself. This sparseness of personal details strongly confirms the opinion that he had not been to Colossæ. Here, however, we come to one of the very few sections which may be called personal, though even here it is rather Paul's office than himself which is in question. He is led to speak of himself by his desire to enforce his exhortations to faithful continuance in the gospel; and, as is so often the case with him in touching on his apostleship, he, as it were, catches fire, and blazes up in a grand flame, which sheds a bright light on his lofty enthusiasm and evangelistic fervour.

The words to be considered now are plain enough in themselves, but they are run together, and thought follows thought in a fashion which makes them somewhat obscure; and there are also one or two difficulties in single words which require to be cleared up. We shall perhaps best bring out the course of thought by dealing with these verses in three groups, of which the three words, Suffering, Service, and Mystery, are respectively the centres. First, we have a remarkable view taken by the prisoner of the meaning of his sufferings, as being endured for the Church. That leads him to speak of his relation to the Church generally as being that of a servant or steward appointed by God, to bring to its completion the work of God; and then, as I said, he takes fire, and, forgetting himself, flames up in rapturous magnifying of the grand message hid so long, and now entrusted to him to preach. So we have his Sufferings for the Church, his service of Stewardship to the Church, and the great Mystery which in that stewardship he had to unveil. It may help us to understand both Paul and his message, as well as our own tasks and trials, if we try to grasp his thoughts here about his work and his sorrows.

I. We have the Apostle's triumphant contemplation of his sufferings. "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church."

The Revised Version, following the best authorities, omits the "who" with which the Authorised Version begins this verse, and marks a new sentence and paragraph, as is obviously right.

The very first word is significant: "Now I rejoice." Aye; it is easy to say fine things about patience in sufferings and triumph in sorrow when we are prosperous and comfortable; but it is different when we are in the furnace. This man, with the chain on his wrist, and the iron entering into his soul, with his life in danger, and all the future uncertain, can say, "Now I rejoice." This bird sings in a darkened cage.

Then come startling words, "I on my part fill up that which is lacking (a better rendering than 'behind') of the afflictions of Christ." It is not surprising that many explanations of these words have tried to soften down their boldness; as, for instance, "afflictions borne for Christ," or "imposed by Him," or "like His." But it seems very clear that the startling meaning is the plain meaning, and that "the sufferings of Christ" here, as everywhere else, are "the sufferings borne by Christ."

Then at once the questions start up, Does Paul mean to say that in any sense whatever the sufferings which Christ endured have anything "lacking" in them? or does he mean to say that a Christian man's sufferings, however they may benefit the Church, can be put alongside of the Lord's, and taken to eke out the incompleteness of His? Surely that cannot be! Did He not say on the cross, "It is finished"? Surely that sacrifice needs no supplement, and can receive none, but stands "the one sacrifice for sins for ever"! Surely His sufferings are absolutely singular in nature and effect, unique and all-sufficient and eternal. And does this Apostle, the very heart of whose gospel was that these were the life of the world, mean to say that anything which he endures can be tacked on to them, a bit of the old rags to the new garment?

Distinctly not! To say so would be contradictory of the whole spirit and letter of the Apostle's teaching. But there is no need to suppose that he means anything of the sort. There is an idea frequently presented in Scripture, which gives full meaning to the words, and is in full accordance with Pauline teaching; namely, that Christ truly participates in the sufferings of His people borne for Him. He suffers with them. The head feels the pangs of all the members; and every ache may be thought of as belonging, not only to the limb where it is located, but to the brain which is conscious of it. The pains and sorrows and troubles of His friends and followers to the end of time are one great whole. Each sorrow of each Christian heart is one drop more added to the contents of the measure which has to be filled to the brim, ere the purposes of the Father, who leads through suffering to rest, are accomplished; and all belong to Him. Whatsoever pain or trial is borne in fellowship with Him is felt and borne by Him. Community of sensation is established between Him and us. Our sorrows are transferred to Him. "In all our afflictions He is afflicted," both by His mystical but most real oneness with us, and by His brother's sympathy.

So for us all, and not for the Apostle only, the whole aspect of our sorrows may be changed, and all poor struggling souls in this valley of weeping may take comfort and courage from the wonderful thought of Christ's union with us, which makes our griefs His and our pain touch Him. Bruise your finger, and the pain pricks and stabs in your brain. Strike the man that is joined to Christ here, and Christ up yonder feels it. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Where did Paul learn this deep lesson, that the sufferings of Christ's servants were Christ's sufferings? I wonder whether, as he wrote these words of confident yet humble identification of himself the persecuted with Christ the Lord, there came back to his memory what he heard on that fateful day as he rode to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The thought so crushing to the persecutor had become balm and glory to the prisoner,—that every blow aimed at the servant falls on the Master, who stoops from amid the glory of the throne to declare that whatsoever is done, whether it be kindness or cruelty, to the least of His brethren, is done to Him. So every one of us may take the comfort and strength of that wonderful assurance, and roll all our burdens and sorrows on Him.

Again, there is prominent here the thought that the good of sorrow does not end with the sufferer. His sufferings are borne in his flesh for the body's sake, which is the Church,—a remarkable antithesis between the Apostle's flesh in which, and Christ's body for which, the sufferings are endured. Every sorrow rightly borne, as it will be when Christ is felt to be bearing it with us, is fruitful of blessing. Paul's trials were in a special sense "for His body's sake," for of course, if he had not preached the gospel, he would have escaped them all; and on the other hand they have been especially fruitful of good, for if he had not been persecuted, he would never have written these precious letters from Rome. The Church owes much to the violence which has shut up confessors in dungeons. Its prison literature, beginning with this letter, and ending with "Pilgrim's Progress," has been among its most cherished treasures.

But the same thing is true about us all, though it may be in a narrower sphere. No man gets good for himself alone out of his sorrows. Whatever purifies and makes gentler and more Christlike, whatever teaches or builds up—and sorrows rightly borne do all these—is for the common good. Be our trials great or small, be they minute and every-day—like gnats that hum about us in clouds, and may be swept away by the hand, and irritate rather than hurt where they sting—or be they huge and formidable, like the viper that clings to the wrist and poisons the life blood, they are meant to give us good gifts, which we may transmit to the narrow circle of our homes, and in ever widening rings of influence to all around us. Have we never known a household, where some chronic invalid, lying helpless perhaps on a sofa, was a source of the highest blessing and the centre of holy influence, that made every member of the family gentler, more self-denying and loving? We shall never understand our sorrows, unless we try to answer the question, What good to others is meant to come through me by this? Alas, that grief should so often be self-absorbed, even more than joy is! The heart sometimes opens to unselfish sharing of its gladness with others; but it too often shuts tight over its sorrow, and seeks solitary indulgence in the luxury of woe. Let us learn that our brethren claim benefit from our trials, as well as from our good things, and seek to ennoble our griefs by bearing them for "His body's sake, which is the Church."

Christ's sufferings on His cross are the satisfaction for a world's sins, and in that view can have no supplement, and stand alone in kind. But His "afflictions"—a word which would not naturally be applied to His death—do operate also to set the pattern of holy endurance, and to teach many a lesson; and in that view every suffering borne for Him and with Him may be regarded as associated with His, and helping to bless the Church and the world. God makes the rough iron of our natures into shining, flexible, sharp steel, by heavy hammers and hot furnaces, that He may shape us as His instruments to help and heal.

It is of great moment that we should have such thoughts of our sorrows whilst their pressure is upon us, and not only when they are past. "I now rejoice." Most of us have had to let years stretch between us and the blow before we could attain to that clear insight. We can look back and see how our past sorrows tended to bless us, and how Christ was with us in them: but as for this one, that burdens us to-day, we cannot make it out. We can even have a solemn thankfulness not altogether unlike joy as we look on those wounds that we remember; but how hard it is to feel it about those that pain us now! There is but one way to secure that calm wisdom, which feels their meaning even while they sting and burn, and can smile through tears, as sorrowful and yet always rejoicing; and that is to keep in very close communion with our Lord. Then, even when we are in the whitest heat of the furnace, we may have the Son of man with us; and if we have, the fiercest flames will burn up nothing but the chains that bind us, and we shall

"walk at liberty" in that terrible heat, because we walk with Him. It is a high attainment of Christian fortitude and faith to feel the blessed meaning, not only of the six tribulations which are past, but of the present seventh, and to say, even while the iron is entering the quivering flesh, "I now rejoice in my sufferings," and try to turn them to others' good.

II. These thoughts naturally lead on to the statement of the Apostle's lowly and yet lofty conception of his office—"whereof (that is, of which Church) I was made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the word of God."

The first words of this clause are used at the close of the preceding section in ver. 23, but the "whereof" there refers to the gospel, not as here to the Church. He is the servant of both, and because he is the servant of the Church he suffers, as he has been saying. The representation of himself as servant gives the reason for the conduct described in the previous clause. Then the next words explain what makes him the Church's servant. He is so in accordance with, or in pursuance of, the stewardship, or office of administrator, of His household, to which God has called him, "to you-ward," that is to say, with especial reference to the Gentiles. And the final purpose of his being made a steward is "to fulfil the word of God"; by which is not meant "to accomplish or bring to pass its predictions," but "to bring it to completion," or "to give full development to it," and that possibly in the sense of preaching it fully, without reserve, and far and wide throughout the whole world.

So lofty and yet so lowly was Paul's thought of his office. He was the Church's servant, and therefore bound to suffer cheerfully for its sake. He was so, because a high honour had been conferred on him by God, nothing less than the stewardship of His great household the Church, in which he had to give to every man his portion, and to exercise authority. He is the Church's servant indeed, but it is because he is the Lord's steward. And the purpose of his appointment goes far beyond the interests of any single Church; for while his office sends him especially to the Colossians, its scope is as wide as the world.

One great lesson to be learned from these words is that Stewardship means service; and we may add that, in nine cases out of ten, service means suffering. What Paul says, if we put it into more familiar language, is just this: "Because God has given me something that I can impart to others, I am their servant, and bound, not only by my duty to Him, but by my duty to them, to labour that they may receive the treasure." That is true for us all. Every gift from the great Householder involves the obligation to impart it. It makes us His stewards and our brethren's servants. We have that we may give. The possessions are the Householder's, not ours, even after He has given them to us. He gives us truths of various kinds in our minds, the gospel in our hearts, influence from our position, money in our pockets, not to lavish on self, nor to hide and gloat over in secret, but that we may transmit His gifts, and "God's grace fructify through us to all." "It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful"; and the heaviest charge, "that he had wasted his Lord's goods," lies against every one of us who does not use all that he possesses, whether of material or intellectual or spiritual wealth, for the common advantage.

But that common obligation of stewardship presses with special force on those who say that they are Christ's servants. If we are, we know something of His love and have felt something of His power; and there are hundreds of people around us, many of whom we can influence, who know nothing of either. That fact makes us their servants, not in the sense of being under their control, or of taking orders from them, but in the sense of gladly working for them, and recognising our obligation to help them. Our resources may be small. The Master of the house may have entrusted us with little. Perhaps we are like the boy with the five barley loaves and two small fishes; but even if we had only a bit of the bread and a tail of one of the fishes, we must not eat our morsel alone. Give it to those who have none, and it will multiply as it is distributed, like the barrel of meal, which did not fail because its poor owner shared it with the still poorer prophet. Give, and not only give, but "pray them with much entreaty to receive the gift"; for men need to have the true Bread pressed on them, and they will often throw it back, or drop it over a wall, as soon as your back is turned, as beggars do in our streets. We have to win them by showing that we are their servants, before they will take what we have to give. Besides this, if stewardship is service, service is often suffering; and he will not clear himself of his obligations to his fellows, or of his responsibility to his Master, who shrinks from seeking to make known the love of Christ to his brethren, because he has often to "go forth weeping" whilst he bears the precious seed.

III. So we come to the last thought here, which is of the grand Mystery of which Paul is the Apostle and Servant. Paul always catches fire when he comes to think of the universal destination of the gospel, and of the honour put upon him as the man to whom the task was entrusted of transforming the Church from a Jewish sect to a world-wide society. That great thought now sweeps him away from his more immediate object, and enriches us with a burst which we could ill spare from the letter.

His task, he says, is to give its full development to the word of God, to proclaim a certain mystery long hid, but now revealed to those who are consecrated to God. To these it has been God's good pleasure to show the wealth of glory which is contained in this mystery, as exhibited among the Gentile Christians, which mystery is nothing else than the fact that Christ dwells in or among these Gentiles, of whom the Colossians are part, and by His dwelling in them gives them the confident expectation of future glory.

The mystery then of which the Apostle speaks so rapturously is the fact that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs and partakers of Christ. "Mystery" is a word borrowed from the ancient systems, in which certain rites and doctrines were communicated to the initiated. There are several allusions to them in Paul's writings, as for instance in the passage in Philippians iv. 12, which the Revised Version gives as "I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry," and probably in the immediate context here, where the characteristic word "per-

fect" means "initiated." Portentous theories which have no warrant have been spun out of this word. The Greek mysteries implied secrecy; the rites were done in deep obscurity; the esoteric doctrines were muttered in the ear. The Christian mysteries are spoken on the housetop, nor does the word imply anything as to the comprehensibility of the doctrines or facts which are so called.

We talk about "mysteries," meaning thereby truths that transcend human faculties; but the New Testament "mystery" may be, and most frequently is, a fact perfectly comprehensible when once spoken. "Behold I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." There is nothing incomprehensible in that. We should never have known it if we had not been told; but when told it is quite level with our faculties. And as a matter of fact, the word is most frequently used in connection with the notion, not of concealment, but of declaring. We find too that it occurs frequently in this Epistle, and in the parallel letter to the Ephesians, and in every instance but one refers, as it does here, to a fact which was perfectly plain and comprehensible when once made known; namely, the entrance of the Gentiles into the Church.

If that be the true meaning of the word, then "a steward of the mysteries" will simply mean a man who has truths, formerly unknown but now revealed, in charge to make known to all who will hearken, and neither the claims of a priesthood nor the demand for the unquestioning submission of the intellect have any foundation in this much abused term.

But turning from this, we may briefly consider what was the substance of this grand mystery which thrilled Paul's soul. It is the wonderful fact that all barriers were broken down, and that Christ dwelt in the hearts of these Colossians. He saw in that the proof and the prophecy of the world-wide destination of the gospel. No wonder that his heart burned as he thought of the marvellous work which God had wrought by him. For there is no greater revolution in the history of the world than that accomplished through him, the cutting loose of Christianity from Judaism and widening the Church to the width of the race. No wonder that he was misunderstood and hated by Jewish Christians all his days!

He thinks of these once heathens and now Christians at Colossæ, far away in their lonely valley, and of many another little community—in Judea, Asia, Greece, and Italy; and as he thinks of how a real solid bond of brotherhood bound them together in spite of their differences of race and culture, the vision of the oneness of mankind in the Cross of Christ shines out before him, as no man had ever seen it till then, and he triumphs in the sorrows that had helped to bring about the great result.

That dwelling of Christ among the Gentiles reveals the exuberant abundance of glory. To him the "mystery" was all running over with riches, and blazing with fresh radiance. To us it is familiar and somewhat worn. The "vision splendid," which was manifestly a revelation of hitherto unknown Divine treasures of mercy and lustrous light when it first dawned on the Apostle's sight, has "faded" somewhat "into the light of common day" for us, to whom the centuries since have shown so slow a progress. But let us not lose more than we can help, either by our familiarity with the thought, or by the discouragements arising from the chequered history of its partial realisation. Christianity is still the only religion which has been able to make permanent conquests. It is the only one that has been able to disregard latitude and longitude, and to address and guide conditions of civilisation and modes of life quite unlike those of its origin. It is the only one that sets itself the task of conquering the world without the sword, and has kept true to the design for centuries. It is the only one whose claims to be world-wide in its adaptation and destiny would not be laughed out of court by its history. It is the only one which is to-day a missionary religion. And so, notwithstanding the long centuries of arrested growth and the wide tracts of remaining darkness, the mystery which fired Paul's enthusiasm is still able to kindle ours, and the wealth of glory that lies in it has not been impoverished nor stricken with eclipse.

One last thought is here,—that the possession of Christ is the pledge of future blessedness. "Hope" here seems to be equivalent to "the source" or "ground" of the hope. If we have the experience of His dwelling in our hearts, we shall have, in that very experience of His sweetness and of the intimacy of His love, a marvellous quickener of our hope that such sweetness and intimacy will continue for ever. The closer we keep to Him, the clearer will be our vision of future blessedness. If He is throned in our hearts, we shall be able to look forward with a hope, which is not less than certainty, to the perpetual continuance of His hold of us and of our blessedness in Him. Anything seems more credible to a man who habitually has Christ abiding in him, than that such a trifle as death should have power to end such a union. To have Him is to have life. To have Him will be heaven. To have Him is to have a hope certain as memory and careless of death or change.

That hope is offered to us all. If by our faith in His great sacrifice we grasp the great truth of "Christ for us," our fears will be scattered, sin and guilt taken away, death abolished, condemnation ended, the future a hope and not a dread. If by communion with Him through faith, love, and obedience, we have "Christ in us," our purity will grow, and our experience will be such as plainly to demand eternity to complete its incompleteness and to bring its folded buds to flower and fruit. If Christ be in us, His life guarantees ours, and we cannot die whilst He lives. The world has come, in the persons of its leading thinkers, to the position of proclaiming that all is dark beyond and above. "Behold! we know not anything," is the dreary "end of the whole matter"—infinitely sadder than the old Ecclesiastes, which from "vanity of vanities" climbed to "fear God and keep His commandments," as the sum of human thought and life. "I find no God; I know no future." Yes! Paul long ago told us that if we were "without Christ" we should "have no hope, and be without God in the world." And cultivated Europe is finding out that to fling away Christ and to keep a faith in God or in a future life is impossible.

But if we will take Him for our Saviour by simple trust, He will give us His own presence in our hearts, and infuse there a hope full of

immortality. If we live in close communion with Him, we shall need no other assurance of an eternal life beyond than that deep, calm blessedness springing from the imperfect fellowship of earth which must needs lead to and be lost in the everlasting and completed union of heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN ITS THEME, METHODS, AND AIM.

COLOSSIANS i. 28, 29 (R. V.).

THE false teachers at Colossæ had a great deal to say about a higher wisdom reserved for the initiated. They apparently treated the Apostolic teaching as trivial rudiments, which might be good for the vulgar crowd, but were known by the possessors of this higher truth to be only a veil for it. They had their initiated class, to whom their mysteries were entrusted in whispers.

Such absurdities excited Paul's special abhorrence. His whole soul rejoiced in a gospel for all men. He had broken with Judaism on the very ground that it sought to enforce a ceremonial exclusiveness, and demanded circumcision and ritual observances along with faith. That was, in Paul's estimate, to destroy the gospel. These Eastern dreamers at Colossæ were trying to enforce an intellectual exclusiveness quite as much opposed to the gospel. Paul fights with all his might against that error. Its presence in the Church colours this context, where he uses the very phrases of the false teachers in order to assert the great principles which he opposes to their teaching. "Mystery," "perfect" or initiated, "wisdom,"—these are the key-words of the system which he is combating; and here he presses them into the service of the principle that the gospel is for all men, and the most recondite secrets of its deepest truth the property of every single soul that wills to receive them. Yes, he says in effect, we have mysteries. We have our initiated. We have wisdom. But we have no whispered teachings, confined to a little coterie; we have no inner chamber closed to the many. We are not muttering hierophants, cautiously revealing a little to a few, and fooling the rest with ceremonies and words. Our whole business is to tell out as fully and loudly as we can what we know of Christ, to tell to every man all the wisdom that we have learned. We fling open the inmost sanctuary, and invite all the crowd to enter.

This is the general scope of the words before us which state the object and methods of the Apostle's work; partly in order to point the contrast with those other teachers, and partly in order to prepare the way, by this personal reference, for his subsequent exhortations.

I. We have here the Apostle's own statement of what he conceived his life work to be.

"Whom we proclaim." All three words are emphatic. "Whom," not what—a person, not a system; we "proclaim," not we argue or dissertate about. "We" preach—the Apostle associates himself with all his brethren, puts himself in line with them, points to the unanimity of their testimony—"whether it were they or I, so we preach." We have all one message, a common type of doctrine.

So then—the Christian teacher's theme is not to be a theory or a system, but a living Person. One peculiarity of Christianity is that you cannot take its message, and put aside Christ, the speaker of the message, as you may do with all men's teachings. Some people say: "We take the great moral and religious truths which Jesus declared. They are the all-important parts of His work. We can disentangle them from any further connection with Him. It matters comparatively little who first spoke them." But that will not do. His person is inextricably intertwined with His teaching, for a very large part of His teaching is exclusively concerned with, and all of it centres in, Himself. He is not only true, but He is the truth. His message is, not only what He said with His lips about God and man, but also what He said about Himself, and what He did in His life, death, and resurrection. You may take Buddha's sayings, if you can make sure that they are his, and find much that is beautiful and true in them, whatever you may think of him; you may appreciate the teaching of Confucius, though you know nothing about him but that he said so and so; but you cannot do thus with Jesus. Our Christianity takes its whole colour from what we think of Him. If we think of Him as less than this chapter has been setting Him forth as being, we shall scarcely feel that He should be the preacher's theme; but if He is to us what He was to this Apostle, the sole Revealer of God, the Centre and Lord of creation, the Fountain of life to all which lives, the Reconciler of men with God by the blood of His cross, then the one message which a man may be thankful to spend his life in proclaiming will be, Behold the Lamb! Let who will preach abstractions, the true Christian minister has to preach the person and the office—Jesus the Christ.

To preach Christ is to set forth the person, the facts of His life and death, and to accompany these with that explanation which turns them from being merely a biography into a gospel. So much of "theory" must go with the "facts," or they will be no more a gospel than the story of another life would be. The Apostle's own statement of "the gospel which he preached" distinctly lays down what is needed —"how that Jesus Christ died." That is biography, and to say that and stop there is not to preach Christ; but add, "For our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was raised again the third day,"—preach that, the fact and its meaning and power, and you will preach Christ.

Of course there is a narrower and a wider sense of this expression. There is the initial teaching, which brings to a soul, which has never seen it before, the knowledge of a Saviour, whose Cross is the propitiation for sin; and there is the fuller teaching, which opens out the manifold bearings of that message in every region of moral and religious thought. I do not plead for any narrow construction of the words. They have been sorely abused, by being made the battle-cry for bitter bigotry and a hard system of abstract theology, as unlike what Paul means by "Christ" as any cobwebs of Gnostic heresy could be. Legitimate outgrowths of the Christian ministry have been

checked in their name. They have been used as a cramping iron, as a shibboleth, as a stone to fling at honest and especially at young preachers. They have been made a pillow for laziness. So that the very sound of the words suggests to some ears, because of their use in some mouths, ignorant narrowness.

But for all that, they are a standard of duty for all workers for God, which it is not difficult to apply, if the will to do so be present, and they are a touch-stone to try the spirits, whether they be of God. A ministry of which the Christ who lived and died for us is manifestly the centre to which all converges and from which all is viewed, may sweep a wide circumference, and include many themes. The requirement bars out no province of thought or experience, nor does it condemn the preacher to a parrot-like repetition of elementary truths, or a narrow round of commonplace. It does demand that all themes shall lead up to Christ, and all teaching point to Him; that He shall be ever present in all the preacher's words, a diffused even when not a directly perceptible presence; and that His name, like some deep tone on an organ, shall be heard sounding on through all the ripple and change of the higher notes. Preaching Christ does not exclude any theme, but prescribes the bearing and purpose of all; and the widest compass and richest variety are not only possible, but obligatory for him who would in any worthy sense take this for the motto of his ministry, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

But these words give us not only the theme, but something of the manner of the Apostle's activity. "We proclaim." The word is emphatic in its form, meaning "to tell out," and representing the proclamation as full, clear, earnest. "We are no muttering mystery-mongers. From full lungs and in a voice to make people hear, we shout aloud our message. We do not take a man into a corner, and whisper secrets into his ear; we cry in the streets, and our message is for 'every man.'"

And the word not only implies the plain, loud earnestness of the speaker, but also that what he speaks is a message, that he is not a speaker of his own words or thoughts, but of what has been told him to tell. His gospel is a good message, and a messenger's virtue is to say exactly what he has been told, and to say it in such a way that the people to whom he has to carry it cannot but hear and understand it.

This connection of the Christian minister's office contrasts on the one hand with the priestly theory. Paul had known in Judaism a religion c. which the altar was the centre, and the official function of the "minister" was to sacrifice. But now he has come to see that "the one sacrifice for sins for ever" leaves no room for a sacrificing priest in that Church of which the centre is the Cross. We sorely need that lesson to be drilled into the minds of men to-day, when such a strange resurrection of priestism has taken place, and good, earnest men, whose devotion cannot be questioned, are looking on preaching as a very subordinate part of their work. For three centuries there has not been so much need as now to fight against the notion of a priesthood in the Church, and to urge this as the true definition of the minister's office: "we preach," not "we sacrifice," not "we do" anything; "we preach," not "we work miracles at any altar, or impart grace by any rites," but by manifestation of the truth discharge our office and spread the blessings of Christ.

This conception contrasts on the other hand with the false teachers' style of speech, which finds its parallel in much modern talk. Their business was to argue and refine and speculate, to spin inferences and cobwebby conclusions. They sat in a lecturer's chair; we stand in a preacher's pulpit. The Christian minister has not to deal in such wares; he has a message to proclaim, and if he allows the "philosopher" in him to overpower the "herald," and substitutes his thoughts about the message, or his arguments in favour of the message, for the message itself, he abdicates his highest office and neglects his most important function.

We hear many demands to-day for a "higher type of preaching," which I would heartily echo, if only it be preaching; that is, the proclamation in loud and plain utterance of the great facts of Christ's work. But many who ask for this really want, not preaching, but something quite different; and many, as I think, mistaken Christian teachers are trying to play up to the requirements of the age by turning their sermons into dissertations, philosophical or moral or æsthetic. We need to fall back on this "we preach," and to urge that the Christian minister is neither priest nor lecturer, but a herald, whose business is to tell out his message, and to take good care that he tells it faithfully. If, instead of blowing his trumpet and calling aloud his commission, he were to deliver a discourse on acoustics and the laws of the vibration of sonorous metal, or to prove that he has a message, and to dilate on its evident truth or on the beauty of its phrases, he would scarcely be doing his work. No more is the Christian minister, unless he keeps clear before himself as the guiding star of his work this conception of his theme and his task—Whom we preach—and opposes that to the demands of an age, one half of which "require a sign," and would again degrade him into a priest, and the other calls for "wisdom," and would turn him into a professor.

II. We have here the varying methods by which this one great end is pursued. "Admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom."

There are then two main methods—"admonishing" and "teaching." The former means "admonishing with blame," and points, as many commentators remark, to that side of the Christian ministry which corresponds to repentance, while the latter points to that side which corresponds to faith. In other words, the former rebukes and warns, has to do with conduct and the moral side of Christian truth; the latter has chiefly to do with doctrine, and the intellectual side. In the one Christ is proclaimed as the pattern of conduct, the "new commandment"; in the other, as the creed of creeds, the new and perfect knowledge.

The preaching of Christ then is to be unfolded into all "warning," or admonishing. The teaching of morality and the admonishing of the evil and the end of sin are essential parts of preaching Christ. We claim for the pulpit the right and the duty of applying the principles and

pattern of Christ's life to all human conduct. It is difficult to do, and is made more so by some of the necessary conditions of our modern ministry, for the pulpit is not the place for details; and yet moral teaching which is confined to general principles is woefully like repeating platitudes and firing blank cartridges. Everybody admits the general principles, and thinks they do not apply to his specific wrong action; and if the preacher goes beyond these toothless generalities, he is met with the cry of "personalities." If a man preaches a sermon in which he speaks plainly about tricks of trade or follies of fashion, somebody is sure to say, going down the chapel steps, "Oh, ministers know nothing of business!" and somebody else to add, "It is a pity he was so personal," and the chorus is completed by many other voices, "He should preach Christ, and leave secular things alone."

Well! whether a sermon of that sort be preaching Christ or not depends on the way in which it is done. But sure I am that there is no "preaching Christ" completely, which does not include plain speaking about plain duties. Everything that a man can either do rightly or wrongly belongs to the sphere of morals, and everything within the sphere of morals belongs to Christianity and to "preaching Christ."

Nor is such preaching complete without plain warning of the end of sin, as death here and hereafter. This is difficult, for many people like to have the smooth side of truth always put uppermost. But the gospel has a rough side, and is by no means a "soothing syrup" merely. There are no rougher words about what wrong-doers come to than some of Christ's words; and he has only given half his Master's message who hides or softens down the grim saying, "The wages of sin is death."

But all this moral teaching must be closely connected with and built upon Christ. Christian morality has Jesus for its perfect exemplar, His love for its motive, and His grace for its power. Nothing is more impotent than mere moral teaching. What is the use of perpetually saying to people, Be good, be good? You may keep on at that for ever, and not a soul will listen, any more than the crowds on our streets are drawn to church by the bell's monotonous call. But if, instead of a cold ideal of duty, as beautiful and as dead as a marble statue, we preach the Son of man, whose life is our law incarnate; and instead of urging to purity by motives which our own evil makes feeble, we re-echo His heart-touching appeal, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments;" and if, instead of mocking lame men with exhortations to walk, we point those who despairingly cry, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" to Him who breathes His living spirit into us to set us free from sin and death, then our preaching of morality will be "preaching the gospel" and be "preaching Christ."

This gospel is also to be unfolded into "teaching." In the facts of Christ's life and death, as we ponder them and grow up to understand them, we get to see more and more the key to all things. For thought, as for life, He is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the ending. All that we can or need know about God or man, about present duty or future destiny, about life, death, and the beyond,—all is in Jesus Christ, and to be drawn from Him by patient thought and by abiding in Him. The Christian minister's business is to be ever learning and ever teaching more and more of the "manifold wisdom" of God. He has to draw for himself from the deep, inexhaustible fountains; he has to bear the water, which must be fresh drawn to be pleasant or refreshing, to thirsty lips. He must seek to present all sides of the truth, teaching all wisdom, and so escaping from his own limited mannerisms. How many ministers' Bibles are all dog-eared and thumbed at certain texts, at which they almost open of themselves, and are as clean in most of their pages as on the day when they were bought!

The Christian ministry, then, in the Apostle's view, is distinctly educational in its design. Preachers and hearers equally need to be reminded of this. We preachers are poor scholars ourselves, and in our work are tempted, like other people, to do most frequently what we can do with least trouble. Besides which, we many of us know, and all suspect, that our congregations prefer to hear what they have heard often before, and what gives them the least trouble. We often hear the cry for "simple preaching," by which one school intends "simple instruction in plain, practical matters, avoiding mere dogma," and another intends "the simple gospel," by which is meant the repetition over and over again of the great truth, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." God forbid that I should say a word which might even seem to under-estimate the need for that proclamation being made in its simple form, as the staple of the Christian ministry, to all who have not welcomed it into their hearts, or to forget that, however dimly understood, it will bring light and hope and new loves and strengths into a soul! But the New Testament draws a distinction between evangelists and teachers, and common sense insists that Christian people need more than the reiteration of that message from him whom they call their "teacher." If he is a teacher, he should teach; and he cannot do that, if the people who listen to him suspect everything that they do not know already, and are impatient of anything that gives them the trouble of attending and thinking in order to learn. I fear there is much unreality in the name, and that nothing would be more distasteful to many of our congregations than the preacher's attempt to make it truly descriptive of his work. Sermons should not be "quiet resting places." Nor is it quite the ideal of Christian teaching that busy men should come to church or chapel on a Sunday, and not be fatigued by being made to think, but perhaps should be able to sleep for a minute or two and pick up the thread when they wake, quite sure that they have missed nothing of any consequence. We are meant to be teachers, as well as evangelists, though we fulfil the function so poorly; but our hearers often make that task more difficult by ill-concealed impatience with sermons which try to discharge it.

Observe too the emphatic repetition of "every man" both in these two clauses and in the following. It is Paul's protest against the exclusiveness of the heretics, who shut out the mob from their mysteries. An intellectual aristocracy is the proudest and most exclusive of all. A Church built upon intellectual qualifications would be as hard and cruel a coterie as could be imagined. So there is almost vehe-

mence and scorn in the persistent repetition in each clause of the obnoxious word, as if he would thrust down his antagonists' throats the truth that his gospel has nothing to do with cliques and sections, but belongs to the world. To it philosopher and fool are equally welcome. Its message is to all. Brushing aside surface diversities, it goes straight to deep-lying wants, which are the same in all men. Below king's robe and professor's gown, and workman's jacket and prodigal's rags, beats the same heart with the same wants, wild longings, and weariness. Christianity knows no hopeless classes. But its highest wisdom can be spoken to the little child and the barbarian, and it is ready to deal with the most forlorn and foolish, knowing its own power to "warn every man and to teach every man in all wisdom."

III. We have here the ultimate aim of these diverse methods. "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

We found this same word "present" in ver. 22. The remarks made there will apply here. There the Divine purpose of Christ's great work, and here Paul's purpose in his, are expressed alike. God's aim is Paul's aim too. The Apostle's thoughts travel on to the great coming day, when we shall all be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ, and preacher and hearer, Apostle and convert, shall be gathered there. That solemn period will test the teacher's work, and should ever be in his view as he works. There is a real and indissoluble connection between the teacher and his hearers, so that in some sense he is to blame if they do not stand perfect then, and he in some sense has to present them as in his work—the gold, silver, and precious stones which he has built on the foundation. So each preacher should work with that end clear in view, as Paul did. He is always toiling in the light of that great vision. One sees him, in all his letters, looking away yonder to the horizon, where he expects the breaking of its morning low down in the eastern sky. Ah! how many a formal pulpit and how many a languid pew would be galvanised into intense action if only their occupants once saw burning in on them, in their decorous deadness, the light of that great white throne! How differently we should preach if we always felt "the terror of the Lord," and under its solemn influence sought to "persuade men"! How differently we should hear if we felt we must appear before the Judge, and give account to Him of our profitings by His word!

And the purpose which the true minister of Christ has in view is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." "Perfect" may be used here with the technical signification of "initiated," but it means absolute moral completeness. Negatively, it implies the entire removal of all defects; positively, the complete possession of all that belongs to human nature as God meant it to be. The Christian aim, for which the preaching of Christ supplies ample power, is to make the whole race possess, in fullest development, the whole circle of possible human excellences. There is to be no one-sided growth, but men are to grow like a tree in the open, which has no barrier to hinder its symmetry, but rises and spreads equally on all sides, with no branch broken or twisted, no leaf worm-eaten or wind-torn, no fruit blighted or fallen, no gap in the clouds of foliage, no bend in the straight stem,—a green and growing completeness. This absolute completeness is attainable "in Christ," by union with Him of that vital sort brought about by faith, which will pour His Spirit into our spirits. The preaching of Christ is therefore plainly the direct way to bring about this perfecting. That is the Christian theory of the way to make perfect men.

And this absolute perfection of character is, in Paul's belief, possible for every man, no matter what his training or natural disposition may have been. The gospel is confident that it can change the Ethiopian's skin, because it can change his heart, and the leopard's spots will be altered when it "eats straw like the ox." There are no hopeless classes in the glad, confident view of the man who has learned Christ's power.

What a vision of the future to animate work! What an aim! What dignity, what consecration, what enthusiasm it would give, making the trivial great and the monotonous interesting, stirring up those who share it to intense effort, overcoming low temptations, and giving precision to the selection of means and use of instruments! The pressure of a great, steady purpose consolidates and strengthens powers, which, without it, become flaccid and feeble. We can make a piece of calico as stiff as a board by putting it under an hydraulic press. Men with a fixed purpose are terrible men. They crash through conventionalities like a cannon ball. They, and they only, can persuade and arouse and impress their own enthusiasm on the inert mass. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" No Christian minister will work up to the limits of his power, nor do much for Christ or man, unless his whole soul is mastered by this high conception of the possibilities of his office, and unless he is possessed with the ambition to present every man "perfect in Christ Jesus."

IV. Note the struggle and the strength with which the Apostle reaches toward this aim. "Whereunto I labour also, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

As to the object, theme, and method of the Christian ministry, Paul can speak, as he does in the previous verses, in the name of all his fellow workers: "We preach, admonishing and teaching, that we may present." There was substantial unity among them. But he adds a sentence about his own toil and conflict in doing his work. He will only speak for himself now. The others may say what their experience has been. He has found that he cannot do his work easily. Some people may be able to get through it with little toil of body or agony of mind, but for himself it has been laborious work. He has not learned to "take it easy." That great purpose has been ever before him, and made a slave of him. "I labour also"; I do not only preach, but I toil—as the word literally implies—like a man tugging at an oar, and putting all his weight into each stroke. No great work for God will be done without physical and mental strain and effort. Perhaps there were people in Colossæ who thought that a man who had nothing to do but to preach had a very easy life, and so the Apostle had to insist that most exhausting work is brain work and heart work. Perhaps there were preachers and teachers there who worked in a leisurely, dignified fashion, and took great care always

to stop a long way on the safe side of weariness; and so he had to insist that God's work cannot be done at all in that fashion, but has to be done "with both hands, earnestly." The "immortal garland" is to be run for, "not without dust and heat." The racer who takes care to slack his speed whenever he is in danger of breaking into a perspiration will not win the prize. The Christian minister who is afraid of putting all his strength into his work, up to the point of weariness, will never do much good.

There must be not only toil, but conflict. He labours, "striving"—that is to say, contending—with hindrances, both without and within, which sought to mar his work. There is the struggle with oneself, with the temptations to do high work from low motives, or to neglect it, and to substitute routine for inspiration and mechanism for fervour. One's own evil, one's weaknesses and fears and falsities, and laziness and torpor and faithlessness, have all to be fought, besides the difficulties and enemies without. In short, all good work is a battle.

The hard strain and stress of this life of effort and conflict made this man "Paul the aged" while he was not old in years. Such soul's agony and travail are indispensable for all high service of Christ. How can any true, noble Christian life be lived without continuous effort and continual strife? Up to the last particle of our power, it is our duty to work. As for the sleepy, languid, self-indulgent service of modern Christians, who seem to be chiefly anxious not to overstrain themselves, and to manage to win the race set before them without turning a hair, I am afraid that a large deduction will have to be made from it in the day that shall "try every man's work, of what sort it is."

So much for the struggle; now for the strength. The toil and the conflict are to be carried on "according to His working, which worketh in me mightily." The measure of our power then is Christ's power in us. He whose presence makes the struggle necessary, by His presence strengthens us for it. He will dwell in us and work in us, and even our weakness will be lifted into joyful strength by Him. We shall be mighty because that mighty Worker is in our spirits. We have not only His presence beside us as an ally, but His grace within us. We may not only have the vision of our Captain standing at our side as we front the foe—an unseen presence to them, but inspiration and victory to us—but we may have the consciousness of His power welling up in our spirits and flowing, as immortal strength, into our arms. It is much to know that Christ fights for us; it is more to know that He fights in us.

Let us take courage then for all work and conflict; and remember that if we have not "striven according to the power"—that is, if we have not utilised all our Christ-given strength in His service—we have not striven enough. There may be a double defect in us. We may not have taken all the power that he Has given, and we may not have used all the power that we have taken. Alas, for us! we have to confess both faults. How weak we have been when Omnipotence waited to give Itself to us! How little we have made our own of the grace that flows so abundantly past us, catching such a small part of the broad river in our hands, and spilling so much even of that before it reached our lips! And how little of the power given, whether natural or spiritual, we have used for our Lord! How many weapons have hung rusty and unused in the fight! He has sowed much in our hearts, and reaped little. Like some unkindly soils, we have "drunk in the rain which cometh oft upon it," and have "not brought forth herbs fit for Him by whom it is dressed." Talents hid, the Master's goods squandered, power allowed to run to waste, languid service and half-hearted conflict, we have all to acknowledge. Let us go to Him and confess that, "we have most unthankful been," and are unprofitable servants indeed, coming far short of duty. Let us yield our spirits to His influence, that He may work in us that which is pleasing in His sight, and may encircle us with ever-growing completeness of beauty and strength, until He "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

CHAPTER X.

PAUL'S STRIVING FOR THE COLOSSIANS.

Colossians ii. 1-3 (R. V.).

We have seen that the closing portion of the previous chapter is almost exclusively personal. In this context the same strain is continued, and two things are dwelt on: the Apostle's agony of anxiety for the Colossian Church, and the joy with which, from his prison, he travelled in spirit across mountain and sea, and saw them in their quiet valley, cleaving to the Lord. The former of these feelings is expressed in the words now before us; the latter, in the following verses.

All this long outpouring of self-revelation is so natural and characteristic of Paul that we need scarcely look for any purpose in it, and yet we may note with what consummate art he thereby prepares the way for the warnings which follow. The unveiling of his own throbbing heart was sure to work on the affections of his readers and to incline them to listen. His profound emotion in thinking of the preciousness of his message would help to make them feel how much was at stake, and his unfaltering faith would give firmness to their less tenacious grasp of the truth which, as they saw, he gripped with such force. Many truths may be taught coolly, and some must be. But in religious matters, arguments wrought in frost are powerless, and earnestness approaching to passion is the all-conquering force. A teacher who is afraid to show his feelings, or who has no feelings to show, will never gather many disciples.

So this revelation of the Apostle's heart is relevant to the great purposes of the whole letter—the warning against error, and the exhortation to steadfastness. In the verses which we are now considering, we have the conflict which Paul was waging set forth in three aspects: first, in itself; second, in regard to the persons for whom it was waged; and, finally and principally, in regard to the object or purpose in view therein. The first and second of these points may be dealt with briefly. The third will require further consideration.

I. There is first the conflict, which he earnestly desired that the Colossian Christians might know to be "great." The word rendered in

the Authorised Version "conflict," belongs to the same root as that which occurs in the last verse of the previous chapter, and is there rendered "striving." The Revised Version rightly indicates this connection by its translation, but fails to give the construction as accurately as the older translation does. "What great strife I have" would be nearer the Greek, and more forcible than the somewhat feeble "how greatly I strive," which the Revisers have adopted. The conflict referred to is, of course, that of the arena, as so often in Paul's writings.

But how could he, in Rome, wage conflict on behalf of the Church at Colossæ? No external conflict can be meant. He could strike no blows on their behalf. What he could do in that way he did, and he was now taking part in their battle by this letter. If he could not fight by their side, he could send them ammunition, as he does in this great Epistle, which was, no doubt, to the eager combatants for the truth at Colossæ, what it has been ever since, a magazine and arsenal in all their warfare. But the real struggle was in his own heart. It meant anxiety, sympathy, an agony of solicitude, a passion of intercession. What he says of Epaphras in this very Epistle was true of himself. He was "always striving in prayer for them." And by these wrestlings of spirit he took his place among the combatants, though they were far away, and though in outward seeming his life was untouched by any of the difficulties and dangers which hemmed them in. In that lonely prison cell, remote from their conflict, and with burdens enough of his own to carry, with his life in peril, his heart yet turned to them and, like some soldier left behind to guard the base while his comrades had gone forward to the fight, his ears listened for the sound of battle, and his thoughts were in the field. His prison cell was like the focus of some reverberating gallery in which every whisper spoken all round the circumference was heard, and the heart that was held captive there was set vibrating in all its chords by every sound from any of the Churches.

Let us learn the lesson, that, for all Christian people, sympathy in the battle for God, which is being waged all over the world, is plain duty. For all Christian teachers of every sort, an eager sympathy in the difficulties and struggles of those whom they would try to teach is indispensable. We can never deal wisely with any mind until we have entered into its peculiarities. We can never help a soul fighting with errors and questionings until we have ourselves felt the pinch of the problems, and have shown that soul that we know what it is to grope and stumble. No man is ever able to lift a burden from another's shoulders except on condition of bearing the burden himself. If I stretch out my hand to some poor brother struggling in "the miry clay," he will not grasp it, and my well-meant efforts will be vain, unless he can see that I too have felt with him the horror of great darkness, and desire him to share with me the benedictions of the light.

Wheresoever our prison or our workshop may be, howsoever Providence or circumstances—which is but a heathenish word for the same thing—may separate us from active participation in any battle for God, we are bound to take an eager share in it by sympathy, by interest, by such help as we can render, and by that intercession which may sway the fortunes of the field, though the uplifted hands grasp no weapons, and the spot where we pray be far from the fight. It is not only the men who bear the brunt of the battle in the high places of the field who are the combatants. In many a quiet home, where their wives and mothers sit, with wistful faces waiting for the news from the front, are an agony of anxiety, and as true a share in the struggle as amidst the battery smoke and the gleaming bayonets. It was a law in Israel, "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that abideth by the stuff. They shall part alike." They were alike in recompense, because they were rightly regarded as alike in service. So all Christians who have in heart and sympathy taken part in the great battle shall be counted as combatants and crowned as victors, though they themselves have struck no blows. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward."

II. We notice the persons for whom this conflict was endured. They are the Christians of Colossæ, and their neighbours of Laodicea, and "as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." It may be a question whether the Colossians and Laodiceans belong to those who have not seen his face in the flesh, but the most natural view of the words is that the last clause "introduces the whole class to which the persons previously enumerated belong," * and this conclusion is confirmed by the silence of the Acts of the Apostles as to any visit of Paul's to these Churches, and by the language of the Epistle itself, which, in several places, refers to his knowledge of the Colossian Church as derived from hearing of them, and never alludes to personal intercourse. That being so, one can understand that its members might easily think that he cared less for them than he did for the more fortunate communities which he had himself planted or watered, and might have suspected that the difficulties of the Church at Ephesus, for instance, lay nearer his heart than theirs in their remote upland valley. No doubt, too, their feelings to him were less warm than to Epaphras and to other teachers whom they had heard. They had never felt the magnetism of his personal presence, and were at a disadvantage in their struggle with the errors which were beginning to lift their snaky heads among them, from not having had the inspiration and direction of his teaching.

It is beautiful to see how, here, Paul lays hold of that very fact which seemed to put some film of separation between them, in order to make it the foundation of his especial keenness of interest in them. Precisely because he had never looked them in the eyes, they had a warmer place in his heart, and his solicitude for them was more tender. He was not so enslaved by sense that his love could not travel beyond the limits of his eyesight. He was the more anxious about them because they had not the recollections of his teaching and of his presence to fall back upon.

III. But the most important part of this section is the Apostle's statement of the great subject of his solicitude, that which he anxiously longed that the Colossians might attain. It is a prophecy, as well as a desire. It is a statement of the deepest purpose of his letter to

* Bishop Lightfoot, *in loc.*

them, and being so, it is likewise a statement of the Divine desire concerning each of us, and of the Divine design of the gospel. Here is set forth what God would have all Christians to be, and, in Jesus Christ, has given them ample means of being.

(1) The first element in the Apostle's desire for them is "that their hearts may be comforted." Of course the Biblical use of the word "heart" is much wider than the modern popular use of it. We mean by it, when we use it in ordinary talk, the hypothetical seat of the emotions, and chiefly, the organ and throne of love; but Scripture means by the word, the whole inward personality, including thought and will as well as emotion. So we read of the "thoughts and intents of the heart," and the whole inward nature is called "the hidden man of the heart."

And what does he desire for this inward man? That it may be "comforted." That word again has a wider signification in Biblical than in nineteenth-century English. It is much more than consolation in trouble. The cloud that hung over the Colossian Church was not about to break in sorrows which they would need consolation to bear, but in doctrinal and practical errors which they would need strength to resist. They were called to fight rather than to endure, and what they needed most was courageous confidence. So Paul desires for them that their hearts should be encouraged or strengthened, that they might not quail before the enemy, but go into the fight with buoyancy, and be of good cheer.

Is there any greater blessing in view both of the conflict which Christianity has to wage today, and of the difficulties and warfare of our own lives, than that brave spirit which plunges into the struggle with the serene assurance that victory sits on our helms and waits upon our swords, and knows that anything is possible rather than defeat? That is the condition of overcoming—even our faith. "The sad heart tires in a mile," but the strong hopeful heart carries in its very strength the prophecy of triumph.

Such a disposition is not altogether a matter of temperament, but may be cultivated, and though it may come easier to some of us than to others, it certainly ought to belong to all who have God to trust to, and believe that the gospel is His truth. They may well be strong who have Divine power ready to flood their hearts, who know that everything works for their good, who can see, above the whirl of time and change, one strong loving Hand which moves the wheels. What have we to do with fear for ourselves, or wherefore should our "hearts tremble for the ark of God," seeing that One fights by our sides who will teach our hands to war and cover our heads in the day of battle? "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart."

(2) The way to secure such joyous confidence and strength is taught us here, for we have next, Union in love, as part of the means for obtaining it—"They being knit together in love." The persons, not the hearts, are to be thus united. Love is the true bond which unites men—the bond of perfectness, as it is elsewhere called. That unity in love would, of course, add to the strength of each. The old fable teaches us that little fagots bound together are strong, and the tighter the rope is pulled, the stronger they are. A solitary heart is timid and weak, but many weaknesses brought together make a strength, as slimly built houses in a row hold each other up, or dying embers raked closer burst into flame. Loose grains of sand are light and moved by a breath; compacted they are a rock against which the Atlantic beats in vain. So, a Church, of which the members are bound together by that love which is the only real bond of Church life, presents a front to threatening evils through which they cannot break. A real moral defence against even intellectual error will be found in such a close compaction in mutual Christian love. A community so interlocked will throw off many evils, as a Roman legion with linked shields roofed itself over against missiles from the wall of a besieged city, or the imbricated scales on a fish keep it dry in the heart of the sea.

But we must go deeper than this in interpreting these words. The love which is to knit Christian men together is not merely love to one another but is common love to Jesus Christ. Such common love to Him is the true bond of union, and the true strengthener of men's hearts.

(3) This compaction in love will lead to a wealth of certitude in the possession of the truth.

Paul is so eagerly desirous for the Colossians' union in love to each other and all to God, because He knows that such union will materially contribute to their assured and joyful possession of the truth. It tends, he thinks, unto "all riches of the full assurance of understanding," by which he means the wealth which consists in the entire, unwavering certitude which takes possession of the understanding, the confidence that it has the truth and the life in Jesus Christ. Such a joyful steadfastness of conviction that I have grasped the truth is opposed to hesitating half belief. It is attainable, as this context shows, by paths of moral discipline, and amongst them, by seeking to realise our unity with our brethren, and not proudly rejecting the "common faith" because it is common. Possessing that assurance, we shall be rich and heart-whole. Walking amid certainties we shall walk in paths of peace, and re-echo the triumphant assurance of the Apostle, to whom love had given the key of knowledge:—"we know that we are of God, and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true."

In all times of religious unsettlement, when an active propaganda of denial is going on, Christian men are tempted to lower their own tone, and to say, "It is so," with somewhat less of certainty because so many are saying, "It is not so." Little Rhoda needs some courage to affirm constantly that "it was even so," when apostles and her masters keep assuring her that she has only seen a vision. In this day, many professing Christians falter in the clear assured profession of their faith, and it does not need a keen ear to catch an undertone of doubt making their voices tremulous. Some even are so afraid of being thought "narrow," that they seek for the reputation of liberality by talking as if there were a film of doubt over even the truths which used to be "most surely believed." Much of the so-called faith of this day is all honeycombed with secret misgivings, which have in many in-

stances no other intellectual basis than the consciousness of prevalent unbelief and a second-hand acquaintance with its teachings. Few things are more needed among us now than this full assurance and satisfaction of the understanding with the truth as it is in Jesus. Nothing is more wretched than the slow paralysis creeping over faith, the fading of what had been stars into darkness. A tragedy is being wrought in many minds which have had to exchange Christ's "Verily, verily," for a miserable "perhaps," and can no longer say "I know," but only, "I would fain believe," or at the best, "I incline to think still." On the other hand, the "full assurance of the understanding" brings wealth. It breathes peace over the soul, and gives endless riches in the truths which through it are made living and real.

This wealth of conviction is attained by living in the love of God. Of course, there is an intellectual discipline which is also needed. But no intellectual process will lead to an assured grasp of spiritual truth, unless it be accompanied by love. As soon may we lay hold of truth with our hands, as of God in Christ with our understandings alone. This is the constant teaching of Scripture—that, if we would know God and have assurance of Him, we must love Him. "In order to love human things, it is necessary to know them. In order to know Divine things, it is necessary to love them." When we are rooted and grounded in love, we shall be able to know—for what we have most need to know and what the gospel has mainly to teach us is the love, and "unless the eye with which we look is love, how shall we know love?" If we love, we shall possess an experience which verifies the truth for us, will give us an irrefragable demonstration which will bring certitude to ourselves, however little it may avail to convince others. Rich in the possession of this confirmation of the gospel by the blessings which have come to us from it, and which witness of their source, as the stream that dots some barren plain with a line of green along its course is revealed thereby, we shall have the right to oppose to many a doubt the full assurance born of love, and while others are disputing whether there be any God, or any living Christ, or any forgiveness of sins, or any guiding providence, we shall know that they are, and are ours, because we have felt the power and wealth which they have brought into our lives.

(4) This unity of love will lead to full knowledge of the mystery of God. Such seems to be the connection of the next words, which may be literally read "unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God," and may be best regarded as a co-ordinate clause with the preceding, depending like it on "being knit together in love." So taken, there is set forth a double issue of that compaction in love to God and one another, namely, the calm assurance in the grasp of truth already possessed, and the more mature and deeper insight into the deep things of God. The word for knowledge here is the same as in i. 9, and here as there means a full knowledge. The Colossians had known Christ at first, but the Apostle's desire is that they may come to a fuller knowledge, for the object to be known is infinite, and endless degrees in the perception and possession of His power and grace are possible. In that fuller knowledge they will not leave behind what they knew at first, but will find in it deeper meaning, a larger wisdom, and a fuller truth.

Among the large number of readings of the following words, that adopted by the Revised Version is to be preferred, and the translation which it gives is the most natural and is in accordance with the previous thought in chapter i. 27, where also "the mystery" is explained to be "Christ in you." A slight variation in the conception is presented here. The "mystery" is Christ, not "in you," but "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The great truth long hidden, now revealed, is that the whole wealth of spiritual insight (knowledge), and of reasoning on the truths thus apprehended so as to gain an ordered system of belief and a coherent law of conduct (wisdom), is stored for us in Christ.

Such being in brief the connection and outline meaning of these great words, we may touch upon the various principles embodied in them. We have seen, in commenting upon a former part of the Epistle, the force of the great thought that Christ in His relations to us is the mystery of God, and need not repeat what was then said. But we may pause for a moment on the fact that the knowledge of that mystery has its stages. The revelation of the mystery is complete. No further stages are possible in that. But while the revelation is, in Paul's estimate, finished, and the long concealed truth now stands in full sunshine, our apprehension of it may grow, and there is a mature knowledge possible. Some poor ignorant soul catches through the gloom a glimpse of God manifested in the flesh, and bearing his sins. That soul will never outgrow that knowledge, but as the years pass, life and reflection and experience will help to explain and deepen it. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son—there is nothing beyond that truth. Grasped however imperfectly, it brings light and peace. But as it is loved and lived by, it unfolds undreamed-of depths, and flashes with growing brightness. Suppose that a man could set out from the great planet that moves on the outermost rim of our system, and could travel slowly inwards towards the central sun, how the disc would grow, and the light and warmth increase with each million of miles that he crossed, till what had seemed a point filled the whole sky! Christian growth is into, not away from, Christ, a penetrating deeper into the centre, and a drawing out into distinct consciousness as a coherent system, all that was wrapped, as the leaves in their brown sheath, in that first glimpse of Him which saves the soul.

These stages are infinite, because in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These four words, treasures, wisdom, knowledge, hidden, are all familiar on the lips of the latter Gnostics, and were so, no doubt, in the mouths of the false teachers at Colossæ. The Apostle would assert for his gospel all which they falsely claimed for their dreams. As in several other places of this Epistle, he avails himself of his antagonists' special vocabulary, transferring its terms, from the illusory phantoms which a false knowledge adorned with them, to the truth which he had to preach. He puts special emphasis on the predicate "hidden" by throwing it to the end of the sentence—a

peculiarity which is reproduced with advantage in the Revised Version.

All wisdom and knowledge are in Christ. He is the Light of men, and all thought and truth of every sort come from Him Who is the Eternal Word, the Incarnate Wisdom. That Incarnate Word is the perfect Revelation of God, and by His one completed life and death has declared the whole name of God to His brethren, of which all other media of revelation have but uttered broken syllables. That ascended Christ breathes wisdom and knowledge into all who love Him, and still pursues, by giving us the Spirit of wisdom, His great work of revealing God to men, according to His own word, which at once asserted the completeness of the revelation made by His earthly life and promised the perpetual continuance of the revelation from His heavenly seat: "I have declared Thy name unto My brethren, and will declare it."

In Christ, as in a great storehouse, lie all the riches of spiritual wisdom, the massive ingots of solid gold which, when coined into creeds and doctrines, are the wealth of the Church. All which we can know concerning God and man, concerning sin and righteousness and duty, concerning another life, is in Him Who is the home and deep mine where truth is stored.

In Christ these treasures are "hidden," but not, as the heretics' mysteries were hidden, in order that they might be out of reach of the vulgar crowd. This mystery is hidden indeed, but it is revealed. It is hidden only from the eyes that will not see it. It is hidden that seeking souls may have the joy of seeking and the rest of finding. The very act of revealing is a hiding, as our Lord has said in His great thanksgiving because these things are (by one and the same act) "hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes." They are hid, as men store provisions in the Arctic regions, in order that the bears may not find them and the shipwrecked sailors may.

Such thoughts have a special message for times of agitation such as the Colossian Church was passing through, and such as we have to face. We too are surrounded by eager confident voices, proclaiming profounder truths and a deeper wisdom than the gospel gives us. In joyful antagonism to these, Christian men have to hold fast by the confidence that all Divine wisdom is laid up in their Lord. We need not go to others to learn new truth. The new problems of each generation to the end of time will find their answers in Christ, and new issues of that old message which we have heard from the beginning will continually be discerned. Let us not wonder if the lessons which the earlier ages of the Church drew from that infinite storehouse fail at many points to meet the eager questionings of to-day. Nor let us suppose that the stars are quenched because the old books of astronomy are in some respects out of date. We need not cast aside the truths that we learned at our mother's knees. The central fact of the universe and the perfect encyclopædia of all moral and spiritual truth is Christ, the Incarnate Word, the Lamb slain, the ascended King. If we keep true to Him and strive to widen our minds to the breadth of that great message, it will grow as we gaze, even as the nightly heavens expand to the eye which steadfastly looks into them, and reveal violet abysses sown with sparkling points, each of which is a sun. "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

The ordinary type of Christian life is contented with a superficial acquaintance with Christ. Many understand no more of Him and of His gospel than they did when first they learned to love Him. So completely has the very idea of a progressive knowledge of Jesus Christ faded from the horizon of the average Christian that "edification," which ought to mean the progressive building up of the character course by course, in new knowledge and grace, has come to mean little more than the sense of comfort derived from the reiteration of old and familiar words which fall on the ear with a pleasant murmur. There is sadly too little first-hand and growing knowledge of their Lord, among Christian people, too little belief that fresh treasures may be found hidden in that field which, to each soul and each new generation struggling with its own special forms of the burdens and problems that press upon humanity, would be cheaply bought by selling all, but may be won at the easier rate of earnest desire to possess them, and faithful adherence to Him in whom they are stored for the world. The condition of growth for the branch is abiding in the vine. If our hearts are knit together with Christ's heart in that love which is the parent of communion, both as delighted contemplation and as glad obedience, then we shall daily dig deeper into the mine of wealth which is hid in Him that it may be found, and draw forth an unfailing supply of things new and old.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCILIATORY AND HORTATORY TRANSITION TO POLEMICS.

COLOSSIANS ii. 4-7 (R. V.).

NOTHING needs more delicacy of hand and gentleness of heart than the administration of warning or reproof, especially when directed against errors of religious opinion. It is sure to do harm unless the person reproved is made to feel that it comes from true kindly interest in him, and does full justice to his honesty. Warning so easily passes into scolding, and sounds to the warned so like it even when the speaker does not mean it so, that there is special need to modulate the voice very carefully.

So in this context, the Apostle has said much about his deep interest in the Colossian Church, and has dwelt on the passionate earnestness of his solicitude for them, his conflict of intercession and sympathy, and the large sweep of his desires for their good. But he does not feel that he can venture to begin his warnings till he has said something more, so as to conciliate them still further, and to remove from their minds other thoughts unfavourable to the sympathetic reception of his words. One can fancy some Colossians saying, "What need is there for all this anxiety? Why should Paul be in such a taking about us? He is exaggerating our danger, and doing scant justice to our Christian character." Nothing stops the ear to the voice of warning more surely than a feeling that it is pitched in too solemn a key, and fails to recognise the good.

So before he goes further, he gathers up his motives in giving the following admonitions, and gives his estimate of the condition of the Colossians, in the first two of the verses now under consideration. All that he has been saying has been said not so much because he thinks that they have gone wrong, but because he knows that there are heretical teachers at work, who may lead them astray with plausible lessons. He is not combating errors which have already swept away the faith of the Colossian Christians, but putting them on their guard against such as threaten them. He is not trying to pump the water out of a water-logged vessel, but to stop a little leak which is in danger of gaping wider. And, in his solicitude, he has much confidence and is encouraged to speak because, absent from them as he is, he has a vivid assurance, which gladdens him, of the solidity and firmness of their faith.

So with this distinct definition of the precise danger which he feared, and this soothing assurance of his glad confidence in their steadfast order, the Apostle at last opens his batteries. The 6th and 7th verses are the first shot fired, the beginning of the monitions so long and carefully prepared for. They contain a general exhortation, which may be taken as the keynote for the polemical portion of the Epistle, which occupies the rest of the chapter.

I. We have then, first, the purpose of the Apostle's previous self-revelation. "This I say"—this, namely, which is contained in the preceding verses, the expression of his solicitude, and perhaps even more emphatically, the declaration of Christ as the revealed secret of God, the inexhaustible storehouse of all wisdom and knowledge. The purpose of the Apostle, then, in his foregoing words has been to guard the Colossians against the danger to which they were exposed, of being deceived and led astray by "persuasiveness of speech." That expression is not necessarily used in a bad sense, but here it evidently has a tinge of censure, and implies some doubt both of the honesty of the speakers and of the truthfulness of their words. Here we have an important piece of evidence as to the then condition of the Colossian Church. There were false teachers busy amongst them who belonged in some sense to the Christian community. But probably these were not Colossians, but wandering emissaries of a Judaising Gnosticism, while certainly the great mass of the Church was untouched by their speculations. They were in danger of getting bewildered, and being deceived, that is to say, of being induced to accept certain teaching because of its speciousness, without seeing all its bearings, or even knowing its real meaning. So error ever creeps into the Church. Men are caught by something fascinating in some popular teaching, and follow it without knowing where it will lead them. By slow degrees its tendencies are disclosed, and at last the followers of the heresiarch wake to find that everything which they once believed and prized has dropped from their creed.

We may learn here, too, the true safeguard against specious errors. Paul thinks that he can best fortify these simple-minded disciples against all harmful teaching by exalting his Master and urging the inexhaustible significance of His person and message. To learn the full meaning and preciousness of Christ is to be armed against error. The positive truth concerning Him, by preoccupying mind and heart, guards beforehand against the most specious teachings. If you fill the coffer with gold, nobody will want, and there will be no room for, pinchbeck. A living grasp of Christ will keep us from being swept away by the current of prevailing popular opinion, which is always much more likely to be wrong than right, and is sure to be exaggerated and one-sided at the best. A personal consciousness of His power and sweetness will give an instinctive repugnance to teaching that would lower His dignity and debase His work. If He be the centre and anchorage of all our thoughts, we shall not be tempted to go elsewhere in search of the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" which "are hid in Him." He who has found the one pearl of great price, needs no more to go seeking goodly pearls, but only day by day more completely to lose self, and give up all else, that he may win more and more of Christ his All. If we keep our hearts and minds in communion with our Lord, and have experience of His preciousness, that will preserve us from many a snare, will give us a wisdom beyond much logic, will solve for us many of the questions most hotly debated to-day, and will show us that many more are unimportant and uninteresting to us. And even if we should be led to wrong conclusions on some matters, "if we drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt us."

II. We see here the joy which blended with the anxiety of the solitary prisoner, and encouraged him to warn the Colossians against impending dangers to their faith.

We need not follow the grammatical commentators in their discussion of how Paul comes to invert the natural order here, and to say "joying and beholding," instead of "beholding and rejoicing," as we should expect. No one doubts that what he saw in spirit was the cause of his joy. The old man in his prison, loaded with many cares, compelled to be inactive in the cause which was more to him than life, is yet full of spirit and buoyancy. His prison-letters all partake of that "rejoicing in the Lord," which is the keynote of one of them. Old age and apparent failure, and the exhaustion of long labours, and the disappointments and sorrows which almost always gather like evening clouds round a life as it sinks in the west, had not power to quench his fiery energy or to blunt his keen interest in all the Churches. His cell was like the centre of a telephonic system. Voices spoke from all sides. Every Church was connected with it, and messages were perpetually being brought. Think of him sitting there, eagerly listening, and thrilling with sympathy at each word, so self-oblivious was he, so swallowed up were all personal ends in the care for the Churches, and in the swift, deep fellow-feeling with them! Love and interest quickened his insight, and though he was far away, he had them so vividly before him that he was as if a spectator. The joy which he had in the thought of them made him dwell on the thought—so the apparently inverted order of the words may be the natural one and he may have looked all the more fixedly because it gladdened him to look.

What did he see? "Your order." That is unquestionably a military metaphor, drawn probably from his experiences of the Prætori-

ans, while in captivity. He had plenty of opportunities of studying both the equipment of the single legionary, who, in the 6th chapter of Ephesians, sat for his portrait to the prisoner to whom he was chained, and also the perfection of discipline in the whole which made the legion so formidable. It was not a multitude, but a unit, "moving altogether if it move at all," as if animated by one will. Paul rejoices to know that the Colossian Church was thus welded into a solid unity.

Further, he beholds "the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." This may be a continuation of the military metaphor, and may mean "the solid front, the close phalanx" which your faith presents. But whether we suppose the figure to be carried on or dropped, we must, I think, recognise that this second point refers rather to the inward condition than to the outward discipline of the Colossians.

Here then is set forth a lofty ideal of the Church, in two respects. First there is, outwardly, an ordered disciplined array; and secondly there is a steadfast faith.

As to the first, Paul was no martinet, anxious about the pedantry of the parade ground, but he knew the need of organisation and drill. Any body of men united in order to carry out a specific purpose have to be organised. That means a place for every man, and every man in his place. It means co-operation to one common end, and therefore division of function and subordination. Order does not merely mean obedience to authority. There may be equal "order" under widely different forms of polity. The legionaries were drawn up in close ranks, the light-armed skirmishers more loosely. In the one case the phalanx was more and the individual less; in the other there was more play given to the single man, and less importance to corporate action; but the difference between them was not that of order and disorder, but that of two systems, each organised but on somewhat different principles and for different purposes. A loosely linked chain is as truly a chain as a rigid one. The main requirement for such "order" as gladdened the Apostle is conjoint action to one end, with variety of office and unity of spirit.

Some Churches give more weight to the principle of authority; others to that of individuality. They may criticise each other's polity, but the former has no right to reproach the latter as being necessarily defective in "order." Some Churches are all drill, and their favourite idea of discipline is, Obey them that have the rule over you. The Churches of looser organisation, on the other hand, are no doubt in danger of making too little of organisation. But both need that all their members should be more penetrated by the sense of unity, and should fill each his place in the work of the body. It was far easier to secure the true order—a place and a task for every man and every man in his place and at his task—in the small homogeneous communities of apostolic times than it is now, when men of such different social position, education, and ways of thinking are found in the same Christian community. The proportion of idlers in all Churches is a scandal and a weakness. However highly organised and officered a Church may be, no joy would fill an apostle's heart in beholding it, if the mass of its members had no share in its activities. Every society of professing Christians should be like a man of war's crew, each of whom knows the exact inch where he has to stand when the whistle sounds, and the precise thing he has to do in the gun drill.

But the perfection of discipline is not enough. That may stiffen into routine if there be not something deeper. We want life even more than order. The description of the soldiers who set David on the throne should describe Christ's army—"men that could keep rank, they were not of double heart." They had discipline and had learned to accommodate their stride to the length of their comrades' step; but they had whole-hearted enthusiasm, which was better. Both are needed. If there be not courage and devotion there is nothing worth disciplining. The Church that has the most complete order and not also steadfastness of faith will be like the German armies, all pipeclay and drill, which ran like hares before the ragged shoeless levies whom the first French Revolution flung across the border with a fierce enthusiasm blazing in their hearts. So the Apostle beholds with joy the steadfastness of the Colossians' faith toward Christ.

If the rendering "steadfastness" be adopted as in the Revised Version, the phrase will be equivalent to the "firmness which characterises or belongs to your faith." But some of the best commentators deny that this meaning of the word is ever found, and propose "foundation" (that which is made steadfast). The meaning then will either be "the firm foundation (for your lives) which consists of your faith," or, more probably, "the firm foundation which your faith has." He rejoices, seeing that their faith towards Jesus Christ has a basis unshaken by assaults.

Such a rock foundation, and consequent steadfastness, must faith have, if it is to be worthy of the name and to manifest its true power. A tremulous faith may, thank God! be a true faith, but the very idea of faith implies solid assurance and fixed confidence. Our faith should be able to resist pressure and to keep its ground against assaults and gainsaying. It should not be like a child's card castle, that the light breath of a scornful laugh will throw down, but

> "a tower of strength
> That stands foursquare to all the winds that blow."

We should seek to make it so, nor let the fluctuations of our own hearts cause it to fluctuate. We should try so to control the ebb and flow of religious emotion that it may always be near high water with our faith, a tideless but not stagnant sea. We should oppose a settled conviction and unalterable confidence to the noisy voices which would draw us away.

And that we may do so we must keep up a true and close communion with Jesus Christ. The faith which is ever going out "towards" Him, as the sunflower turns sunwards, will ever draw from Him such blessed gifts that doubt or distrust will be impossible. If we keep near our Lord and wait expectant on Him, He will increase our faith and make our "hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord." So a greater than Paul may speak even to us, as He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, words which from His lips will be praise indeed: "Though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the

spirit, joying and beholding your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Me."

III. We have here the exhortation which comprehends all duty and covers the whole ground of Christian belief and practice.

"Therefore"—the following exhortation is based upon the warning and commendation of the preceding verses. There is first a wide general injunction. "As ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him," *i. e.*, let your active life be in accord with what you learned and obtained when you first became Christians. Then this exhortation is defined or broken up into four particulars in the following clauses, which explain in detail how it is to be kept.

The general exhortation is to a true Christian walk. The main force lies upon the "as." The command is to order all life in accordance with the early lessons and acquisitions. The phrase "ye received Christ Jesus the Lord" presents several points requiring notice. It is obviously parallel with "as ye were taught" in the next verse; so that it was from their first teachers, and probably from Epaphras (i. 7) that they had "received Christ." So, then, what we receive, when, from human lips, we hear the gospel and accept it, is not merely the word about the Saviour, but the Saviour Himself. This expression of our text is no mere loose or rhetorical mode of speech, but a literal and blessed truth. Christ is the sum of all Christian teaching and, where the message of His love is welcomed, He Himself comes in spiritual and real presence, and dwells in the spirit.

The solemnity of the full name of our Saviour in this connection is most significant. Paul reminds the Colossians, in view of the teaching which degraded the person and curtailed the work of Christ, that they had received the man Jesus, the promised Christ, the universal Lord. As if he had said, Remember whom you received in your conversion—Christ, the Messiah, anointed, that is, fitted by the unmeasured possession of the Divine Spirit, to fulfil all prophecy and to be the world's deliverer. Remember Jesus, the man, our brother;—therefore listen to no misty speculations nor look to whispered mysteries nor to angel hierarchies for knowledge of God or for help in conflict. Our gospel is not theory spun out of men's brains, but is, first and foremost, the history of a brother's life and death. You received Jesus, so you are delivered from the tyranny of these unsubstantial and portentous systems, and relegated to the facts of a human life for your knowledge of God. You received Jesus Christ as Lord. He was proclaimed as Lord of men, angels, and the universe, Lord and Creator of the spiritual and material worlds, Lord of history and providence. Therefore you need not give heed to those teachers who would fill the gulf between men and God with a crowd of powers and rulers. You have all that your mind or heart or will can need in the human Divine Jesus, who is the Christ and the Lord for you and all men. You have received Him in the all-sufficiency of His revealed nature and offices. You have Him for your very own. Hold fast that which you have, and let no man take this your crown and treasure. The same exhortation has emphatic application to the conflicts of to-day. The Church has had Jesus set forth as Christ and Lord. His manhood, the historical reality of His Incarnation with all its blessed issues, His Messiahship as the fulfiller of prophecy and symbol, designated and fitted by the fulness of the Spirit, to be man's deliverer, His rule and authority over all creatures and events have been taught, and the tumults of present unsettlement make it hard and needful to keep true to that threefold belief, and to let nothing rob us of any of the elements of the full gospel which lies in the august name, Christ Jesus the Lord.

To that gospel, to that Lord, the walk, the active life, is to be conformed, and the manner thereof is more fully explained in the following clauses.

"Rooted and built up in Him." Here again we have the profound "in Him," which appears so frequently in this and in the companion Epistle to the Ephesians, and which must be allowed its proper force, as expressing a most real indwelling of the believer in Christ, if the depth of the meaning is to be sounded.

Paul drives his fiery chariot through rhetorical proprieties, and never shrinks from "mixed metaphors" if they more vigorously express his thought. Here we have three incongruous ones close on each other's heels. The Christian is to walk, to be rooted like a tree, to be built up like a house. What does the incongruity matter to Paul as the stream of thought and feeling hurries him along?

The tenses of the verbs, too, are studiously and significantly varied. Fully rendered they would be "having been rooted and being builded up." The one is a past act done once for all, the effects of which are permanent; the other is a continuous resulting process which is going on now. The Christian has been rooted in Jesus Christ at the beginning of his Christian course. His faith has brought him into living contact with the Saviour, who has become as the fruitful soil into which the believer sends his roots, and both feeds and anchors there. The familiar image of the first Psalm may have been in the writer's mind, and naturally recurs to ours. If we draw nourishment and stability from Christ, round whom the roots of our being twine and cling, we shall flourish and grow and bear fruit. No man can do without some person beyond himself on whom to repose, nor can any of us find in ourselves or on earth the sufficient soil for our growth. We are like seedlings dropped on some great rock, which send their rootlets down the hard stone and are stunted till they reach the rich leaf-mould at its base. We blindly feel through all the barrenness of the world for something into which our roots may plunge that we may be nourished and firm. In Christ we may be "like a tree planted by the river of water;" out of Him we are "as the chaff," rootless, lifeless, profitless, and swept at last by the wind from the threshing floor. The choice is before every man—either to be rooted in Christ by faith, or to be rootless.

"Being built up in Him." The gradual continuous building up of the structure of a Christian character is doubly expressed in this word by the present tense which points to a process, and by the prefixed preposition represented by "up," which points to the successive laying of course of masonry upon course. We are the architects of our own characters. If our lives are based on Jesus Christ as their foundation,

and every deed is in vital connection with Him, as at once its motive, its pattern, its power, its aim, and its reward, then we shall build holy and fair lives, which will be temples. Men do not merely grow as a leaf which "grows green and broad, and takes no care." The other metaphor of a building needs to be taken into account, to complete the former. Effort, patient continuous labour must be put forth. More than "forty and six years is this temple in building." A stone at a time is fitted into its place, and so after much toil and many years, as in the case of some mediæval cathedral unfinished for centuries, the topstone is brought forth at last. This choice, too, is before all men—to build on Christ and so to build for eternity, or on sand and so to be crushed below the ruins of their fallen houses.

"Stablished in your faith, even as ye were taught." This is apparently simply a more definite way of putting substantially the same thoughts as in the former clauses. Possibly the meaning is "stablished by faith," the Colossians' faith being the instrument of their establishment. But the Revised Version is probably right in its rendering, "stablished in," or as to, "your faith." Their faith, as Paul had just been saying, was steadfast, but it needed yet increased firmness. And this exhortation, as it were, translates the previous ones into more homely language, that if any man stumbled at the mysticism of the thoughts there, he might grasp the plain practicalness here. If we are established and confirmed in our faith, we shall be rooted and built up in Jesus, for it is faith which joins us to Him, and its increase measures our growth in and into Him.

There then is a very plain practical issue of these deep thoughts of union with Jesus. A progressive increase of our faith is the condition of all Christian progress. The faith which is already the firmest, and by its firmness may gladden an Apostle, is still capable of and needs strengthening. Its range can be enlarged, its tenacity increased, its power over heart and life reinforced. The eye of faith is never so keen but that it may become more longsighted; its grasp never so close but that it may be tightened; its realisation never so solid but that it may be more substantial; its authority never so great but that it may be made more absolute. This continual strengthening of faith is the most essential form of a Christian's effort at self-improvement. Strengthen faith and you strengthen all graces; for it measures our reception of Divine help.

And the furthest development which faith can attain should ever be sedulously kept in harmony with the initial teaching—"even as ye were taught." Progress does not consist in dropping the early truths of Jesus Christ the Lord for newer wisdom and more speculative religion, but in discovering ever deeper lessons and larger powers in these rudiments which are likewise the last and highest lessons which men can learn.

Further, as the daily effort of the believing soul ought to be to strengthen the quality of its faith, so it should be to increase its amount —"abounding in it with thanksgiving." Or if we adopt the reading of the Revised Version, we shall omit the "in it," and find here only an exhortation to thanksgiving. That is in any case the main idea of the clause, which adds to the former the thought that thanksgiving is an inseparable accompaniment of vigorous Christian life. It is to be called forth, of course, mainly by the great gift of Christ, in whom we are rooted and builded, and, in Paul's judgment, it is the very spring of Christian progress.

That constant temper of gratitude implies a habitual presence to the mind of God's great mercy in His unspeakable gift, a continual glow of heart as we gaze, a continual appropriation of that gift for our very own, and a continual outflow of our heart's love to the Incarnate and Immortal Love. Such thankfulness will bind us to glad obedience, and will give swiftness to the foot and eagerness to the will, to run in the way of God's commandments. It is like genial sunshine, all flowers breathe perfume and fruits ripen under its influence. It is the fire which kindles the sacrifice of life and makes it go up in fragrant incense-clouds, acceptable to God. The highest nobleness of which man is capable is reached when, moved by the mercies of God, we yield ourselves living sacrifices, thank-offerings to Him Who yielded Himself the sin-offering for us. The life which is all influenced by thanksgiving will be pure, strong, happy, in its continual counting of its gifts, and in its thoughts of the Giver, and not least happy and beautiful in its glad surrender of itself to Him who has given Himself for and to it. The noblest offering that we can bring, the only recompense which Christ asks, is that our hearts and our lives should say, We thank thee, O Lord. "By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and the continual thanksgiving will ensure continuous growth in our Christian character, and a constant increase in the strength and depth of our faith.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BANE AND THE ANTIDOTE.

Colossians ii. 8-10 (R. V.).

We come now to the first plain reference to the errors which were threatening the peace of the Colossian community. Here Paul crosses swords with the foe. This is the point to which all his previous words have been steadily converging. The immediately preceding context contained the positive exhortation to continue in the Christ Whom they had received, having been rooted in Him as the tree in a fertile place "by the rivers of water," and being continually builded up in Him, with ever-growing completeness of holy character. The same exhortation in substance is contained in the verses which we have now to consider, with the difference that it is here presented negatively, as warning and dehortation, with distinct statement of the danger which would uproot the tree and throw down the building, and drag the Colossians away from union with Christ.

In these words the Bane and Antidote are both before us. Let us consider each.

I. The Poison against which Paul warns the Colossians is plainly described in our first verse, the terms of which may require a brief comment.

"Take heed lest there shall be." The con-

struction implies that it is a real and not a hypothetical danger which he sees threatening. He is not crying "wolf" before there is need.

"Any one"—perhaps the tone of the warning would be better conveyed if we read the more familiar "somebody"; as if he had said —"I name no names—it is not the persons, but the principles that I fight against—but you know whom I mean well enough. Let him be anonymous, you understand who it is." Perhaps there was even a single "somebody" who was the centre of the mischief.

"That maketh spoil of you." Such is the full meaning of the word—and not "injure" or "rob," which the translation in the Authorised Version suggests to an English reader. Paul sees the converts in Colossæ taken prisoners and led away with a cord round their necks, like the long strings of captives on the Assyrian monuments. He had spoken in the previous chapter (ver. 13) of the merciful conqueror who had "translated" them from the realm of darkness into a kingdom of light, and now he fears lest a robber horde, making a raid upon the peaceful colonists in their happy new homes, may sweep them away again into bondage.

The instrument which the man-stealer uses, or perhaps we may say, the cord, whose fatal noose will be tightened round them, if they do not take care, is "philosophy and vain deceit." If Paul had been writing in English, he would have put "philosophy" in inverted commas, to show that he was quoting the heretical teachers' own name for their system, if system it may be called, which was really a chaos. For the true love of wisdom, for any honest, humble attempt to seek after her as hid treasure, neither Paul nor Paul's Master has anything but praise and sympathy and help. Where he met real, however imperfect, searchers after truth, he strove to find points of contact between them and his message, and to present the gospel as the answer to their questionings, the declaration of that which they were groping to find. The thing spoken of here has no resemblance but in name to what the Greeks in their better days first called philosophy, and nothing but that mere verbal coincidence warrants the representation—often made both by narrow-minded Christians, and by unbelieving thinkers—that Christianity takes up a position of antagonism or suspicion to it.

The form of the expression in the original shows clearly that "vain deceit," or more literally "empty deceit," describes the "philosophy" which Paul is bidding them beware of. They are not two things, but one. It is like a blown bladder, full of wind, and nothing else. In its lofty pretensions, and if we take its own account of itself, it is a love of and search after wisdom; but if we look at it more closely, it is a swollen nothing, empty and a fraud. This is what he is condemning. The genuine thing he has nothing to say about here.

He goes on to describe more closely this impostor, masquerading in the philosopher's cloak. It is "after the traditions of men." We have seen in a former chapter what a strange heterogeneous conglomerate of Jewish ceremonial and Oriental dreams the false teachers in Colossæ were preaching. Probably both these elements are included here. It is significant that the very expression, "the traditions of men," is a word of Christ's, applied to the Pharisees, whom He charges with "leaving the commandment of God, and holding fast the tradition of men" (Mark vii. 8). The portentous undergrowth of such "traditions" which, like the riotous fertility of creepers in a tropical forest, smother and kill the trees round which they twine, is preserved for our wonder and warning in the Talmud, where for thousands and thousands of pages, we get nothing but Rabbi So and So said this, but Rabbi So and So said that; until we feel stifled, and long for one Divine Word to still all the babble.

The Oriental element in the heresy, on the other hand, prided itself on a hidden teaching which was too sacred to be entrusted to books, and was passed from lip to lip in some close conclave of muttering teachers and listening adepts. The fact that all this, be it Jewish, be it Oriental teaching, had no higher source than men's imaginings and refinings, seems to Paul the condemnation of the whole system. His theory is that in Jesus Christ every Christian man has the full truth concerning God and man, in their mutual relations,—the authoritative Divine declaration of all that can be known, the perfect exemplar of all that ought to be done, the sun-clear illumination and proof of all that dare be hoped. What an absurd descent, then, from the highest of our prerogatives, to "turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven," in order to listen to poor human voices, speaking men's thoughts!

The lesson is as needful to-day as ever. The special forms of men's traditions in question here have long since fallen silent, and trouble no man any more. But the tendency to give heed to human teachers and to suffer them to come between us and Christ is deep in us all. There is at one extreme the man who believes in no revelation from God, and, smiling at us Christians who accept Christ's words as final and Himself as the Incarnate truth, often pays to his chosen human teacher a deference as absolute as that which he regards as superstition, when we render it to our Lord. At the other extremity are the Christians who will not let Christ and the Scripture speak to the soul, unless the Church be present at the interview, like a jailor, with a bunch of man-made creeds jingling at its belt. But it is not only at the two ends of the line, but all along its length, that men are listening to "traditions" of men and neglecting "the commandment of God." We have all the same tendency in us. Every man carries a rationalist and a traditionalist under his skin. Every Church in Christendom, whether it has a formal creed or no, is ruled as to its belief and practice, to a sad extent, by the "traditions of the elders." The "freest" of the Nonconformist Churches, untrammelled by any formal confession, may be bound with as tight fetters, and be as much dominated by men's opinions, as if it had the straitest of creeds. The mass of our religious beliefs and practices has ever to be verified, corrected, and remodelled, by harking back from creeds, written or unwritten, to the one Teacher, the endless significance of Whose person and work is but expressed in fragments by the purest and widest thoughts even of those who have lived nearest to Him, and seen most of His beauty. Let us get away from men, from the Babel of opinions and the strife of tongues, that we may "hear

the words of His mouth"! Let us take heed of the empty fraud which lays the absurd snare for our feet, that we can learn to know God by any means but by listening to His own speech in His Eternal Word, lest it lead us away captive out of the Kingdom of the Light! Let us go up to the pure spring on the mountain top, and not try to slake our thirst at the muddy pools at its base! "Ye are Christ's, be not the slaves of men." "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him."

Another mark of this empty pretence of wisdom which threatens to captivate the Colossians is, that it is "after the rudiments of the world." The word rendered "rudiments" means the letters of the alphabet, and hence comes naturally to acquire the meaning of "elements," or "first principles," just as we speak of the A B C of a science. The application of such a designation to the false teaching is, like the appropriation of the term "mystery" to the gospel, an instance of turning the tables and giving back the teachers their own words. They boasted of mysterious doctrines reserved for the initiated, of which the plain truths that Paul preached were but the elements, and they looked down contemptuously on his message as "milk for babes." Paul retorts on them, asserting that the true mystery, the profound truth long hidden and revealed, is the word which he preached, and that the poverty-stricken elements, fit only for infants, are in that swelling inanity which called itself wisdom and was not. Not only does he brand it as "rudiments," but as "rudiments of the world," which is worse—that is to say, as belonging to the sphere of the outward and material, and not to the higher region of the spiritual, where Christian thought ought to dwell. So two weaknesses are charged against the system: it is the mere alphabet of truth, and therefore unfit for grown men. It moves, for all its lofty pretensions, in the region of the visible and mundane things, and is therefore unfit for spiritual men. What features of the system are referred to in this phrase? Its use in the Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 3), as a synonym for the whole system of ritual observances and ceremonial precepts of Judaism, and the present context, which passes on immediately to speak of circumcision, point to a similar meaning here, though we may include also the ceremonial and ritual of the Gentile religions, in so far as they contributed to the outward forms which the Colossian heresy sought to impose on the Church. This then is Paul's opinion about a system which laid stress on ceremonial and busied itself with forms. He regards it as a deliberate retrogression to an earlier stage. A religion of rites had come first, and was needed for the spiritual infancy of the race—but in Christ we ought to have outgrown the alphabet of revelation, and, being men, to have put away childish things. He regards it further as a pitiable descent into a lower sphere, a fall from the spiritual realm to the material, and therefore unbecoming for those who have been enfranchised from dependence upon outward helps and symbols, and taught the spirituality and inwardness of Christian worship.

We need the lesson in this day no less than did these Christians in the little community in that remote valley of Phrygia. The forms which were urged on them are long since antiquated, but the tendency to turn Christianity into a religion of ceremonial is running with an unusually powerful current to-day. We are all more interested in art, and think we know more about it than our fathers did. The eye and the ear are more educated than they used to be, and a society as "æsthetic" and "musical" as much cultured English society is becoming, will like an ornate ritual. So, apart altogether from doctrinal grounds, much in the conditions of to-day works towards ritual religion. Nonconformist services are less plain; some go from their ranks because they dislike the "bald" worship in the chapel, and prefer the more elaborate forms of the Anglican Church, which in its turn is for the same reason left by others who find their tastes gratified by the complete thing, as it is to be enjoyed full-blown in the Roman Catholic communion. We may freely admit that the Puritan reaction was possibly too severe, and that a little more colour and form might with advantage have been retained. But enlisting the senses as the allies of the spirit in worship is risky work. They are very apt to fight for their own hand when they once begin, and the history of all symbolic and ceremonial worship shows that the experiment is much more likely to end in sensualising religion than in spiritualising sense. The theory that such aids make a ladder by which the soul may ascend to God is perilously apt to be confuted by experience, which finds that the soul is quite as likely to go down the ladder as up it. The gratification of taste, and the excitation of æsthetic sensibility, which are the results of such aids to worship, are not worship, however they may be mistaken for such. All ceremonial is in danger of becoming opaque instead of transparent, as it was meant to be, and of detaining mind and eye instead of letting them pass on and up to God. Stained glass is lovely, and white windows are "barnlike," and "starved," and "bare"; but perhaps, if the object is to get light and to see the sun, these solemn purples and glowing yellows are rather in the way. I for my part believe that of the two extremes, a Quaker meeting is nearer the ideal of Christian worship than High Mass, and so far as my feeble voice can reach, I would urge, as eminently a lesson for the day, Paul's great principle here, that a Christianity making much of forms and ceremonies is a distinct retrogression and descent. You are men in Christ, do not go back to the picture book A B C of symbol and ceremony, which was fit for babes. You have been brought in to the inner sanctuary of worship in spirit; do not decline to the beggarly elements of outward form.

Paul sums up his indictment in one damning clause, the result of the two preceding. If the heresy have no higher source than men's traditions, and no more solid contents than ceremonial observances, it cannot be "after Christ." He is neither its origin, nor its substance, nor its rule and standard. There is a fundamental discord between every such system, however it may call itself Christian, and Christ. The opposition may be concealed by its teachers. They and their victims may not be aware of it. They may not themselves be conscious that by adopting it they have slipped off the foundation; but they have done so, and though in their own hearts they be loyal to Him, they have brought

an incurable discord into their creeds which will weaken their lives, if it do not do worse. Paul cared very little for the dreams of these teachers, except in so far as they carried them and others away from his Master. The Colossians might have as many ceremonies as they liked, and welcome; but when these interfered with the sole reliance to be placed on Christ's work, then they must have no quarter. It is not merely because the teaching was "after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world," but because, being so, it was "not after Christ," that Paul will have none of it. He that touches his Master touches the apple of his eye, and shades of opinion, and things indifferent in practice, and otherwise unimportant forms of worship, have to be fought to the death if they obscure one corner of the perfect and solitary work of the One Lord, who is at once the source, the substance, and the standard of all Christian teaching.

II. The Antidote.—"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power."

These words may be a reason for the warning —"Take heed, for"; or they may be a reason for the implied exclusion of any teaching which is not after Christ. The statement of its characteristics carries in itself its condemnation. Anything "not after Christ" is *ipso facto* wrong, and to be avoided—"for," etc. "In Him" is placed with emphasis at the beginning, and implies "and nowhere else." "Dwelleth," that is, has its permanent abode; where the tense is to be noticed also, as pointing to the ascended Christ. "All the fulness of the Godhead," that is, the whole unbounded powers and attributes of Deity, where is to be noted the use of the abstract term Godhead, instead of the more usual God, in order to express with the utmost force the thought of the indwelling in Christ of the whole essence and nature of God. "Bodily," that points to the Incarnation, and so is an advance upon the passage in the former chapter (ver. 19), which speaks of "the fulness" dwelling in the Eternal Word, whereas this speaks of the Eternal Word in whom the fulness dwelt becoming flesh. So we are pointed to the glorified corporeal humanity of Jesus Christ in His exaltation as the abode, now and for ever, of all the fulness of the Divine nature, which is thereby brought very near to us. This grand truth seems to Paul to shiver to pieces all the dreams of these teachers about angel mediators, and to brand as folly every attempt to learn truth and God anywhere else but in Him.

If He be the one sole temple of Deity in whom all Divine glories are stored, why go anywhere else in order to see or to possess God? It is folly; for not only are all these glories stored in Him, but they are so stored on purpose to be reached by us. Therefore the Apostle goes on, "and in Him ye are made full;" which sets forth two things as true in the inward life of all Christians, namely, their living incorporation in and union with Christ, and their consequent participation in His fulness. Every one of us may enter into that most real and close union with Jesus Christ by the power of continuous faith in Him. So may we be grafted into the Vine, and builded into the Rock. If thus we keep our hearts in contact with His heart and let Him lay His lip on our lips, He will breathe into us the breath of His own life, and ye shall live because He lives, and in our measure, as He lives. All the fulness of God is in Him, that from Him it may pass into us. We might start back from such bold words if we did not remember that the same apostle who here tells us that that fulness dwells in Jesus, crowns his wonderful prayer for the Ephesian Christians with that daring petition, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." The treasure was lodged in the earthen vessel of Christ's manhood that it might be within our reach. He brings the fiery blessing of a Divine life from Heaven to earth enclosed in the feeble reed of His manhood, that it may kindle kindred fire in many a heart. Freely the water of life flows into all cisterns from the ever fresh stream, into which the infinite depth of that unfathomable sea of good pours itself. Every kind of spiritual blessing is given therein. That stream, like a river of molten lava, holds many precious things in its flaming current, and will cool into many shapes and deposit many rare and rich gifts. According to our need it will vary itself, being to each what the moment most requires,—wisdom, or strength, or beauty, or courage, or patience. Out of it will come whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, as Rabbinical legends tell us that the manna tasted to each man like the food for which he wished most.

This process of receiving of all the Divine fulness is a continuous one. We can but be approximating to the possession of the infinite treasure which is ours in Christ; and since the treasure is infinite, and we can indefinitely grow in capacity of receiving God, there must be an eternal continuance of the filling and an eternal increase of the measure of what fills us. Our natures are elastic, and in love and knowledge, as well as in purity and capacity for blessedness, there are no bounds to be set to their possible expansion. They will be widened by bliss into a greater capacity for bliss. The indwelling Christ will "enlarge the place of His habitation," and as the walls stretch and the roofs soar, He will fill the greater house with the light of His presence and the fragrance of His name. The condition of this continuous reception of the abundant gift of a Divine life is abiding in Jesus. It is "in Him" that we are "being filled full"—and it is only so long as we continue in Him that we continue full. We cannot bear away our supplies, as one might a full bucket from a well, and keep it full. All the grace will trickle out and disappear unless we live in constant union with our Lord, whose Spirit passes into our deadness only so long as we are joined to Him.

From all such thoughts Paul would have us draw the conclusion—how foolish, then, it must be to go to any other source for the supply of our needs! Christ is "the head of all principality and power," he adds, with a reference to the doctrine of angel mediators, which evidently played a great part in the heretical teaching. If He is sovereign head of all dignity and power on earth and heaven, why go to the ministers, when we have access to the King; or have recourse to erring human teachers, when we have the Eternal Word to enlighten us; or flee to creatures to replenish our emptiness, when we may draw from the depths of God in Christ? Why should we go on a weary search after

goodly pearls when the richest of all is by us, if we will have it? Do we seek to know God? Let us behold Christ, and let men talk as they list. De we crave a stay for our spirit, guidance and impulse for our lives? Let us cleave to Christ, and we shall be no more lonely and bewildered. Do we need a quieting balm to be laid on conscience, and the sense of guilt to be lifted from our hearts? Let us lay our hands on Christ, the one sacrifice, and leave all other altars and priests and ceremonies. Do we look longingly for some light on the future? Let us steadfastly gaze on Christ as He rises to heaven bearing a human body into the glory of God.

Though all the earth were covered with helpers and lovers of my soul, "as the sand by the sea shore innumerable," and all the heavens were sown with faces of angels who cared for me and succoured me, thick as the stars in the Milky Way—all could not do for me what I need. Yea, though all these were gathered into one mighty and loving creature, even he were no sufficient stay for one soul of man. We want more than creature help. We need the whole fulness of the Godhead to draw from. It is all there in Christ, for each of us. Whosoever will, let him draw freely. Why should we leave the fountain of living waters to hew out for ourselves, with infinite pains, broken cisterns that can hold no water? All we need is in Christ. Let us lift our eyes from the low earth and all creatures, and behold "no man any more," as Lord and Helper, "save Jesus only," "that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION.

COLOSSIANS ii. 11-13 (R. V.).

THERE are two opposite tendencies ever at work in human nature to corrupt religion. One is of the intellect; the other of the senses. The one is the temptation of the cultured few; the other, that of the vulgar many. The one turns religion into theological speculation; the other, into a theatrical spectacle. But, opposite as these tendencies usually are, they were united in that strange chaos of erroneous opinion and practice which Paul had to front at Colossæ. From right and from left he was assailed, and his batteries had to face both ways. Here he is mainly engaged with the error which insisted on imposing circumcision on these Gentile converts.

I. To this teaching of the necessity of circumcision, he first opposes the position that all Christian men, by virtue of their union with Christ, have received the true circumcision, of which the outward rite was a shadow and a prophecy, and that therefore the rite is antiquated and obsolete.

His language is emphatic and remarkable. It points to a definite past time—no doubt the time when they became Christians—when, because they were in Christ, a change passed on them which is fitly paralleled with circumcision. This Christian circumcision is described in three particulars: as "not made with hands;" as consisting in "putting off the body of the flesh;" and as being "of Christ."

It is "not made with hands," that is, it is not a rite, but a reality; not transacted in flesh, but in spirit. It is not the removal of ceremonial impurity, but the cleansing of the heart. This idea of ethical circumcision, of which the bodily rite is the type, is common in the Old Testament, as, for instance, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart . . . to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (Deut. xxx. 6). This is the true Christian circumcision.

It consists in the "putting off the body of the flesh"—for "the sins of" is an interpolation. Of course a man does not shuffle off this mortal coil when he becomes a Christian, so that we have to look for some other meaning of the strong words. They are very strong, for the word "putting off" is intensified so as to express a complete stripping off from oneself, as of clothes which are laid aside, and is evidently intended to contrast the partial outward circumcision as the removal of a small part of the body, with the entire removal effected by union with Christ. If that removal of "the body of the flesh" is "not made with hands," then it can only be in the sphere of the spiritual life, that is to say, it must consist in a change in the relation of the two constituents of a man's being, and that of such a kind that, for the future, the Christian shall not live after the flesh, though he live in the flesh. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," says Paul, and again he uses an expression as strong as, if not stronger than that of our text, when he speaks of "the body" as "being destroyed," and explains himself by adding "that henceforth we should not serve sin." It is not the body considered simply as material and fleshly that we put off, but the body considered as the seat of corrupt and sinful affections and passions. A new principle of life comes into men's hearts which delivers them from the dominion of these, and makes it possible that they should live in the flesh, not "according to the lusts of the flesh, but according to the will of God." True, the text regards this divesting as complete, whereas, as all Christian men know only too sadly, it is very partial, and realised only by slow degrees. The ideal is represented here,—what we receive "in Him," rather than what we actually possess and incorporate into our experience. On the Divine side the change is complete. Christ gives complete emancipation from the dominion of sense, and if we are not in reality completely emancipated, it is because we have not taken the things that are freely given to us, and are not completely "in Him." So far as we are, we have put off "the flesh." The change has passed on us if we are Christians. We have to work it out day by day. The foe may keep up a guerilla warfare after he is substantially defeated, but his entire subjugation is certain if we keep hold of the strength of Christ.

Finally, this circumcision is described as "of Christ," by which is not meant that He submitted to it, but that He instituted it.

Such being the force of this statement, what is its bearing on the Apostle's purpose? He desires to destroy the teaching that the rite of circumcision was binding on the Christian converts, and he does so by asserting that the gospel has brought the reality, of which the rite was but a picture and a prophecy. The underlying principle is that when we have the thing signified by any Jewish rites, which were all prophetic as well as symbolic, the rite may

—must go. Its retention is an anachronism, "as if a flower should shut, and be a bud again." That is a wise and pregnant principle, but as it comes to the surface again immediately hereafter, and is applied to a whole series of subjects, we may defer the consideration of it, and rather dwell briefly on other matters suggested by this verse.

We notice, then, the intense moral earnestness which leads the Apostle here to put the true centre of gravity of Christianity in moral transformation, and to set all outward rites and ceremonies in a very subordinate place. What had Jesus Christ come from heaven for, and for what had He borne His bitter passion? To what end were the Colossians knit to Him by a tie so strong, tender, and strange? Had they been carried into that inmost depth of union with Him, and were they still to be laying stress on ceremonies? Had Christ's work, then, no higher issue than to leave religion bound in the cords of outward observances? Surely Jesus Christ, who gives men a new life by union with Himself, which union is brought about through faith alone, has delivered men from that "yoke of bondage," if He has done anything at all. Surely they who are joined to Him should have a profounder apprehension of the means and the end of their relation to their Lord than to suppose that it is either brought about by any outward rite, or has any reality unless it makes them pure and good. From that height all questions of external observances dwindle into insignificance, and all question of sacramental efficacy drops away of itself. The vital centre lies in our being joined to Jesus Christ—the condition of which is faith in Him, and the outcome of it a new life which delivers us from the dominion of the flesh. How far away from such conceptions of Christianity are those which busy themselves on either side with matters of detail, with punctilios of observance, and pedantries of form? The hatred of forms may be as completely a form as the most elaborate ritual—and we all need to have our eyes turned away from these to the far higher thing, the worship and service offered by a transformed nature.

We notice, again, that the conquest of the animal nature and the material body is the certain outcome of true union with Christ, and of that alone.

Paul did not regard matter as necessarily evil, as these teachers at Colossæ did, nor did he think of the body as the source of all sin. But he knew that the fiercest and most fiery temptations came from it, and that the foulest and most indelible stains on conscience were splashed from the mud which it threw. We all know that too. It is a matter of life and death for each of us to find some means of taming and holding in the animal that is in us all. We all know of wrecked lives, which have been driven on the rocks by the wild passions belonging to the flesh. Fortune, reputation, health, everything are sacrified by hundreds of men, especially young men, at the sting of this imperious lust. The budding promise of youth, innocence, hope, and all which makes life desirable and a nature fair, are trodden down by the hoofs of the brute. There is no need to speak of that. And when we come to add to this the weaknesses of the flesh, and the needs of the flesh, and the limitations of the flesh, and to remember how often high purposes are frustrated by its shrinking from toil, and how often mists born from its undrained swamps darken the vision that else might gaze on truth and God, we cannot but feel that we do not need to be Eastern Gnostics to believe that goodness requires the flesh to be subdued. Every one who has sought for self-improvement recognises the necessity. But no asceticisms and no resolves will do what we want. Much repression may be effected by sheer force of will, but it is like a man holding a wolf by the jaws. The arms begin to ache and the grip to grow slack, and he feels his strength ebbing, and knows that, as soon as he lets go, the brute will fly at his throat. Repression is not taming. Nothing tames the wild beast in us but the power of Christ. He binds it in a silken lash, and that gentle constraint is strong, because the fierceness is gone. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them." The power of union with Christ, and that alone, will enable us to put off the body of the flesh. And such union will certainly lead to such crucifying of the animal nature. Christianity would be easy if it were a round of observances; it would be comparatively easy if it were a series of outward asceticisms. Anybody can fast or wear a hair shirt, if he have motive sufficient; but the "putting off the body of the flesh" which is "not made with hands," is a different and harder thing. Nothing else avails. High-flown religious emotion, or clear theological definitions, or elaborate ceremonial worship, may all have their value; but a religion which includes them all, and leaves out the plain moralities of subduing the flesh, and keeping our heel well pressed down on the serpent's head, is worthless. If we are in Christ, we shall not live in the flesh.

II. The Apostle meets the false teaching of the need for circumcision, by a second consideration; namely, a reference to Christian Baptism, as being the Christian sign of that inward change.

Ye were circumcised, says he—being buried with Him in baptism. The form of expression in the Greek implies that the two things are contemporaneous. As if he had said—Do you want any further rite to express that mighty change which passed on you when you came to be "in Christ"? You have been baptised; does not that express all the meaning that circumcision ever had, and much more? What can you want with the less significant rite when you have the more significant? This reference to baptism is quite consistent with what has been said as to the subordinate importance of ritual. Some forms we must have, if there is to be any outward visible Church, and Christ has yielded to the necessity, and given us two, of which the one symbolises the initial spiritual act of the Christian life, and the other the constantly repeated process of Christian nourishment. They are symbols and outward representations, nothing more. They convey grace, in so far as they help us to realise more clearly and to feel more deeply the facts on which our spiritual life is fed, but they are not channels of grace in any other way than any other outward acts of worship may be.

We see that the form of baptism here presupposed is by immersion, and that the form is regarded as significant. All but entire unan-

imity prevails among commentators on this point. The burial and the resurrection spoken of point unmistakably to the primitive mode of baptism, as Bishop Lightfoot, the latest and best English expositor of this book, puts it in his paraphrase: "Ye were buried with Christ to your old selves beneath the baptismal waters, and were raised with Him from these same waters, to a new and better life."

If so, two questions deserve consideration—first, is it right to alter a form which has a meaning that is lost by the change? second, can we alter a significant form without destroying it? Is the new thing rightly called by the old name? If baptism be immersion, and immersion express a substantial part of its meaning, can sprinkling or pouring be baptism?

Again, baptism is associated in time with the inward change, which is the true circumcision. There are but two theories on which these two things are contemporaneous. The one is the theory that baptism effects the change; the other is the theory that baptism goes with the change as its sign. The association is justified if men are "circumcised," that is, changed when they are baptised, or if men are baptised when they have been "circumcised." No other theory gives full weight to these words.

The former theory elevates baptism into more than the importance of which Paul sought to deprive circumcision, it confuses the distinction between the Church and the world, it lulls men into a false security, it obscures the very central truth of Christianity—namely that faith in Christ, working by love, makes a Christian—it gives the basis for a portentous reproduction of sacerdotalism, and it is shivered to pieces against the plain facts of daily life. But it may be worth while to notice in a sentence, that it is conclusively disposed of by the language before us—it is "through faith in the operation of God" that we are raised again in baptism. Not the rite, then, but faith is the means of this participation with Christ in burial and resurrection. What remains but that baptism is associated with that spiritual change by which we are delivered from the body of the flesh, because in the Divine order it is meant to be the outward symbol of that change which is effected by no rite or sacrament, but by faith alone, uniting us to the transforming Christ?

We observe the solemnity and the thoroughness of the change thus symbolised. It is more than a circumcision. It is burial and a resurrection, an entire dying of the old self by union with Christ, a real and present rising again by participation in His risen life. This and nothing less makes a Christian. We partake of His death, inasmuch as we ally ourselves to it by our faith, as the sacrifice for our sins, and make it the ground of all our hope. But that is not all. We partake of His death, inasmuch as, by the power of His cross, we are drawn to sever ourselves from the selfish life, and to slay our own old nature; dying for His dear sake to the habits, tastes, desires, and purposes in which we lived. Self-crucifixion for the love of Christ is the law for us all. His cross is the pattern for our conduct, as well as the pledge and means of our acceptance. We must die to sin that we may live to righteousness. We must die to self, that we may live to God and our brethren. We have no right to trust in Christ for us, except as we have Christ in us. His cross is not saving us from our guilt unless it is moulding our lives to some faint likeness of Him who died that we may live, and might live a real life by dying daily to the world, sin, and self.

If we are thus made conformable to His death, we shall know the power of His resurrection, in all its aspects. It will be to us the guarantee of our own, and we shall know its power as a prophecy for our future. It will be to us the seal of His perfect work on the cross, and we shall know its power as God's token of acceptance of His sacrifice in the past. It will be to us the type of our spiritual resurrection now, and we shall know its power as the pattern and source of our supernatural life in the present. Thus we must die in and with Christ that we may live in and with Him, and that twofold process is the very heart of personal religion. No lofty participation in the immortal hopes which spring from the empty grave of Jesus is warranted, unless we have His quickening power raising us to-day by a better resurrection; and no participation in the present power of His heavenly life is possible, unless we have such a share in His death, as that by it the world is crucified to us, and we unto the world.

III. The Apostle adds another phase of this great contrast of life and death, which brings home still more closely to his hearers the deep and radical change which passes upon all Christians. He has been speaking of a death and burial followed by a resurrection. But there is another death from which Christ raises us, by that same risen life imparted to us through faith—a darker and grimmer thing than the self-abnegation before described.

"And you, being dead through your trespasses, and the uncircumcision of your flesh." The separate acts of transgression of which they had been guilty, and the unchastened, unpurified, carnal nature from which these had flowed, were the reasons of a very real and awful death; or, as the parallel passage in Ephesians (ii. 2) puts it with a slight variation, they made the condition or sphere in which that death inhered. That solemn thought, so pregnant in its dread emphasis in Scripture, is not to be put aside as a mere metaphor. All life stands in union with God. The physical universe exists by reason of its perpetual contact with His sustaining hand, in the hollow of which all Being lies, and it is, because He touches it. "In Him we live." So also the life of mind is sustained by His perpetual inbreathing, and in the deepest sense "we see light" in His light. So, lastly, the highest life of the spirit stands in union in still higher manner with Him, and to be separated from Him is death to it. Sin breaks that union, and therefore sin is death, in the very inmost centre of man's being. The awful warning, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," was fulfilled. That separation by sin, in which the soul is wrenched from God, is the real death, and the thing that men call by the name is only an outward symbol of a far sadder fact—the shadow of that which is the awful substance, and as much less terrible than it as painted fires are less than the burning reality.

So men may live in the body, and toil and think and feel, and be dead. The world is full of "sheeted dead," that "squeak and gibber" in "our streets," for every soul that lives to self and has rent itself away from God, so far

as a creature can, is "dead while he liveth." The other death, of which the previous verse spoke, is therefore but the putting off of a death. We lose nothing of real life in putting off self, but only that which keeps us in a separation from God, and slays our true and highest being. To die to self is but "the death of death."

The same life of which the previous verse spoke as coming from the risen Lord is here set forth as able to raise us from that death of sin. "He hath quickened you together with Him." Union with Christ floods our dead souls with His own vitality, as water will pour from a reservoir through a tube inserted in it. There is the actual communication of a new life when we touch Christ by faith. The prophet of old laid himself upon the dead child, the warm lip on the pallid mouth, the throbbing heart on the still one, and the contact rekindled the extinguished spark. So Christ lays His full life on our deadness, and does more than recall a departed glow of vitality. He communicates a new life kindred with His own. That life makes us free here and now from the law of sin and death, and it shall be perfected hereafter when the working of His mighty power shall change the body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory, and the leaven of His new life shall leaven the three measures in which it is hidden, body, soul, and spirit, with its own transforming energy. Then, in yet higher sense, death shall die, and life shall be victor by His victory.

But to all this one preliminary is needful—"having forgiven us all trespasses." Paul's eagerness to associate himself with his brethren, and to claim his share in the forgiveness, as well as to unite in the acknowledgment of sin, makes him change his word from "you" to "us." So the best manuscripts give the text, and the reading is obviously full of interest and suggestiveness. There must be a removal of the cause of deadness before there can be a quickening to new life. That cause was sin, which cannot be cancelled as guilt by any self-denial however great, nor even by the impartation of a new life from God for the future. A gospel which only enjoined dying to self would be as inadequate as a gospel which only provided for a higher life in the future. The stained and faultful past must be cared for. Christ must bring pardon for it, as well as a new spirit for the future. So the condition prior to our being quickened together with Him is God's forgiveness, free and universal, covering all our sins, and given to us without anything on our part. That condition is satisfied. Christ's death brings to us God's pardon, and when the great barrier of unforgiven sin is cleared away, Christ's life pours into our hearts, and "everything lives whithersoever the river cometh."

Here then we have the deepest ground of Paul's intense hatred of every attempt to make anything but faith in Christ and moral purity essential to the perfect Christian life. Circumcision and baptism and all other rites or sacraments of Judaism or Christianity are equally powerless to quicken dead souls. For that, the first thing needed is the forgiveness of sins, and that is ours through simple faith in Christ's death. We are quickened by Christ's own life in us, and He "dwells in our hearts by faith." All ordinances may be administered to us a hundred times, and without faith they leave us as they found us—dead. If we have hold of Christ by faith we live, whether we have received the ordinances or not. So all full-blown or budding sacramentarianism is to be fought against to the uttermost, because it tends to block the road to the City of Refuge for a poor sinful soul, and the most pressing of all necessities is that that way of life should be kept clear and unimpeded.

We need the profound truth which lies in the threefold form which Paul gives to one of his great watchwords: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." And how, says my despairing conscience, shall I keep the commandments? The answer lies in the second form of the saying—"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And how, replies my saddened heart, can I become a new creature? The answer lies in the final form of the saying—"In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh." Faith brings the life which makes us new men, and then we can keep the commandments. If we have faith, and are new men and do God's will, we need no rites but as helps. If we have not faith, all rites are nothing.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CROSS THE DEATH OF LAW AND THE TRIUMPH OVER EVIL POWERS.

COLOSSIANS ii. 14, 15 (R. V.).

THE same double reference to the two characteristic errors of the Colossians which we have already met so frequently, presents itself here. This whole section vibrates continually between warnings against the Judaising enforcement of the Mosaic law on Gentile Christians, and against the Oriental figments about a crowd of angelic beings filling the space betwixt man and God, betwixt pure spirit and gross matter. One great fact is here opposed to these strangely associated errors. The cross of Christ is the abrogation of the Law; the cross of Christ is the victory over principalities and powers. If we hold fast by it, we are under no subjection to the former, and have neither to fear nor reverence the latter.

I. The Cross of Christ is the death of Law.

The law is a written document. It has an antagonistic aspect to us all, Gentiles as well as Jews. Christ has blotted it out. More than that, He has taken it out of the way, as if it were an obstacle lying right in the middle of our path. More than that, it is "nailed to the cross." That phrase has been explained by an alleged custom of repealing laws and cancelling bonds by driving a nail into them, and fixing them up in public, but proof of the practice is said to be wanting. The thought seems to be deeper than that. This antagonistic "law" is conceived of as being, like "the world," crucified in the crucifixion of our Lord. The nails which fastened Him to the cross fastened it, and in His death it was done to death. We are free from it, "that being dead in which we were held."

We have first, then, to consider the "handwriting," or, as some would render the word, "the bond." Of course, by law here is primarily meant the Mosaic ceremonial law, which was being pressed upon the Colossians. It is so completely antiquated for us, that we have difficulty in realising what a fight for life and death raged round the question of its observance by the primitive Church. It is always harder to change customs than creeds, and religious observances live on, as every maypole on a village green tells us, long after the beliefs which animated them are forgotten. So there was a strong body among the early believers to whom it was flat blasphemy to speak of allowing the Gentile Christian to come into the Church, except through the old doorway of circumcision, and to whom the outward ceremonial of Judaism was the only visible religion. That is the point directly at issue between Paul and these teachers.

But the modern distinction between moral and ceremonial law had no existence in Paul's mind, any more than it has in the Old Testament, where precepts of the highest morality and regulations of the merest ceremonial are interstratified in a way most surprising to us moderns. To him the law was a homogeneous whole, however diverse its commands, because it was all the revelation of the will of God for the guidance of man. It is the law as a whole, in all its aspects and parts, that is here spoken of, whether as enjoining morality, or external observances, or as an accuser fastening guilt on the conscience, or as a stern prophet of retribution and punishment.

Further, we must give a still wider extension to the thought. The principles laid down are true not only in regard to "the law," but about all law, whether it be written on the tables of stone, or on "the fleshly tables of the heart" or conscience, or in the systems of ethics, or in the customs of society. Law, as such, howsoever enacted and whatever the bases of its rule, is dealt with by Christianity in precisely the same way as the venerable and Godgiven code of the Old Testament. When we recognise that fact, these discussions in Paul's Epistles flash up into startling vitality and interest. It has long since been settled that Jewish ritual is nothing to us. But it ever remains a burning question for each of us, What Christianity does for us in relation to the solemn law of duty under which we are all placed, and which we have all broken?

The antagonism of law is the next point presented by these words. Twice, to add to the emphasis, Paul tells us that the law is against us. It stands opposite us fronting us and frowning at us, and barring our road. Is "law" then become our "enemy because it tells us the truth"? Surely this conception of law is a strange contrast to and descent from the rapturous delight of psalmists and prophets in the "law of the Lord." Surely God's greatest gift to man is the knowledge of His will, and law is beneficent, a light and a guide to men, and even its strokes are merciful. Paul believed all that too. But nevertheless the antagonism is very real. As with God, so with law, if we be against Him, He cannot but be against us. We may make Him our dearest friend or our foe. "They rebelled . . . therefore He was turned to be their enemy and fought against them." The revelation of duty to which we are not inclined is ever unwelcome. Law is against us, because it comes like a taskmaster, bidding us do, but neither putting the inclination into our hearts, nor the power into our hands. And law is against us, because the revelation of unfulfilled duty is the accusation of the defaulter and a revelation to him of his guilt. And law is against us, because it comes with threatenings and foretastes of penalty and pain. Thus as standard, accuser, and avenger, it is—sad perversion of its nature and function though such an attitude be—against us.

We all know that. Strange and tragic it is, but alas! it is true, that God's law presents itself before us as an enemy. Each of us has seen that apparition, severe in beauty, like the sword-bearing angel that Balaam saw "standing in the way" between the vineyards, blocking our path when we wanted to "go frowardly in the way of our heart." Each of us knows what it is to see our sentence in the stern face. The law of the Lord should be to us "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb," but the corruption of the best is the worst, and we can make it poison. Obeyed, it is as the chariot of fire to bear us heavenward. Disobeyed, it is an iron car that goes crashing on its way, crushing all who set themselves against it. To know what we ought to be and to love and try to be it, is blessedness, but to know it and to refuse to be it, is misery. In herself she "wears the Godhead's most benignant grace," but if we turn against her, Law, the "daughter of the voice of God," gathers frowns upon her face and her beauty becomes stern and threatening.

But the great principle here asserted is the destruction of law in the cross of Christ. The cross ends the law's power of punishment. Paul believed that the burden and penalty of sin had been laid on Jesus Christ and borne by Him on His cross. In deep, mysterious, but most real identification of Himself with the whole race of man, He not only Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses, by the might of His sympathy and the reality of His manhood, but "the Lord made to meet upon Him the iniquity of us all"; and He, the Lamb of God, willingly accepted the load, and bare away our sins by bearing their penalty.

To philosophise on that teaching of Scripture is not my business here. It is my business to assert it. We can never penetrate to a full understanding of the rationale of Christ's bearing the world's sins, but that has nothing to do with the earnestness of our belief in the fact. Enough for us that in His person He willingly made experience of all the bitterness of sin: that when He agonised in the dark on the cross, and when from out of the darkness came that awful cry, so strangely compact of wistful confidence and utter isolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" it was something deeper than physical pain or shrinking from physical death that found utterance—even the sin-laden consciousness of Him who in that awful hour gathered into His own breast the spear-points of a world's punishment. The cross of Christ is the endurance of the penalty of sin, and therefore is the unloosing of the grip of the law upon us, in so far as threatening and punishment are concerned. It is not enough that we should only intellectually recognise that as a principle—it is the very

heart of the gospel, the very life of our souls. Trusting ourselves to that great sacrifice, the dread of punishment will fade from our hearts, and the thunder-clouds melt out of the sky, and the sense of guilt will not be a sting, but an occasion for lowly thankfulness, and the law will have to draw the bolts of her prison-house and let our captive souls go free.

Christ's cross is the end of law as ceremonial. The whole elaborate ritual of the Jew had sacrifice for its vital centre, and the prediction of the Great Sacrifice for its highest purpose. Without the admission of these principles, Paul's position is unintelligible, for he holds, as in this context, that Christ's coming puts the whole system out of date, because it fulfils it all. When the fruit has set, there is no more need for petals; or, as the Apostle himself puts it, "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part is done away." We have the reality, and do not need the shadow. There is but one temple for the Christian soul—the "temple of His body." Local sanctity is at an end, for it was never more than an external picture of that spiritual fact which is realised in the Incarnation. Christ is the dwelling-place of Deity, the meeting-place of God and man, the place of sacrifice; and, builded on Him, we in Him become a spiritual house. There are none other temples than these. Christ is the great priest, and in His presence all human priesthood loses its consecration, for it could offer only external sacrifice, and secure a local approach to a "worldly sanctuary." He is the real Aaron, and we in Him become a royal priesthood. There are none other priests than these. Christ is the true sacrifice. His death is the real propitiation for sin, and we in Him become thank-offerings, moved by His mercies to present ourselves living sacrifices. There are none other offerings than these. So the law as a code of ceremonial worship is done to death in the cross, and, like the temple veil, is torn in two from the top to the bottom.

Christ's cross is the end of law as moral rule. Nothing in Paul's writings warrants the restriction to the ceremonial law of the strong assertion in the text, and its many parallels. Of course, such words do not mean that Christian men are freed from the obligations of morality, but they do mean that we are not bound to do the "things contained in the law" because they are there. Duty is duty now because we see the pattern of conduct and character in Christ. Conscience is not our standard, nor is the Old Testament conception of the perfect ideal of manhood. We have neither to read law in the fleshy tables of the heart, nor in the tables graven by God's own finger, nor in men's parchments and prescriptions. Our law is the perfect life and death of Christ, who is at once the ideal of humanity and the reality of Deity.

The weakness of all law is that it merely commands, but has no power to get its commandments obeyed. Like a discrowned king, it posts its proclamations, but has no army at its back to execute them. But Christ puts His own power within us, and His love in our hearts; and so we pass from under the dominion of an external commandment into the liberty of an inward spirit. He is to His followers both "law and impulse." He gives not the "law of a carnal commandment, but the power of an endless life." The long schism between inclination and duty is at an end, in so far as we are under the influence of Christ's cross. The great promise is fulfilled, "I will put My law into their minds and write it in their hearts"; and so, glad obedience with the whole power of the new life, for the sake of the love of the dear Lord who has bought us by His death, supersedes the constrained submission to outward precept. A higher morality ought to characterise the partakers of the life of Christ, who have His example for their code, and His love for their motive. The tender voice that says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," wins us to purer and more self-sacrificing goodness than the stern accents that can only say, "Thou shalt—or else!" can ever enforce. He came "not to destroy, but to fulfil." The fulfilment was destruction in order to reconstruction in higher form. Law died with Christ on the cross in order that it might rise and reign with Him in our inmost hearts.

II. The Cross is the triumph over all the powers of evil.

There are considerable difficulties in the interpretation of ver. 15; the main question being the meaning of the word rendered in the Authorised Version "spoiled," and in the R. V., "having put off from Himself." It is the same word as is used in iii. 9, and is there rendered "have put off"; while a cognate noun is found in verse 11 of this chapter, and is there translated "the putting off." The form here must either mean "having put off from oneself," or "having stripped (others) for oneself." The former meaning is adopted by many commentators, as well as by the R. V., and is explained to mean that Christ, having assumed our humanity, was, as it were, wrapped about and invested with Satanic temptations, which He finally flung from Him for ever in His death, which was His triumph over the powers of evil. The figure seems far-fetched and obscure, and the rendering necessitates the supposition of a change in the person spoken of, which must be God in the earlier part of the period, and Christ in the latter.

But if we adopt the other meaning, which has equal warrant in the Greek form, "having stripped for Himself," we get the thought that in the cross God has, for His greater glory, stripped principalities and powers. Taking this meaning, we avoid the necessity of supposing with Bishop Lightfoot that there is a change of subject from God to Christ at some point in the period including vv. 13 to 15—an expedient which is made necessary by the impossibility of supposing that God "divested Himself of principalities or powers"—and also avoid the other necessity of referring the whole period to Christ, which is another way out of that impossibility. We thereby obtain a more satisfactory meaning than that Christ in assuming humanity was assailed by temptations from the powers of evil which were, as it were, a poisoned garment clinging to Him, and which He stripped off from Himself in His death. Further, such a meaning as that which we adopt makes the whole verse a consistent metaphor in three stages, whereas the other introduces an utterly incongruous and irrelevant figure. What connection has the figure of stripping off a garment with that of a conqueror in his triumphal procession? But if we read "spoiled for Himself principali-

ties and powers," we see the whole process before our eyes—the victor stripping his foes of arms and ornaments and dress, then parading them as his captives, and then dragging them at the wheels of his triumphal car.

The words point us into dim regions of which we know nothing more than Scripture tells us. These dreamers at Colossæ had much to say about a crowd of beings, bad and good, which linked men and matter with spirit and God. We have heard already the emphasis with which Paul has claimed for his Master the sovereign authority of Creator over all orders of being, the headship over all principality and power. He has declared, too, that from Christ's cross a magnetic influence streams out upwards as well as earthwards, binding all things together in the great reconciliation—and now he tells us that from that same cross shoot downwards darts of conquering power which subdue and despoil reluctant foes of other realms and regions than ours, in so far as they work among men.

That there are such seems plainly enough asserted in Christ's own words. However much discredit has been brought on the thought by monastic and Puritan exaggerations, it is clearly the teaching of Scripture; and however it may be ridiculed or set aside, it can never be disproved.

But the position which Christianity takes in reference to the whole matter is to maintain that Christ has conquered the banded kingdom of evil, and that no man owes it fear or obedience, if he will only hold fast by his Lord. In the cross is the judgment of this world, and by it is the prince of this world cast out. He has taken away the power of these Powers who were so mighty amongst men. They held men captive by temptations too strong to be overcome, but He has conquered the lesser temptations of the wilderness and the sorer of the cross, and therein has made us more than conquerors. They held men captive by ignorance of God, and the cross reveals Him; by the lie that sin was a trifle, but the cross teaches us its gravity and power; by the opposite lie that sin was unforgivable, but the cross brings pardon for every transgression and cleansing for every stain. By the cross the world is a redeemed world, and, as our Lord said in words which may have suggested the figure of our text, the strong man is bound, and his house spoiled of all his armour wherein he trusted. The prey is taken from the mighty and men are delivered from the dominion of evil. So that dark kingdom is robbed of its subjects and its rulers impoverished and restrained. The devout imagination of the monk-painter drew on the wall of the cell in his convent the conquering Christ with white banner bearing a blood-red cross, before whose glad coming the heavy doors of the prison-house fell from their hinges, crushing beneath their weight the demon jailor, while the long file of eager captives, from Adam onwards through ages of patriarchs and psalmists and prophets, hurried forward with outstretched hands to meet the Deliverer, who came bearing His own atmosphere of radiance and joy. Christ has conquered. His cross is His victory; and in that victory God has conquered. As the long files of the triumphal procession swept upwards to the temple with incense and music, before the gazing eyes of a gathered glad nation, while the conquered trooped chained behind the chariot, that all men might see their fierce eyes gleaming beneath their matted hair, and breathe more freely for the chains on their hostile wrists, so in the world-wide issues of the work of Christ, God triumphs before the universe, and enhances His glory in that He has rent the prey from the mighty and won men back to Himself.

So we learn to think of evil as conquered, and for ourselves in our own conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil, as well as for the whole race of man, to be of good cheer. True, the victory is but slowly being realised in all its consequences, and often it seems as if no territory had been won. But the main position has been carried, and though the struggle is still obstinate, it can end only in one way. The brute dies hard, but the naked heel of our Christ has bruised his head, and though still the dragon

"Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail,"

his death will come sooner or later. The regenerating power is lodged in the heart of humanity, and the centre from which it flows is the cross. The history of the world thenceforward is but the history of its more or less rapid assimilation of that power, and of its consequent deliverance from the bondage in which it has been held. The end can only be the entire and universal manifestation of the victory which was won when He bowed His head and died. Christ's cross is God's throne of triumph.

Let us see that we have our own personal part in that victory. Holding to Christ, and drawing from Him by faith a share in His new life, we shall no longer be under the yoke of law, but enfranchised into the obedience of love, which is liberty. We shall no longer be slaves of evil, but sons and servants of our conquering God, who wooes and wins us by showing us all His love in Christ, and by giving us His own Son on the Cross, our peace-offering. If we let Him overcome, His victory will be life, not death. He will strip us of nothing but rags, and clothe us in garments of purity; He will so breathe beauty into us that He will show us openly to the universe as examples of His transforming power, and He will bind us glad captives to His chariot wheels, partakers of His victory as well as trophies of His all-conquering love. "Now thanks be unto God, which always triumphs over us in Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER XV.

WARNINGS AGAINST TWIN CHIEF ERRORS, BASED UPON PREVIOUS POSITIVE TEACHING.

COLOSSIANS ii. 16-19 (R. V.).

"Let no man therefore judge you." That "therefore" sends us back to what the Apostle has been saying in the previous verses, in order to find there the ground of these earnest warnings. That ground is the whole of the foregoing exposition of the Christian relation to Christ as far back as ver. 9, but especially the great truths contained in the immediately preceding verses, that the cross of Christ is the death of law, and God's triumph over all the powers of evil. Because it is so, the Colossian

Christians are exhorted to claim and use their emancipation from both. Thus we have here the very heart and centre of the practical counsels of the Epistle—the double blasts of the trumpet warning against the two most pressing dangers besetting the Church. They are the same two which we have often met already—on the one hand, a narrow Judaising enforcement of ceremonial and punctilios of outward observance; on the other hand, a dreamy Oriental absorption in imaginations of a crowd of angelic mediators obscuring the one gracious presence of Christ our Intercessor.

I. Here then we have first, the claim for Christian liberty, with the great truth on which it is built.

The points in regard to which that liberty is to be exercised are specified. They are no doubt those, in addition to circumcision, which were principally in question then and there. "Meat and drink" refers to restrictions in diet, such as the prohibition of "unclean" things in the Mosaic law, and the question of the lawfulness of eating meat offered to idols; perhaps also, such as the Nazarite vow. There were few regulations as to "drink" in the Old Testament, so that probably other ascetic practices besides the Mosaic regulations were in question, but these must have been unimportant, else Paul could not have spoken of the whole as being a "shadow of things to come." The second point in regard to which liberty is here claimed is that of the sacred seasons of Judaism: the annual festivals, the monthly feast of the new moon, the weekly Sabbath.

The relation of the Gentile converts to these Jewish practices was an all-important question for the early Church. It was really the question whether Christianity was to be more than a Jewish sect—and the main force which, under God, settled the contest, was the vehemence and logic of the Apostle Paul.

Here he lays down the ground on which that whole question about diet and days, and all such matters, is to be settled. They "are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." "Coming events cast their shadows before." That great work of Divine love, the mission of Christ, Whose "goings forth have been from everlasting," may be thought of as having set out from the Throne as soon as time was, travelling in the greatness of its strength, like the beams of some far-off star that have not yet reached a dark world. The light from the Throne is behind Him as He advances across the centuries, and the shadow is thrown far in front.

Now that involves two thoughts about the Mosaic law and whole system. First, the purely prophetic and symbolic character of the Old Testament order, and especially of the Old Testament ritual. The absurd extravagance of many attempts to "spiritualise" the latter should not blind us to the truth which they caricature. Nor, on the other hand, should we be so taken with new attempts to reconstruct our notions of Jewish history and the dates of Old Testament books, as to forget that, though the New Testament is committed to no theory on these points, it is committed to the Divine origin and prophetic purpose of the Mosaic law and Levitical worship. We should thankfully accept all teaching which free criticism and scholarship can give us as to the process by which, and the time when, that great symbolic system of acted prophecy was built up; but we shall be further away than ever from understanding the Old Testament if we have gained critical knowledge of its genesis, and have lost the belief that its symbols were given by God to prophesy of His Son. That is the key to both Testaments; and I cannot but believe that the uncritical reader who reads his book of the law and the prophets with that conviction, has got nearer the very marrow of the book than the critic, if he have parted with it, can ever come.

Sacrifice, altar, priest, temple spake of Him. The distinctions of meats were meant, among other purposes, to familiarise men with the conceptions of purity and impurity, and so, by stimulating conscience, to wake the sense of need of a Purifier. The yearly feasts set forth various aspects of the great work of Christ, and the sabbath showed in outward form the rest into which He leads those who cease from their own works and wear His yoke. All these observances, and the whole system to which they belong, are like out-riders who precede a prince on his progress, and as they gallop through sleeping villages, rouse them with the cry, "The king is coming!"

And when the king has come, where are the heralds? and when the reality has come, who wants symbols? and if that which threw the shadow forward through the ages has arrived, how shall the shadow be visible too? Therefore the second principle here laid down, namely the cessation of all these observances, and their like, is really involved in the first, namely their prophetic character.

The practical conclusion drawn is very noteworthy, because it seems much narrower than the premises warrant. Paul does not say—therefore let no man observe any of these any more; but takes up the much more modest ground—let no man judge you about them. He claims a wide liberty of variation, and all that he repels is the right of anybody to dragoon Christian men into ceremonial observances on the ground that they are necessary. He does not quarrel with the rites, but with men insisting on the necessity of the rites.

In his own practice he gave the best commentary on his meaning. When they said to him, "You must circumcise Titus," he said, "Then I will not." When nobody tried to compel him, he took Timothy, and of his own accord circumcised him to avoid scandals. When it was needful as a protest, he rode right over all the prescriptions of the law, and "did eat with Gentiles." When it was advisable as a demonstration that he himself "walked orderly and kept the law," he performed the rites of purification and united in the temple worship.

In times of transition wise supporters of the new will not be in a hurry to break with the old. "I will lead on softly, according as the flock and the children be able to endure," said Jacob, and so says every good shepherd.

The brown sheaths remain on the twig after the tender green leaf has burst from within them, but there is no need to pull them off, for they will drop presently. "I will wear three surplices if they like," said Luther once. "Neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse," said Paul. Such is the spirit of the words here. It is a plea for

Christian liberty. If not insisted on as necessary, the outward observances may be allowed. If they are regarded as helps, or as seemly adjuncts or the like, there is plenty of room for difference of opinion and for variety of practice, according to temperament and taste and usage. There are principles which should regulate even these diversities of practice, and Paul has set these forth, in the great chapter about meats in the Epistle to the Romans. But it is a different thing altogether when any external observances are insisted on as essential, either from the old Jewish or from the modern sacramentarian point of view. If a man comes saying, "Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved," the only right answer is, Then I will not be circumcised, and if you are, because you believe that you cannot be saved without it, "Christ is become of none effect to you." Nothing is necessary but union to Him, and that comes through no outward observance, but through the faith which worketh by love. Therefore, let no man judge you, but repel all such attempts at thrusting any ceremonial ritual observances on you, on the plea of necessity, with the emancipating truth that the cross of Christ is the death of law.

A few words may be said here on the bearing of the principles laid down in these verses on the religious observance of Sunday. The obligation of the Jewish sabbath has passed away as much as sacrifices and circumcision. That seems unmistakably the teaching here. But the institution of a weekly day of rest is distinctly put in Scripture as independent of, and prior to, the special form and meaning given to the institution in the Mosaic law. That is the natural conclusion from the narrative of the creative rest in Genesis, and from our Lord's emphatic declaration that the sabbath was made for "man"—that is to say, for the race. Many traces of the pre-Mosaic sabbath have been adduced, and among others we may recall the fact that recent researches show it to have been observed by the Accadians, the early inhabitants of Assyria. It is a physical and moral necessity, and that is a sadly mistaken benevolence which, on the plea of culture or amusement for the many, compels the labour of the few, and breaks down the distinction between the Sunday and the rest of the week.

The religious observance of the first day of the week rests on no recorded command, but has a higher origin, inasmuch as it is the outcome of a felt want. The early disciples naturally gathered together for worship on the day which had become so sacred to them. At first, no doubt, they observed the Jewish sabbath, and only gradually came to the practice which we almost see growing before our eyes in the Acts of the Apostles, in the mention of the disciples at Troas coming together on the first day of the week to break bread, and which we gather, from the Apostle's instructions as to weekly setting apart money for charitable purposes, to have existed in the Church at Corinth; as we know, that even in his lonely island prison far away from the company of his brethren, the Apostle John was in a condition of high religious contemplation on the Lord's day, ere yet he heard the solemn voice and saw "the things which are."

This gradual growing up of the practice is in accordance with the whole spirit of the New Covenant, which has next to nothing to say about the externals of worship, and leaves the new life to shape itself. Judaism gave prescriptions and minute regulations; Christianity, the religion of the spirit, gives principles. The necessity, for the nourishment of the Divine life, of the religious observance of the day of rest is certainly not less now than at first. In the hurry and drive of our modern life, with all world forcing itself on us at every moment, we cannot keep up the warmth of devotion unless we use this day, not merely for physical rest and family enjoyment, but for worship. They who know their own slothfulness of spirit, and are in earnest in seeking after a deeper, fuller Christian life, will thankfully own, "the week were dark but for its light." I distrust the spirituality which professes that all life is a sabbath, and therefore holds itself absolved from special seasons of worship. If the stream of devout communion is to flow through all our days, there must be frequent reservoirs along the road, or it will be lost in the sand, like the rivers of higher Asia. It is a poor thing to say, keep the day as a day of worship because it is a commandment. Better to think of it as a great gift for the highest purposes; and not let it be merely a day of rest for jaded bodies, but make it one of refreshment for cumbered spirits, and rekindle the smouldering flame of devotion, by drawing near to Christ in public and in private. So shall we gather stores that may help us to go in the strength of that meat for some more marches on the dusty road of life.

II. The Apostle passes on to his second peal of warning,—that against the teaching about angel mediators, which would rob the Colossian Christians of their prize,—and draws a rapid portrait of the teachers of whom they are to beware.

"Let no man rob you of your prize." The metaphor is the familiar one of the race or the wrestling ground; the umpire or judge is Christ; the reward is that incorruptible crown of glory, of righteousness, woven not of fading bay leaves, but of sprays from the "tree of life," which dower with undying blessedness the brows round which they are wreathed. Certain people are trying to rob them of their prize—not consciously, for that would be inconceivable, but such is the tendency of their teaching. No names will be mentioned, but he draws a portrait of the robber with swift firm hand, as if he had said, If you want to know whom I mean, here he is. Four clauses, like four rapid strokes of the pencil, do it, and are marked in the Greek by four participles, the first of which is obscured in the Authorised Version. "Delighting in humility and the worshipping of angels." So probably the first clause should be rendered. The first words are almost contradictory, and are meant to suggest that the humility has not the genuine ring about it. Self-conscious humility in which a man takes delight is not the real thing. A man who knows that he is humble, and is self-complacent about it, glancing out of the corners of his downcast eyes at any mirror where he can see himself, is not humble at all. "The devil's darling vice is the pride which apes humility."

So very humble were these people that they would not venture to pray to God! There was humility indeed. So far beneath did they feel themselves that the utmost they could do was

to lay hold of the lowest link of a long chain of angel mediators, in hope that the vibration might run upwards through all the links, and perhaps reach the throne at last. Such fantastic abasement which would not take God at His word,-nor draw near to Him in His Son, was really the very height of pride.

the-en follows a second descriptive clause, of the-e no altogether satisfactory interpretation et been given. Possibly, as has been sug-d, we have here an early error in the text, has affected all the manuscripts, and can-w be corrected. Perhaps, on the whole, nslation adopted by the Revised Version s the least difficulty—"dwelling in the which he hath seen." In that case the would be not by the senses, but by and pretended revelations, and the against the false teachers would be that they "walked in a vain show" of unreal imaginations and visionary hallucinations, whose many-coloured misleading lights they followed rather than the plain sunshine of revealed facts in Jesus Christ.

"Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" is the next feature in the portrait. The self-conscious humility was only skin-deep, and covered the utmost intellectual arrogance. The heretic teacher, like a blown bladder, was swollen with what after all was only wind; he was dropsical from conceit of "mind," or, as we should say, "intellectual ability," which after all was only the instrument and organ of the "flesh," the sinful self. And, of course, being all these things, he would have no firm grip of Christ, from whom such tempers and views were sure to detach him. Therefore the damning last clause of the indictment is "not holding the Head." How could he do so? And the slackness of his grasp of the Lord Jesus would make all these errors and faults ten times worse.

Now the special forms of these errors which are here dealt with are all gone past recall. But the tendencies which underlay these special forms are as rampant as ever, and work unceasingly to loosen our hold of our dear Lord. The worship of angels is dead, but we are still often tempted to think that we are too lowly and sinful to claim our portion of the faithful promises of God. The spurious humility is by no means out of date, which knows better than God does whether He can forgive us our sins, and bend over us in love. We do not slip in angel mediators between ourselves and Him, but the tendency to put the sole work of Jesus Christ "into commission," is not dead. We are all tempted to grasp at others as well as at Him, for our love, and trust, and obedience, and we all need the reminder that to lay hold of any other props is to lose hold of Him, and that he who does not cleave to Christ alone does not cleave to Christ at all.

We do not see visions and dream dreams any more, except here and there some one led astray by a so-called "spiritualism," but plenty of us attach more importance to our own subjective fancies or speculations about the obscurer parts of Christianity than to the clear revelation of God in Christ. The "unseen world" has for many minds an unwholesome attraction. The Gnostic spirit is still in full force among us, which despises the foundation facts and truths of the gospel as "milk for babes," and values its own baseless artificial speculations about subordinate matters, which are unrevealed because they are subordinate, and fascinating to some minds because unrevealed, far above the truths which are clear because they are vital, and insipid to such minds because they are clear. We need to be reminded that Christianity is not for speculation, but to make us good, and that "He who has fashioned their hearts alike," has made us all to live by the same air, to be nourished by the same bread from heaven, to be saved and purified by the same truth. That is the gospel which the little child can understand, of which the outcast and the barbarian can get some kind of hold, which the failing spirit groping in the darkness of death can dimly see as its light in the valley—that is the all-important part of the gospel. What needs special training and capacity to understand is no essential portion of the truth that is meant for the world.

And a swollen self-conceit is of all things the most certain to keep a man away from Christ. We must feel our utter helplessness and need, before we shall lay hold on Him, and if ever that wholesome lowly sense of our own emptiness is clouded over, that moment will our fingers relax their tension, and that moment will the flow of life into our deadness run slow and pause. Whatever slackens our hold of Christ tends to rob us of the final prize, that crown of life which He gives.

Hence the solemn earnestness of these warnings. It was not only a doctrine more or less that was at stake, but it was their eternal life. Certain truths believed would increase the firmness of their hold on their Lord, and thereby would secure the prize. Disbelieved, the disbelief would slacken their grasp of Him, and thereby would deprive them of it. We are often told that the gospel gives heaven for right belief, and that that is unjust. But if a man does not believe a thing, he cannot have in his character or feelings the influence which the belief of it would produce. If he does not believe that Christ died for his sins, and that all his hopes are built on that great Saviour, he will not cleave to Him in love and dependence. If he does not so cleave to Him he will not draw from Him the life which would mould his character and stir him to run the race. If he do not run the race he will never win nor wear the crown. That crown is the reward and issue of character and conduct, made possible by the communication of strength and new nature from Jesus, which again is made possible through our faith laying hold of Him as revealed in certain truths, and of these truths as revealing Him. Therefore, intellectual error may loose our hold on Christ, and if we slacken that, we shall forfeit the prize. Mere speculative interest about the less plainly revealed corners of Christian truth may, and often do, act in paralysing the limbs of the Christian athlete. "Ye did run well, what hath hindered you?" has to be asked of many whom a spirit akin to this described in our text has made languid in the race. To us all, knowing in some measure how the whole sum of influences around us work to detach us from our Lord, and so to rob us of the prize which is inseparable from His presence, the solemn exhortation which He speaks from heaven may well come, "Hold fast that thou hast; let no man take thy crown."

III. The source and manner of all true growth are next set forth, in order to enforce the warn-

ing, and to emphasise the need of holding the Head.

Christ is not merely represented supreme and sovereign, when He is called "the head." The metaphor goes much deeper, and points to Him as the source of a real spiritual life, from Him communicated to all the members of the true Church, and constituting it an organic whole. We have found the same expression twice already in the Epistle; once as applied to His relation to "the body, the Church" (i. 18), and once in reference to the "principalities and powers." The errors in the Colossian Church derogated from Christ's sole sovereign place as fountain of all life natural and spiritual for all orders of beings, and hence the emphasis of the Apostle's proclamation of the counter truth. That life which flows from the head is diffused through the whole body by the various and harmonious action of all the parts. The body is "supplied and knit together," or in other words, the functions of nutrition and compaction into a whole are performed by the "joints and bands," in which last word are included muscles, nerves, tendons, and any of the "connecting bands which strap the body together." Their action is the condition of growth; but the Head is the source of all which the action of the members transmits to the body. Christ is the source of all nourishment. From Him flows the life-blood which feeds the whole, and by which every form of supply is ministered whereby the body grows. Christ is the source of all unity. Churches have been bound together by other bonds, such as creeds, polity, or even nationality; but that external bond is only like a rope round a bundle of fagots, while the true, inward unity springing from common possession of the life of Christ is as the unity of some great tree, through which the same sap circulates from massive bole to the tiniest leaf that dances at the tip of the farthest branch.

These blessed results of supply and unity are effected through the action of the various parts. If each organ is in healthy action, the body grows. There is diversity in offices; the same life is light in the eyes, beauty in the cheek, strength in the hand, thought in the brain. The more you rise in the scale of life the more the body is differentiated, from the simple sac that can be turned inside out and has no division of parts or offices, up to man. So in the Church. The effect of Christianity is to heighten individuality, and to give each man his own proper "gift from God," and therefore each man his office, "one after this manner and another after that." Therefore is there need for the freest possible unfolding of each man's idiosyncrasy, heightened and hallowed by an indwelling Christ, lest the body should be the poorer if any member's activity be suppressed, or any one man be warped from his own work wherein he is strong, to become a feeble copy of another's. The perfect light is the blending of all colours.

A community where each member thus holds firmly by the Head, and each ministers in his degree to the nourishment and compaction of the members, will, says Paul, increase with the increase of God. The increase will come from Him, will be pleasing to Him, will be essentially the growth of His own life in the body. There is an increase not of God. These heretical teachers were swollen with dropsical self-conceit; but this is wholesome, solid growth. For individuals and communities of professing Christians the lesson is always seasonable, that it is very easy to get an increase of the other kind. The individual may increase in apparent knowledge, in volubility, in visions and speculations, in so-called Christian work; the Church may increase in members, in wealth, in culture, in influence in the world, in apparent activities, in subscription lists, and the like—and it may all be not sound growth, but proud flesh, which needs the knife. One way only there is by which we may increase with the increase of God, and that is that we keep fast hold of Jesus Christ, and "let Him not go, for He is our life." The one exhortation which includes all that is needful, and which being obeyed, all ceremonies and all speculations will drop into their right place, and become helps, not snares, is the exhortation which Barnabas gave to the new Gentile converts at Antioch—that "with purpose of heart they should cleave unto the Lord."

CHAPTER XVI.

TWO FINAL TESTS OF THE FALSE TEACHING.

COLOSSIANS ii. 20-23 (R. V.)

THE polemical part of the Epistle is now coming to an end. We pass in the next chapter, after a transitional paragraph, to simple moral precepts which, with personal details, fill up the remainder of the letter. The antagonist errors appear for the last time in the words which we have now to consider. In these the Apostle seems to gather up all his strength to strike two straight, crashing, final blows, which pulverise and annihilate the theoretical positions and practical precepts of the heretical teachers. First, he puts in the form of an unanswerable demand for the reason for their teachings, their radical inconsistency with the Christian's death with Christ, which is the very secret of his life. Then, by a contemptuous concession of their apparent value to people who will not look an inch below the surface, he makes more emphatic their final condemnation as worthless—less than nothing and vanity—for the suppression of "the flesh"—the only aim of all moral and religious discipline. So we have here two great tests by their conformity to which we may try all teachings which assume to regulate life, and all Christian teaching about the place and necessity for ritual and outward prescriptions of conduct. "Ye are dead with Christ." All must fit in with that great fact. The restraint and conquest of "the flesh" is the purpose of all religion and of all moral teaching—our systems must do that or they are naught, however fascinating they may be.

I. We have then to consider the great fact of the Christian's death with Christ, and to apply it as a touchstone.

The language of the Apostle points to a definite time when the Colossian Christians "died" with Christ. That carries us back to former words in the chapter, where, as we found, the period of their baptism, considered as the symbol and profession of their conversion, was regarded as the time of their burial. They died

with Christ when they clave with penitent trust to the truth that Christ died for them. When a man unites himself by faith to the dying Christ as his Peace, Pardon, and Saviour, then he too in a very real sense dies with Jesus.

That thought that every Christian is dead with Christ runs through the whole of Paul's teaching. It is no mere piece of mysticism on his lips, though it has often become so, when divorced from morality, as it has been by some Christian teachers. It is no mere piece of rhetoric, though it has often become so, when men have lost the true thought of what Christ's death is for the world. But to Paul the cross of Christ was, first and foremost, the altar of sacrifice on which the oblation had been offered that took away all his guilt and sin; and then, because it was that, it became the law of his own life, and the power that assimilated him to his Lord.

The plain English of it all is, that when a man becomes a Christian by putting his trust in Christ Who died, as the ground of his acceptance and salvation, such a change takes place upon his whole nature and relationship to externals as is fairly comparable to a death.

The same illustration is frequent in ordinary speech. What do we mean when we talk of an old man being dead to youthful passions or follies or ambitions? We mean that they have ceased to interest him, that he is separated from them and insensible to them. Death is the separator. What an awful gulf there is between that fixed white face beneath the sheet and all the things about which the man was so eager an hour ago! How impossible for any cries of love to pass the chasm! "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not." The "business" which filled his thoughts crumbles to pieces, and he cares not. Nothing reaches him or interests him any more. So, if we have got hold of Christ as our Saviour, and have found in His cross the anchor of souls, that experience will deaden us to all which was our life, and the measure in which we are joined to Jesus by our faith in His great sacrifice, will be the measure in which we are detached from our former selves, and from old objects of interest and pursuit. The change may either be called dying with Christ, or rising with Him. The one phrase takes hold of it at an earlier stage than the other; the one puts stress on our ceasing to be what we were, the other on our beginning to be what we were not. So our text is followed by a paragraph corresponding in form and substance, and beginning, "If ye then be risen with Christ," as this begins, "If ye died with Christ!"

Such detachment from externals and separation from a former self is not unknown in ordinary life. Strong emotion of any kind makes us insensible to things around, and even to physical pain. Many a man with the excitement of the battle-field boiling in his brain, "receives but recks not of a wound." Absorption of thought and interest leads to what is called "absence of mind," where the surroundings are entirely unfelt, as in the case of the saint who rode all day on the banks of the Swiss lake, plunged in theological converse, and at evening asked where the lake was, though its waves had been rippling for twenty miles at his mule's feet. Higher tastes drive out lower ones, as some great stream turned into a new channel will sweep it clear of mud and rubbish. So, if we are joined to Christ, He will fill our souls with strong emotions and interests which will deaden our sensitiveness to things around us, and will inspire new loves, tastes, and desires, which will make us indifferent to much that we used to be eager about, and hostile to much that we once cherished.

To what shall we die if we are Christians? The Apostle answers that question in various ways, which we may profitably group together. "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. vi. 11). "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15). "Ye are become dead to the law" (Rom. vii. 6). By the cross of Christ, "the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So then, to the whole mass of outward material things, all this present order which surrounds us, to the unrenounced self which has ruled us so long, and to the sin which results from the appeals of outward things to that evil self—to these, and to the mere outward letter of a commandment which is impotent to enforce its own behests or deliver self from the snares of the world and the burden of sin, we cease to belong in the measure in which we are Christ's. The separation is not complete; but, if we are Christians at all, it is begun, and henceforward our life is to be a "dying daily." It must either be a dying life or a living death. We shall still belong in our outward being—and, alas! far too much in heart also—to the world and self and sin—but, if we are Christians at all, there will be a real separation from these in the inmost heart of our hearts, and the germ of entire deliverance from them all will be in us.

This day needs that truth to be strongly urged. The whole meaning of the death of Christ is not reached when it is regarded as the great propitiation for our sins. Is it the pattern for our lives? Has it drawn us away from our love of the world, from our sinful self, from the temptations to sin, from cowering before duties which we hate but dare not neglect? Has it changed the current of our lives, and lifted us into a new region where we find new interests, loves, and aims, before which the twinkling lights, which once were stars to us, pale their ineffectual fires? If so, then, just in as much as it is so, and not one hair's breadth the more, may we call ourselves Christians. If not, it is of no use for us to talk about looking to the cross as the source of our salvation. Such a look, if it be true and genuine, will certainly change all a man's tastes, habits, aspirations, and relationships. If we know nothing of dying with Christ, it is to be feared we know as little of Christ's dying for us.

This great fact of the Christian's death with Christ comes into view here mainly as pointing the contradiction between the Christian's position, and his subjection to the prescriptions and prohibitions of a religion which consists chiefly in petty rules about conduct. We are "dead," says Paul, "to the rudiments of the world,"—a phrase which we have already heard in ver. 8 of this chapter, where we found its meaning to be "precepts of an elementary character, fit for babes, not for men in Christ, and moving principally in the region of the material." It implies a condemnation of all such regulation religion on the two grounds, that it is an an-

achronism, seeking to perpetuate an earlier stage which has been left behind, and that it has to do with the outsides of things, with the material and visible only. To such rudiments we are dead with Christ. Then, queries Paul, with irresistible triumphant question—why, in the name of consistency, "do you subject yourself to ordinances" (of which we have already heard in ver. 14 of the chapter) such as "handle not, nor taste, nor touch"? These three prohibitions are not Paul's, but are quoted by him as specimens of the kind of rules and regulations which he is protesting against. The ascetic teachers kept on vehemently reiterating their prohibitions, and as the correct rendering of the words shows, with a constantly increasing in tolerance. "Handle not" is a less rigid prohibition than "touch not." The first says, Do not lay hold of; the last, Do not even touch with the tip of your finger. So asceticism, like many another tendency and habit, grows by indulgence, and demands abstinence ever more rigid and separation ever more complete. And the whole thing is out of date, and a misapprehension of the genius of Christianity. Man's work in religion is ever to confine it to the surface, to throw it outward and make it a mere round of things done and things abstained from. Christ's work in religion is to drive it inwards, and to focus all its energy on "the hidden man of the heart," knowing that if that be right, the visible will come right. It is waste labour to try to stick figs on the prickles of a thorn bush —as is the tree, so will be the fruit. There are plenty of pedants and martinets in religion as well as on the parade ground. There must be so many buttons on the uniform, and the shoulder-belts must be pipe-clayed, and the rifles on the shoulders sloped at just such an angle—and then all will be right. Perhaps so. Disciplined courage is better than courage undisciplined. But there is much danger of all the attention being given to drill, and then, when the parade ground is exchanged for the battle-field, disaster comes because there is plenty of etiquette and no dash. Men's lives are pestered out of them by a religion which tries to tie them down with as many tiny threads as those with which the Liliputians fastened down Gulliver. But Christianity in its true and highest forms is not a religion of prescriptions, but of principles. It does not keep perpetually dinning a set of petty commandments and prohibitions into our ears. Its language is not a continual "Do this, forbear from that,"—but "Love, and thou fulfillest the law." It works from the centre outwards to the circumference; first making clean the inside of the platter, and so ensuring that the outside shall be clean also. The error with which Paul fought, and which perpetually crops up anew, having its roots deep in human nature, begins with the circumference and wastes effort in burnishing the outside.

The parenthesis which follows in the text, "all which things are to perish with the using," contains an incidental remark intended to show the mistake of attaching such importance to regulations about diet and the like, from the consideration of the perishableness of these meats and drinks about which so much was said by the false teachers. "They are all destined for corruption, for physical decomposition—in the very act of consumption." You cannot use them without using them up. They are destroyed in the very moment of being used. Is it fitting for men who have died with Christ to this fleeting world, to make so much of its perishable things?

May we not widen this thought beyond its specific application here, and say that death with Christ to the world should deliver us from the temptation of making much of the things which perish with the using, whether that temptation is presented in the form of attaching exaggerated religious importance to ascetic abstinence from them or in that of exaggerated regard and unbridled use of them? Asceticism and Sybaritic luxury have in common an over-estimate of the importance of the material things. The one is the other turned inside out. Dives in his purple and fine linen, and the ascetic in his hair shirt, both make too much of "what they shall put on." The one with his feasts and the other with his fasts both think too much of what they shall eat and drink. A man who lives on high with his Lord puts all these things in their right place. There are things which do not perish with the using, but grow with use, like the five loaves in Christ's hands. Truth, love, holiness, all Christlike graces and virtues increase with exercise, and the more we feed on the bread which comes down from heaven, the more shall we have for our own nourishment and for our brother's need. There is a treasure which faileth not, bags which wax not old, the durable riches and undecaying possessions of the soul that lives on Christ and grows like Him. These let us seek after; for if our religion be worth anything at all, it should carry us past all the fleeting wealth of earth straight into the heart of things, and give us for our portion that God whom we can never exhaust, nor outgrow, but possess the more as we use His sweetness for the solace, and His all-sufficient Being for the good, of our souls.

The final inconsistency between the Christian position and the practical errors in question is glanced at in the words "after the commandments and doctrines of men," which refer, of course, to the ordinances of which Paul is speaking. The expression is a quotation from Isaiah's (xxix. 13) denunciation of the Pharisees of his day, and as used here seems to suggest that our Lord's great discourse on the worthlessness of the Jewish punctilios about meats and drinks was in the Apostle's mind, since the same words of Isaiah occur there in a similar connection. It is not fitting that we, who are withdrawn from dependence on the outward visible order of things by our union with Christ in His death, should be under the authority of men. Here is the true democracy of the Christian society. "Ye were redeemed with a price. Be not the servants of men." Our union to Jesus Christ is a union of absolute authority and utter submission. We all have access to the one source of illumination, and we are bound to take our orders from the one Master. The protest against the imposition of human authority on the Christian soul is made not in the interests of self-will, but from reverence to the only voice that has the right to give autocratic commands and to receive unquestioning obedience. We are free in proportion as we are dead to the world with Christ. We are free from men not that we may please ourselves, but that we may please Him.

"Hold your peace, I want to hear what my Master has to command me," is the language of the Christian freedman, who is free that he may serve, and because he serves.

II. We have to consider one great purpose of all teaching and external worship, by its power in attaining which any system is to be tried.

"Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." Here is the conclusion of the whole matter, the parting summary of the indictment against the whole irritating tangle of restrictions and prescriptions. From a moral point of view it is worthless, as having no coercive power over "the flesh." Therein lies its conclusive condemnation, for if religious observances do not help a man to subdue his sinful self, what, in the name of common sense, is the use of them?

The Apostle knows very well that the system which he was opposing had much which commended it to people, especially to those who did not look very deep. It had a "show of wisdom" very fascinating on a superficial glance, and that in three points, all of which caught the vulgar eye, and all of which turned into the opposite on closer examination.

It had the look of being exceeding devotion and zealous worship. These teachers with their abundant forms impose upon the popular imagination, as if they were altogether given up to devout contemplation and prayer. But if one looks a little more closely at them, one sees that their devotion is the indulgence of their own will and not surrender to God's. They are not worshipping Him as He has appointed, but as they have themselves chosen, and as they are rendering services which He has not required, they are in a very true sense worshipping their own wills, and not God at all. By "will-worship" seems to be meant self-imposed forms of religious service which are the outcome not of obedience, nor of the instincts of a devout heart, but of a man's own will. And the Apostle implies that such supererogatory and volunteered worship is no worship. Whether offered in a cathedral or a barn, whether the worshipper wear a cope or a fustian jacket, such service is not accepted. A prayer which is but the expression of the worshipper's own will, instead of being "not my will but Thine be done," reaches no higher than the lips that utter it. If we are subtly and half unconsciously obeying self even while we seem to be bowing before God; if we are seeming to pray, and are all the while burning incense to ourselves instead of being drawn out of ourselves by the beauty and the glory of the God towards whom our spirits yearn, then our devotion is a mask, and our prayers will be dispersed in empty air.

The deceptive appearance of wisdom in these teachers and their doctrines is further manifest in the humility which felt so profoundly the gulf between man and God that it was fain to fill the void with its fantastic creations of angel mediators. Humility is a good thing, and it looked very humble to say, We cannot suppose that such insignificant flesh-encompassed creatures as we can come into contact and fellowship with God; but it was a great deal more humble to take God at His word, and to let Him lay down the possibilities and conditions of intercourse, and to tread the way of approach to Him which He has appointed. If a great king were to say to all the beggars and ragged losels of his capital, Come to the palace to-morrow; which would be the humbler, he who went, rags and leprosy and all, or he who hung back because he was so keenly conscious of his squalor? God says to men, "Come to My arms through My Son. Never mind the dirt, come." Which is the humbler: he who takes God at His word, and runs to hide his face on his Father's breast, having access to Him through Christ the Way, or he who will not venture near till he has found some other mediators besides Christ? A humility so profound that it cannot think God's promise and Christ's mediation enough for it, has gone so far West that it has reached the East, and from humility has become pride.

Further, this system has a show of wisdom in "severity to the body." Any asceticism is a great deal more to men's taste than abandoning self. They will rather stick hooks in their backs and do the "swinging poojah," than give up their sins or yield up their wills. It is easier to travel the whole distance from Cape Comorin to the shrine of Juggernaut, measuring every foot of it by the body laid prostrate in the dust, than to surrender the heart to the love of God. In the same manner the milder forms of putting oneself to pain, hair shirts, scourgings, abstinence from pleasant things with the notion that thereby merit is acquired, or sin atoned for, have a deep root in human nature, and hence "a show of wisdom." It is strange, and yet not strange, that people should think that, somehow or other, they recommend themselves to God by making themselves uncomfortable, but so it is that religion presents itself to many minds mainly as a system of restrictions and injunctions which forbids the agreeable and commands the unpleasant. So does our poor human nature vulgarise and travesty Christ's solemn command to deny ourselves and take up our cross after Him.

The conclusive condemnation of all the crowd of punctilious restrictions of which the Apostle has been speaking lies in the fact that, however they may correspond to men's mistaken notions, and so seem to be the dictate of wisdom, they "are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." This is one great end of all moral and spiritual discipline, and if practical regulations do not tend to secure it, they are worthless.

Of course by "flesh" here we are to understand, as usually in the Pauline Epistles, not merely the body, but the whole unregenerate personality, the entire unrenewed self that thinks and feels and wills and desires apart from God. To indulge and satisfy it is to die, to slay and suppress it is to live. All these "ordinances" with which the heretical teachers were pestering the Colossians have no power, Paul thinks, to keep that self down, and therefore they seem to him so much rubbish. He thus lifts the whole question up to a higher level and implies a standard for judging much formal outward Christianity which would make very short work of it.

A man may be keeping the whole round of them and seven devils may be in his heart. They distinctly tend to foster some of the "works of the flesh," such as self-righteousness, uncharitableness, censoriousness, and

they as distinctly altogether fail to subdue any of them. A man may stand on a pillar like Simeon Stylites for years, and be none the better. Historically the ascetic tendency has not been associated with the highest types of real saintliness except by accident, and has never been their productive cause. The bones rot as surely inside the sepulchre though the whitewash on its dome be ever so thick.

So the world and the flesh are very willing that Christianity should shrivel into a religion of prohibitions and ceremonials, because all manner of vices and meannesses may thrive and breed under these, like scorpions under stones. There is only one thing that will put the collar on the neck of the animal within us, and that is the power of the indwelling Christ. The evil that is in us all is too strong for every other fetter. Its cry to all these "commandments and ordinances of men" is, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" Not in obedience to such, but in the reception into our spirits of His own life, is our power of victory over self. "This I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRESENT CHRISTIAN LIFE A RISEN LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1-4 (R. V.).

WE have now done with controversy. We hear no more about heretical teachers. The Apostle has cut his way through the tangled thickets of error, and has said his say as to the positive truths with which he would hew them down. For the remainder of the letter, we have principally plain practical exhortations, and a number of interesting personal details.

The paragraph which we have now to consider is the transition from the controversial to the ethical portion of the Epistle. It touches the former by its first words, "If ye then were raised together with Christ," which correspond in form and refer in meaning to the beginning of the previous paragraph, "If ye died with Christ." It touches the latter because it embodies the broad general precept, "Seek the things that are above," of which the following practical directions are but varying applications in different spheres of duty.

In considering these words we must begin by endeavouring to put clearly their connection and substance. As they flew from Paul's eager lips, motive and precept, symbol and fact, the present and future are blended together. It may conduce to clearness if we try to part these elements.

There are here two similar exhortations, side by side. "Seek the things that are above," and "Set your mind on the things that are above." The first is preceded, and the second is followed by its reason. So the two laws of conduct are, as it were, enclosed like a kernel in its shell, or a jewel in a gold setting, by encompassing motives. These considerations, in which the commandments are embedded, are the double thought of union with Christ in His resurrection, and in His death, and as consequent thereon, participation in His present hidden life, and in His future glorious manifestation. So we have here the present budding life of the Christian in union with the risen, hidden Christ; the future consummate flower of the Christian life in union with the glorious manifested Christ; and the practical aim and direction which alone are consistent with either bud or flower.

I. The present budding life of the Christian in union with the risen, hidden Christ.

Two aspects of this life are set forth in verses 1 and 3—"raised with Christ," and "ye died, and your life is hid with Christ." A still profounder thought lies in the words of verse 4, "Christ is our life."

We have seen in former parts of this Epistle that Paul believed that, when a man puts His faith in Jesus Christ, he is joined to Him in such a way that he is separated from his former self and dead to the world. That great change may be considered either with reference to what the man has ceased to be, or with reference to what he becomes. In the one aspect, it is a death; in the other, it is a resurrection. It depends on the point of view whether a semicircle seems convex or concave. The two thoughts express substantially the same fact. That great change was brought about in these Colossian Christians, at a definite time, as the language shows; and by a definite means—namely, by union with Christ through faith, which grasps His death and resurrection as at once the ground of salvation, the pattern for life, and the prophecy of glory. So then, the great truths here are these; the impartation of life by union with Christ, which life is truly a resurrection life, and is, moreover, hidden with Christ in God.

Union with Christ by faith is the condition of a real communication of life. "In Him was life," says John's Gospel, meaning thereby to assert, in the language of our Epistle, that "in Him were all things created, and in Him all things consist." Life in all its forms is dependent on union in varying manner with the Divine, and upheld only by His continual energy, The creature must touch God or perish. Of that energy the Uncreated Word of God is the channel—"with Thee is the fountain of life." As the life of the body, so the higher self-conscious life of the thinking, feeling, striving soul, is also fed and kept alight by the perpetual operation of a higher Divine energy, imparted in like manner by the Divine Word. Therefore, with deep truth, the psalm just quoted, goes on to say, "In Thy light shall we see light"—and therefore, too, John's Gospel continues: "And the life was the light of men."

But there is a still higher plane on which life may be manifested, and nobler energies which may accompany it. The body may live, and mind and heart be dead. Therefore Scripture speaks of a threefold life: that of the animal nature, that of the intellectual and emotional nature, and that of the spirit, which lives when it is conscious of God, and touches Him by aspiration, hope, and love. This is the loftiest life. Without it, a man is dead while he lives. With it, he lives though he dies. And like the others, it depends on union with the Divine life as it is stored in Jesus Christ—but in this case, the union is a conscious union by faith. If I trust to Him, and am thereby holding firmly by Him, my union with Him is so real, that, in the measure of my faith, His fulness passes over into my emptiness, His righteousness into my

sinfulness, His life into my death, as surely as the electric shock thrills my nerves when I grasp the poles of the battery.

No man can breathe into another's nostrils the breath of life. But Christ can and does breathe His life into us; and this true miracle of a communication of spiritual life takes place in every man who humbly trusts himself to Him. So the question comes home to each of us—am I living by my union with Christ? do I draw from Him that better being which He is longing to pour into my withered, dead spirit? It is not enough to live the animal life; the more it is fed, the more are the higher lives starved and dwindled. It is not enough to live the life of intellect and feeling. That may be in brightest, keenest exercise, and yet we—our best selves—may be dead—separated from God in Christ, and therefore dead—and all our activity may be but as a galvanic twitching of the muscles in a corpse. Is Christ our life, its source, its strength, its aim, its motive? Do we live in Him, by Him, with Him, for Him? If not, we are dead while we live.

This life from Christ is a resurrection life. "The power of Christ's resurrection" is threefold—as a seal of His mission and Messiahship, "declared to be the Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead;" as a prophecy and pledge of ours, "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept;" and as a symbol and pattern of our new life of Christian consecration, "likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be indeed dead unto sin." This last use of the resurrection of Christ is a plain witness of the firm, universal, and uncontested belief in the historical fact, throughout the Churches which Paul addressed. The fact must have been long familiar and known as undoubted, before it could have been thus moulded into a symbol. But, passing from that, consider that our union to Christ produces a moral and spiritual change analogous to His resurrection. After all, it is the moral and not the mystical side which is the main thing in Paul's use of this thought. He would insist that all true Christianity operates a death to the old self, to sin, and to the whole present order of things, and endows a man with new tastes, desires, and capacities, like a resurrection to a new being. These heathen converts—picked from the filthy cesspools in which many of them had been living, and set on a pure path, with the astounding light of a Divine love flooding it, and a bright hope painted on the infinite blackness ahead—had surely passed into a new life. Many a man in this day, long familiar with Christian teaching, has found himself made over again in mature life, when his heart has grasped Christ. Drunkards, profligates, outcasts, have found it life from the dead; and even where there has not been such complete visible revolution as in them, there has been such deep-seated central alteration that it is no exaggeration to call it resurrection. The plain fact is that real Christianity in a man will produce in him a radical moral change. If our religion does not do that in us, it is nothing. Ceremonial and doctrine are but means to an end—making us better men. The highest purpose of Christ's work, for which He both "died and rose and revived," is to change us into the likeness of His own beauty of perfect purity. That risen life is no mere exaggeration of mystical rhetoric, but an imperative demand of the highest morality, and the plain issue of it is: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Do I say that I am a Christian? The test by which my claim must be tried is the likeness of my life here to Him who has died unto sin, and liveth unto God.

But the believing soul is risen with Christ also, inasmuch as our union with Him makes us partakers of His resurrection as our victory over death. The water in the reservoir and in the fountain is the same; the sunbeam in the chamber and in the sky is one. The life which flows into our spirits from Christ is a life that has conquered death, and makes us victors in that last conflict, even though we have to go down into the darkness. If Christ live in us, we can never die. "It is not possible that we should be holden of it." The bands which He broke can never be fastened on our limbs. The gates of death were so warped and the locks so spoiled, when He burst them asunder, that they can never be closed again. There are many arguments for a future life beyond the grave, but there is only one proof of it—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, trusting in Him, and with our souls bound in the bundle of life with our Lord the King, we can cherish quiet thankfulness of heart, and bless the God and Father of our Lord who hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

This risen life is a hidden life. Its roots are in Him. He has passed in His ascension into the light which is inaccessible, and is hidden in its blaze, bearing with Him our life, concealed there with Him in God. Faith stands gazing into heaven, as the cloud, the visible manifestation from of old of the Divine presence, hides Him from sight, and turns away feeling that the best part of its true self is gone with Him. So here Paul points his finger upwards to where "Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God," and says—We are here in outward seeming, but our true life is there, if we are His. And what majestic, pregnant words these are! How full, and yet how empty for a prurient curiosity, and how reverently reticent even while they are triumphantly confident! How gently they suggest repose—deep and unbroken, and yet full of active energy! For if the attitude imply rest, the locality—"at the right hand of God"—expresses not only the most intimate approach to, but also the wielding of the Divine omnipotence. What is the right hand of God but the activity of His power? and what less can be ascribed to Christ here, than His being enthroned in closest union with the Father, exercising Divine dominion, and putting forth Divine power. No doubt the ascended and glorified bodily manhood of Jesus Christ has a local habitation, but the old psalm might teach us that wherever space is, even there "Thy right hand upholds," and there is our ascended Lord, sitting as in deepest rest, but working all the work of God. And it is just because He is at the right hand of God that He is hid. The light hides. He has been lost to sight in the glory.

He has gone in thither, bearing with Him the true source and root of our lives into the secret place of the Most High. Therefore we no longer belong to this visible order of things in the midst of which we tarry for a while. The true spring that feeds our lives lies deep be-

neath all the surface waters. These may dry up, but it will flow. These may be muddied with rain, but it will be limpid as ever. The things seen do not go deep enough to touch our real life. They are but as the winds that fret, and the currents that sway the surface and shallower levels of the ocean, while the great depths are still. The circumference is all a whirl; the centre is at rest.

Nor need we leave out of sight, though it be not the main thought here, that the Christian life is hidden, inasmuch as here on earth action ever falls short of thought, and the love and faith by which a good man lives can never be fully revealed in his conduct and character. You cannot carry electricity from the generator to the point where it is to work without losing two-thirds of it by the way. Neither word nor deed can adequately set forth a soul; and the profounder and nobler the emotion, the more inadequate are the narrow gates of tongue and hand to give it passage. The deepest love can often only "love and be silent." So, while every man is truly a mystery to his neighbour, a life which is rooted in Christ is more mysterious to the ordinary eye than any other. It is fed by hidden manna. It is replenished from a hidden source. It is guided by other than the world's motives, and follows unseen aims. "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not."

II. We have the future consummate flower of the Christian life in union with the manifested, glorious Christ.

The future personal manifestation of Jesus Christ in visible glory is, in the teaching of all the New Testament writers, the last stage in the series of His Divine human conditions. As surely as the Incarnation led to the cross, and the cross to the empty grave, and the empty grave to the throne, so surely does the throne lead to the coming again in glory. And as with Christ, so with His servants, the manifestation in glory is the certain end of all the preceding, as surely as the flower is of the tiny green leaves that peep above the frost-bound earth in bleak March days. Nothing in that future, however glorious and wonderful, but has its germ and vital beginning in our union with Christ here by humble faith. The great hopes which we may cherish are gathered up here into these words—"shall be manifested with Him." That is far more than was conveyed by the old translation—"shall appear." The roots of our being shall be disclosed, for He shall come, "and every eye shall see Him." We shall be seen for what we are The outward life shall correspond to the inward. The faith and love which often struggled in vain for expression and were thwarted by the obstinate flesh, as a sculptor trying to embody his dream might be by a block of marble with many a flaw and speck, shall then be able to reveal themselves completely. Whatever is in the heart shall be fully visible in the life. Stammering words and imperfect deeds shall vex us no more. "His name shall be in their foreheads"—no longer only written in fleshly tables of the heart and partially visible in the character, but stamped legibly and completely on life and nature. They shall walk in the light, and so shall be seen of all. Here the truest followers of Christ shine like an intermittent star, seen through mist and driving cloud: "Then shall the righteous blaze forth like the sun in the kingdom of My Father."

But this is not all. The manifestation is to be "with Him." The union which was here effected by faith, and marred by many an interposing obstacle of sin and selfishness, of flesh and sense, is to be perfected then. No film of separation is any more to break its completeness. Here we often lose our hold of Him amidst the distractions of work, even when done for His sake; and our life is at best but an imperfect compromise between contemplation and action; but then, according to that great saying, "His servants shall serve Him, and see His face," the utmost activity of consecrated service, though it be far more intense and on a nobler scale than anything here, will not interfere with the fixed gaze on His countenance. We shall serve like Martha, and yet never remove from sitting with Mary, rapt and blessed at His feet.

This is the one thought of that solemn future worth cherishing. Other hopes may feed sentiment, and be precious sometimes to aching hearts. A reverent longing or an irreverent curiosity may seek to discern something more in the far-off light. But it is enough for the heart to know that "we shall ever be with the Lord;" and the more we have that one hope in its solitary grandeur, the better. We shall be with Him "in glory." That is the climax of all that Paul would have us hope. "Glory" is the splendour and light of the self-revealing God. In the heart of the blaze stands Christ; the bright cloud enwraps Him, as it did on the mountain of transfiguration, and into the dazzling radiance His disciples will pass as His companions did then, nor "fear as they enter into the cloud." They walk unshrinking in that beneficent fire, because with them is one like unto the Son of man, through whom they dwell, as in their own calm home, amidst "the everlasting burning," which shall not destroy them, but kindle them into the likeness of its own flashing glory.

Then shall the life which here was but in bud, often unkindly nipped and struggling, burst into the consummate beauty of the perfect flower "which fadeth not away."

III. We have the practical aim and direction which alone are consistent with either stage of the Christian life.

Two injunctions are based upon these considerations—"seek," and "set your mind upon," the things that are above. The one points to the outward life of effort and aim; the other to the inward life of thought and longing. Let the things above, then, be the constant mark at which you aim. There is a vast realm of real existence of which your risen Lord is the centre and the life. Make it the point to which you strive. That will not lead to despising earth and nearer objects. These, so far as they are really good and worthy, stand right in the line of direction which our efforts will take if we are seeking the things that are above, and may all be stages on our journey Christwards. The lower objects are best secured by those who live for the higher. No man is so well able to do the smallest duties here, or to bear the passing troubles of this world of illusion and change, or to wring the last drop of sweetness out of swiftly fleeting joys, as he to whom everything on earth is dwarfed by the eternity

beyond, as some hut beside a palace, and is great because it is like a little window a foot square through which infinite depths of sky with all their stars shine in upon him. The true meaning and greatness of the present are that it is the vestibule of the august future. The staircase leading to the presence chamber of the king may be of poor deal, narrow crooked, and stowed away in a dark turret, but it has dignity by reason of that to which it gives access. So let our aims pass through the earthly and find in them helps to the things that are above. We should not fire all our bullets at the short range. Seek ye first the kingdom of God —the things which are above.

"Set your mind on" these things, says the Apostle further. Let them occupy mind and heart—and this in order that we may seek them. The direction of the aims will follow the set and current of the thoughts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." How can we be shaping our efforts to reach a good which we have not clearly before our imaginations as desirable? How should the life of so many professing Christians be other than a lame creeping along the low levels of earth, seeing that so seldom do they look up to "see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off"? John Bunyan's "man with the muck-rake" grubbed away so eagerly among the rubbish because he never lifted his eyes to the crown that hung above his head. In many a silent, solitary hour of contemplation, with the world shut out and Christ brought very near, we must find the counterpoise to the pressure of earthly aims, or our efforts after the things that are above will be feeble and broken. Life goes at such a pace to-day, and the present is so exacting with most of us, that quiet meditation is, I fear me, almost out of fashion with Christian people. We must become more familiar with the secret place of the most High, and more often enter into our chambers and shut our doors about us, if in the bustle of our busy days we are to aim truly and strongly at the only object which saves life from being a waste and a sin, a madness and a misery—"the things which are above, where Christ is."

"Where Christ is." Yes, that is the only thought which gives definiteness and solidity to that else vague and nebulous unseen universe; the only thought which draws our affections thither. Without Him, there is no footing for us there. Rolling mists of doubt and dim hopes warring with fears, strangeness, and terrors wrap it all. "I go to prepare a place for you" —a place where desire and thought may walk unterrified and undoubting even now, and where we ourselves may abide when our time comes, nor shrink from the light nor be oppressed by the glory.

> "My knowledge of that life is small,
> The eye of faith is dim,
> But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
> And I shall be with Him."

Into that solemn world we shall all pass. We can choose whether we shall go to it as to our long-sought home, to find in it Him who is our life; or whether we shall go reluctant and afraid, leaving all for which we have cared, and going to Him whom we have neglected and that which we have feared. Christ will be manifested, and we shall see Him. We can choose whether it will be to us the joy of beholding the soul of our soul, the friend long-loved when dimly seen from afar; or whether it shall be the vision of a face that will stiffen us to stone and stab us with its light. We must make our choice. If we give our hearts to Him, and by faith unite ourselves with Him, then, "when He shall appear, we shall have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SLAYING SELF THE FOUNDATION PRECEPT OF PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

COLOSSIANS iii. 5-9 (R. V.).

"MORTIFY therefore"—wherefore? The previous words give the reason. Because "ye died" with Christ, and because ye "were raised together with Him." In other words, the plainest, homeliest moral teaching of this Epistle, such as that which immediately follows, is built upon its "mystical" theology. Paul thinks that the deep things which he has been saying about union with Christ in His death and resurrection have the most intimate connection with common life. These profound truths have the keenest edge, and are as a sacrificial knife, to slay the life of self. Creed is meant to tell on conduct. Character is the last outcome and test of doctrine. But too many people deal with their theological beliefs as they do with their hassocks and prayer books and hymn books in their pews—use them for formal worship once a week, and leave them for the dust to settle on them till Sunday comes round again. So it is very necessary to put the practical inferences very plainly, to reiterate the most commonplace and threadbare precepts as the issue of the most recondite teaching, and to bind the burden of duty on men's backs with the cords of principles and doctrines.

Accordingly the section of the Epistle which deals with Christian character now begins, and this "therefore" knits the two halves together. That word protests against opposite errors. On the one hand, some good people are to be found impatient of exhortations to duties, and ready to say, Preach the gospel, and the duties will spring up spontaneously where it is received; on the other hand, some people are to be found who see no connection between the practice of common morality and the belief of Christian truths, and are ready to say, Put away your theology; it is useless lumber, the machine will work as well without it. But Paul believed that the firmest basis for moral teaching and the most powerful motive for moral conduct is "the truth as it is in Jesus."

I. We have here put very plainly the paradox of continual self-slaying as the all-embracing duty of a Christian.

It is a pity that the R. V. has retained "mortify" here, as that Latinised word says to an ordinary reader much less than is meant, and hides the allusion to the preceding context. The marginal alternative "make dead" is, to say the least, not idiomatic English. The suggestion of the American revisers, which is printed at the end of the R. V., "put to death," is much better, and perhaps a single word, such as "slay" or "kill" might have been better still.

"Slay your members which are upon the earth." It is a vehement and paradoxical injunction, though it be but the echo of still more solemn and stringent words—"pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from thee." The possibility of misunderstanding it and bringing it down to the level of that spurious asceticism and "severity to the body" against which he has just been thundering, seems to occur to the Apostle, and therefore he hastens to explain that he does not mean the maiming of selves, or hacking away limbs, but the slaying of the passions and desires which root themselves in our bodily constitution. The eager haste of the explanation destroys the congruity of the sentence, but he does not mind that. And then follows a grim catalogue of the evil-doers on whom sentence of death is passed.

Before dealing with that list, two points of some importance may be observed. The first is that the practical exhortations of this letter begin with this command to put off certain characteristics which are assumed to belong to the Colossian Christians in their natural state, and that only afterwards comes the precept to put on (ver. 12) the fairer robes of Christlike purity, clasped about by the girdle of perfectness. That is to say, Paul's anthropology regards men as wrong and having to get right. A great deal of the moral teaching which is outside of Christianity, and which does not sufficiently recognise that the first thing to be done is to cure and alter, but talks as if men were, on the whole, rather inclined to be good, is for that very reason perfectly useless. Its fine precepts and lofty sentiments go clean over people's heads, and are ludicrously inappropriate to the facts of the case. The serpent has twined itself round my limbs, and unless you can give me a knife, sharp and strong enough to cut its loathsome coils asunder, it is cruel to bid me walk. All men on the face of the earth need, for moral progress, to be shown and helped first how not to be what they have been, and only after that is it of the slightest use to tell them what they ought to be. The only thing that reaches the universal need is a power that will make us different from what we are. If we are to grow into goodness and beauty, we must begin by a complete reversal of tastes and tendencies. The thing we want first is not progress, the going on in the direction in which our faces are turned, but a power which can lay a mastering hand upon our shoulders, turn us right round, and make us go in the way opposite to that. Culture, the development of what is in us in germ, is not the beginning of good husbandry on human nature as it is. The thorns have to be stubbed up first, and the poisonous seeds sifted out, and new soil laid down, and then culture will bring forth something better than wild grapes. First—"mortify;" then—"put on."

Another point to be carefully noted is that, according to the Apostle's teaching, the root and beginning of all such slaying of the evil which is in us all, lies in our being dead with Christ to the world. In the former chapter we found that the Apostle's final condemnation of the false asceticism which was beginning to infect the Colossian Church, was that it was of no value as a counteractive of fleshly indulgence. But here he proclaims that what asceticism could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, union with Jesus Christ in His death and risen life will do; it will subdue sin in the flesh. That slaying here enjoined as fundamental to all Christian holiness, is but the working out in life and character of the revolution in the inmost self, which has been effected, if by faith we are joined to the living Lord, who was dead and is alive for evermore.

There must, however, be a very vigorous act of personal determination if the power of that union is to be manifested in us. The act of "slaying" can never be pleasant or easy. The vehemence of the command and the form of the metaphor express the strenuousness of the effort and the painfulness of the process, in the same way as Paul's other saying, "crucify the flesh," does. Suppose a man working at some machine. His fingers get drawn between the rollers or caught in some belting. Another minute and he will be flattened to a shapeless bloody mass. He catches up an axe lying by and with his own arm hacks off his own hand at the wrist. It takes some nerve to do that. It is not easy nor pleasant, but it is the only alternative to a horrible death. I know of no stimulus that will string a man up to the analogous spiritual act here enjoined, and enjoined by conscience also, except participation in the death of Christ and in the resulting life.

"Slay your members which are upon the earth" means tears and blood and more than blood. It is easier far to cut off the hand, which after all is not me, than to sacrifice passions and desires which, though they be my worst self, are myself. It is useless to blink the fact that the only road to holiness is through self-suppression, self-annihilation; and nothing can make that easy and pleasant. True, the paths of religion are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, but they are steep, and climbing is never easy. The upper air is bracing and exhilarating indeed, but trying to lungs accustomed to the low levels. Religion is delightsome, but self-denial is always against the grain of the self which is denied, and there is no religion without it. Holiness is not to be won in a moment. It is not a matter of consciousness, possessed when we know that we possess it. But it has to be attained by effort. The way to heaven is not by "the primrose path." That leads to "the everlasting bonfire." For ever it remains true that men obtain forgiveness and eternal life as a gift for which the only requisite is faith, but they achieve holiness, which is the permeating of their characters with that eternal life, by patient, believing, continuous effort. An essential part of that effort is directed towards the conquest and casting out of the old self in its earthward-looking lusts and passions. The love of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of His renewing spirit make that conquest possible, by supplying an all-constraining motive and an all-conquering power. But even they do not make it easy, nor deaden the flesh to the cut of the sacrificial knife.

II. We have here a grim catalogue of the condemned to death.

The Apostle stands like a jailor at the prison door, with the fatal roll in his hand, and reads out the names of the evil doers for whom the tumbril waits to carry them to the guillotine. It is an ugly list, but we need plain speaking that there may be no mistake as to the identity of the culprits. He enumerates evils which honey-

combed society with rottenness then, and are rampant now. The series recounts various forms of evil love, and is so arranged as that it starts with the coarse, gross act, and goes on to more subtle and inward forms. It goes up the stream as it were, to the fountain head, passing inward from deed to desire. First stands "fornication," which covers the whole ground of immoral sexual relations, then "all uncleanness," which embraces every manifestation in word or look or deed of the impure spirit, and so is at once wider and subtler than the gross physical act. Then follow "passion" and "evil desire"; the sources of the evil deeds. These again are at once more inward and more general than the preceding. They include not only the lusts and longings which give rise to the special sins just denounced, but all forms of hungry appetite and desire after "the things that are upon the earth." If we are to try to draw a distinction between the two, probably "passion" is somewhat less wide than "desire," and the former represents the evil emotion as an affection which the mind suffers, while the latter represents it as a longing which it actively puts forth. The "lusts of the flesh" are in the one aspect kindled by outward temptations which come with terrible force and carry men captive, acting almost irresistibly on the animal nature. In the other aspect they are excited by the voluntary action of the man himself. In the one the evil comes into the heart; in the other the heart goes out to the evil.

Then follows covetousness. The juxtaposition of that vice with the grosser forms of sensuality is profoundly significant. It is closely allied with these. It has the same root, and is but another form of evil desire going out to the "things which are on the earth." The ordinary worldly nature flies for solace either to the pleasures of appetite or to the passion of acquiring. And not only are they closely connected in root, but covetousness often follows lust in the history of a life just as it does in this catalogue. When the former evil spirit loses its hold, the latter often takes its place. How many respectable middle-aged gentlemen are now mainly devoted to making money, whose youth was foul with sensual indulgence? When that palled, this came to titillate the jaded desires with a new form of gratification. Covetousness is "promoted *vice* lust superannuated."

A reason for this warning against covetousness is appended, "inasmuch as (for such is the force of the word rendered 'the which') it is idolatry." If we say of anything, no matter what, "If I ha e only enough of this, I shall be satisfied; it is my real aim, my sufficient good," that thing is a god to me, and my real worship is paid to it, whatever may be my nominal religion. The lowest form of idolatry is the giving of supreme trust to a material thing, and making that a god. There is no lower form of fetish-worship than this, which is the real working religion to-day of thousands of Englishmen who go masquerading as Christians.

III. The exhortation is enforced by a solemn note of warning: "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience." Some authorities omit the words "upon the children of disobedience," which are supposed to have crept in here from the parallel passage, Eph. v. 6. But even the advocates of the omission allow that the clause has "preponderating support," and the sentence is painfully incomplete and abrupt without it. The R. V. has exercised a wise discretion in retaining it.

In the previous chapter the Apostle included "warning" in his statement of the various branches into which his Apostolic activity was divided. His duty seemed to him to embrace the plain stern setting forth of that terrible reality, the wrath of God. Here we have it urged as a reason for shaking off these evil habits.

That thought of wrath as an element in the Divine nature has become very unwelcome to this generation. The great revelation of God in Jesus Christ has taught the world His love, as it never knew it before, and knows it now by no other means. So profoundly has that truth that God is love penetrated the consciousness of the European world, that many people will not hear of the wrath of God because they think it inconsistent with His love—and sometimes reject the very gospel to which they owe their lofty conceptions of the Divine heart, because it speaks solemn words about His anger and its issues.

But surely these two thoughts of God's love and God's wrath are not inconsistent, for His wrath is His love, pained, wounded, thrown back upon itself, rejected and compelled to assume the form of aversion and to do its "strange work"—that which is not its natural operation—of punishment. When we ascribe wrath to God, we must take care of lowering the conception of it to the level of human wrath, which is shaken with passion and often tinged with malice, whereas in that affection of the Divine nature which corresponds to anger in us, there is neither passion nor wish to harm. Nor does it exclude the co-existence of love, as Paul witnesses in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in one verse declaring that "we were the children of wrath," and in the next that God "loved us with a great love even when we were dead in sins."

God would not be a holy God if it were all the same to Him whether a man were good or bad. As a matter of fact, the modern revulsion against the representation of the wrath of God is usually accompanied with weakened conceptions of His holiness, and of His moral government of the world. Instead of exalting, it degrades His love to free it from the admixture of wrath, which is like alloy with gold, giving firmness to what were else too soft for use. Such a God is not love, but impotent good nature. If there be no wrath, there is no love; if there were no love, there would be no wrath. It is more blessed and hopeful for sinful men to believe in a God who is angry with the wicked, whom yet He loves, every day, and who cannot look upon sin, than in one who does not love righteousness enough to hate iniquity, and from whose too indulgent hand the rod has dropped, to the spoiling of His children. "With the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward." The mists of our sins intercept the gracious beams and turn the blessed sun into a ball of fire.

The wrath "cometh." That majestic present tense may express either the continuous present incidence of the wrath as exemplified in the moral government of the world, in which, notwithstanding anomalies, such sins as have been

enumerated drag after themselves their own punishment and are "avenged in kind," or it may be the present tense expressive of prophetic certainty, which is so sure of what shall come, that it speaks of it as already on its road. It is eminently true of those sins of lust and passion that the men who do them reap as they have sown. How many young men come up into our great cities, innocent and strong, with a mother's kiss upon their lips and a father's blessing hovering over their heads! They fall among bad companions in college or warehouse, and after a little while they disappear. Broken in health, tainted in body and soul, they crawl home to break their mothers' hearts—and to die. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." Whether in such extreme forms or no, that wrath comes even now, in plain and bitter consequences on men, and still more on women who sin in such ways.

And the present retribution may well be taken as the herald and prophet of a still more solemn manifestation of the Divine displeasure, which is already as it were on the road, has set out from the throne of God, and will certainly arrive here one day. These consequences of sin already realised serve to show the set and drift of things, and to suggest what will happen when retribution and the harvest of our present life of sowing come. The first fiery drops that fell on Lot's path as he fled from Sodom were not more surely precursors of an overwhelming rain, nor bade him flee for his life more urgently, than the present punishment of sin proclaims its sorer future punishment, and exhorts us all to come out of the storm into the refuge, even Jesus, who is ever even now "delivering us from the wrath which is" ever even now "coming" on the sons of disobedience.

IV. A further motive enforcing the main precept of self-slaying is the remembrance of a sinful past, which remembrance is at once penitent and grateful. "In the which ye also walked aforetime, when ye lived in them."

What is the difference between "walking" and "living" in these things? The two phrases seem synonymous, and might often be used indifferently; but here there is evidently a well marked diversity of meaning. The former is an expression frequent in the Pauline Epistles as well as in John's; as for instance, "to walk in love" or "in truth." That in which men walk is conceived of as an atmosphere encompassing them; or, without a metaphor, to walk in anything is to have the active life or conduct guided or occupied by it. These Colossian Christians, then, had in the past trodden that evil path, or their active life had been spent in that poisonous atmosphere—which is equivalent to saying that they had committed these sins. At what time? "When you lived in them." That does not mean merely "when your natural life was passed among them." That would be a trivial thing to say, and it would imply that their outward life now was not so passed, which would not be true. In that sense they still lived in the poisonous atmosphere. In such an age of unnamable moral corruption no man could live out of the foul stench which filled his nostrils whenever he walked abroad or opened his window. But the Apostle has just said that they were now "living in Christ," and their lives "hid with Him in God." So this phrase describes the condition which is the opposite of their present, and may be paraphrased, "When the roots of your life, tastes, affections, thoughts, desires were immersed, as in some feculent bog, in these and kindred evils." And the meaning of the whole is substantially—Your active life was occupied and guided by these sins in that past time when your inward being was knit to and nourished by them. Or to put it plainly, conduct followed and was shaped by inclinations and desires.

This retrospect enforces the main exhortation. It is meant to awaken penitence, and the thought that time enough has been wasted and incense enough offered on these foul altars. It is also meant to kindle thankfulness for the strong, loving hand which has drawn them from that pit of filth, and by both emotions to stimulate the resolute casting aside of that evil in which they once, like others, wallowed. Their joy on the one hand and their contrition on the other should lead them to discern the inconsistency of professing to be Christians and yet keeping terms with these old sins. They could not have the roots of half their lives above and of the other half down here. The gulf between the present and past of a regenerate man is too wide and deep to be bridged by flimsy compromises. "A man who is perverse in his two ways," that is, in double ways, "shall fall in one of them," as the Book of Proverbs has it. The attempt to combine incompatibles is sure to fail. It is impossible to walk firmly if one foot be down in the gutter and the other up on the curbstone. We have to settle which level we shall choose, and then to plant both feet there.

V. We have, as conclusion, a still wider exhortation to an entire stripping off of the sins of the old state.

The whole force of the contrast and contrariety between the Colossian Christians' past and present lies in that emphatic "now." They as well as other heathen had been walking, because they had been living, in these muddy ways. But now that their life was hid with Christ in God; now that they had been made partakers of His death and resurrection, and of all the new loves and affinities which therein became theirs; now they must take heed that they bring not that dead and foul past into this bright and pure present, nor prolong winter and its frosts into the summer of the soul.

"Ye also." There is another "ye also" in the previous verse—"ye also walked," that is, you in company with other Gentiles followed a certain course of life. Here, by contrast, the expression means "you, in common with other Christians." A motive enforcing the subsequent exhortation is in it hinted rather than fully spoken. The Christians at Colossæ had belonged to a community which they have now left in order to join another. Let them behave as their company behaves. Let them keep step with their new comrades. Let them strip themselves, as their new associates do, of the uniform which they wore in that other regiment.

The metaphor of putting clothing on or off is very frequent in this Epistle. The precept here is substantially equivalent to the previous command to "slay," with the difference that the conception of vices as the garments of the soul is somewhat less vehement than that which regards them as members of the very self. "All

these" are to be put off. That phrase points back to the things previously spoken of. It includes the whole of the unnamed members of the class, of which a few have been already named, and a handful more are about to be plucked like poison flowers, and suggests that there are many more as baleful growing by the side of this devil's bouquet which is next presented.

As to this second catalogue of vices, they may be summarised as, on the whole, being various forms of wicked hatred, in contrast with the former list, which consisted of various forms of wicked love. They have less to do with bodily appetites. But perhaps it is not without profound meaning that the fierce rush of unhallowed passion over the soul is put first, and the contrary flow of chill malignity comes second; for in the spiritual world, as in the physical, a storm blowing from one quarter is usually followed by violent gales from the opposite. Lust ever passes into cruelty, and dwells "hard by hate." A licentious epoch or man is generally a cruel epoch or man. Nero made torches of the Christians. Malice is evil desire iced.

This second list goes in the opposite direction to the former. That began with actions and went up the stream of desire; this begins with the sources, which are emotions, and comes down stream to their manifestations in action.

First we have anger. There is a just and righteous anger, which is part of the new man, and essential to his completeness, even as it is part of the image after which he is created. But here of course the anger which is to be put off is the inverted reflection of the earthly and passionate lust after the flesh; it is, then, of an earthly, passionate, and selfish kind. "Wrath" differs from "anger" in so far as it may be called anger boiling over. If anger rises keep the lid on, do not let it get the length of wrath, nor effervesce into the brief madness of passion. But on the other hand, do not think that you have done enough when you have suppressed the wrath which is the expression of your anger, nor be content with saying, "Well, at all events I did not show it," but take the cure a step further back, and strip off anger as well as wrath, the emotion as well as the manifestation.

Christian people do not sufficiently bring the greatest forces of their religion and of God's Spirit to bear upon the homely task of curing small hastinesses of temper, and sometimes seem to think it a sufficient excuse to say, "I have naturally a hot disposition." But Christianity was sent to subdue and change natural dispositions. An angry man cannot have communion with God, any more than the sky can be reflected in the storm-swept tide; and a man in communion with God cannot be angry with a passionate and evil anger any more than a dove can croak like a raven or strike like a hawk. Such anger disturbs our insight into everything; eyes suffused with it cannot see; and it weakens all good in the soul, and degrades it before its own conscience.

"Malice" designates another step in the process. The anger boils over in wrath, and then cools down into malignity—the disposition which means mischief, and plans or rejoices in evil falling on the hated head. That malice, as cold, as clear, as colourless as sulphuric acid, and burning like it, is worse than the boiling rage already spoken of. There are many degrees of this cold-drawn, double-distilled rejoicing in evil, and the beginning of it in a certain faint satisfaction in the misfortunes of those whom we dislike is by no means unusual.

An advance is now made in the direction of outward manifestation. It is significant that while the expressions of wicked love were deeds, those of wicked hate are words. The "blasphemy" of the Authorised Version is better taken, with the Revised, as "railing." The word means "speech that injures," and such speech may be directed either against God, which is blasphemy in the usual sense of the word, or against man. The hate blossoms into hurtful speech. The heated metal of anger is forged into poisoned arrows of the tongue. Then follows "shameful speaking out of your mouth," which is probably to be understood not so much of obscenities, which would more properly belong to the former catalogue, as of foul-mouthed abuse of the hated persons, that copiousness of vituperation and those volcanic explosions of mud, which are so natural to the angry Eastern.

Finally, we have a dehortation from lying, especially to those within the circle of the Church, as if that sin too were the child of hatred and anger. It comes from a deficiency of love, or a predominance of selfishness, which is the same thing. A lie ignores my brother's claims on me, and my union with him. "Ye are members one of another," is the great obligation to love which is denied and sinned against by hatred in all its forms and manifestations, and not least by giving my brother the poisoned bread of lies instead of the heavenly manna of pure truth, so far as it has been given to me.

On the whole, this catalogue brings out the importance to be attached to sins of speech, which are ranked here as in parallel lines with the grossest forms of animal passion. Men's words ought to be fountains of consolation and sources of illumination, encouragement, revelations of love and pity. And what are they? What floods of idle words, foul words, words that wound like knives and sting and bite like serpents, deluge the world! If all the talk that has its sources in these evils rebuked here were to be suddenly made inaudible, what a dead silence would fall on many brilliant circles, and how many of us would stand making mouths but saying nothing.

All the practical exhortations of this section concern common homely duties which everybody knows to be such. It may be asked—does Christianity then only lay down such plain precepts? What need was there of all that prelude of mysterious doctrines, if we are only to be landed at last in such elementary and obvious moralities? No doubt they are elementary and obvious, but the main matter is—how to get them kept. And in respect to that, Christianity does two things which nothing else does. It breaks the entail of evil habits by the great gift of pardon for the past, and by the greater gift of a new spirit and life principle within, which is foreign to all evil, being the effluence of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Therefore the gospel of Jesus Christ makes it possible that men should slay themselves, and

put on the new life, which will expel the old as the new shoots on some trees push the last year's lingering leaves, brown and sere, from their places. All moral teachers from the beginning have agreed, on the whole, in their reading of the commandments which are printed on conscience in the largest capitals. Everybody who is not blind can read them. But reading is easy, keeping is hard. How to fulfil has been wanting. It is given us in the gospel, which is not merely a republication of old precepts, but the communication of new power. If we yield ourselves to Christ He will nerve our arms to wield the knife that will slay our dearest tastes, though beloved as Isaac by Abraham. If a man knows and feels that Christ has died for him, and that he lives in and by Christ, then, and not else, will he be able to crucify self. If he knows and feels that, by His pardoning mercy and atoning death, Christ has taken off his foul raiment and clothed him in clean garments, then, and not else, will he be able, by daily effort after repression of self and appropriation of Christ, to put off the old man and to put on the new, which is daily being renewed into closer resemblance to the image of Him who created him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEW NATURE WROUGHT OUT IN NEW LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 9-11 (R. V.).

IN previous chapter we were obliged to break the close connection between these words and the preceding. They adduce a reason for the moral exhortation going before, which at first sight may appear very illogical. "Put off these vices of the old nature because you have put off the old nature with its vices," sounds like, Do a thing because you have done it. But the apparent looseness of reasoning covers very accurate thought which a little consideration brings to light, and introduces a really cogent argument for the conduct it recommends. Nor do the principles contained in the verses now under examination look backward only to enforce the exhortation to put aside these evils. They also look forward, and are taken as the basis of the following exhortation, to put on the white robes of Christlikeness—which is coupled with this section by "therefore."

I. The first thing to be observed is the change of the spirit's dress, which is taken for granted as having occurred in the experience of all Christians.

We have already found the same idea presented under the forms of death and resurrection. The "death" is equivalent to the "putting off of the old," and the "resurrection" to "the putting on of the new man." That figure of a change of dress to express a change of moral character is very obvious, and is frequent in Scripture. Many a psalm breathes such prayers as, "Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness." Zechariah in vision saw the high-priestly representative of the nation standing before the Lord "in filthy garments," and heard the command to strip them off him, and clothe him in festival robes, in token that God had "caused his iniquity to pass from him." Christ spoke His parable of the man at the wedding feast without the wedding garment, and of the prodigal, who was stripped of his rags stained with the filth of the swine troughs, and clothed with the best robe. Paul in many places touches the same image, as in his ringing exhortation—clear and rousing in its notes like the morning bugle—to Christ's soldiers, to put off their night gear, "the works of darkness," and to brace on the armour of light, which sparkles in the morning sunrise. Every reformatory and orphanage yields an illustration of the image, where the first thing done is to strip off and burn the rags of the new comers, then to give them a bath and dress them in clean, sweet, new clothes. Most naturally dress is taken as the emblem of character, which is indeed the garb of the soul. Most naturally habit means both costume and custom.

But here we have a strange paradox introduced to the ruining of the rhetorical propriety of the figure. It is a "new man" that is put on. The Apostle does not mind hazarding a mixed metaphor, if it adds to the force of his speech, and he introduces this thought of the new man, though it somewhat jars, in order to impress on his readers that what they have to put off and on is much more truly part of themselves than an article of dress is. The "old man" is the unregenerate self; the new man is, of course, the regenerate self, the new Christian moral nature personified. There is a deeper self which remains the same throughout the change, the true man, the centre of personality; which is, as it were, draped in the moral nature, and can put it off and on. I myself change myself. The figure is vehement, and, if you will, paradoxical, but it expresses accurately and forcibly at once the depth of the change which passes on him who becomes a Christian, and the identity of the person through all change. If I am a Christian, there has passed on me a change so thorough that it is in one aspect a death, and in another a resurrection; in one aspect it is a putting off not merely of some garb of action, but of the old man, and in another a putting on not merely of some surface renovation, but of a new man—which is yet the same old self.

This entire change is taken for granted by Paul as having been realised in every Christian. It is here treated as having taken place at a certain point of time, namely when these Colossians began to put their trust in Jesus Christ, and in profession of that trust, and as a symbol of that change, were baptised.

Of course the contrast between the character before and after faith in Christ is strongest when, like the Christians at Colossæ, converts have been brought out of heathenism. With us, where some knowledge of Christianity is widely diffused, and its indirect influence has shaped the characters even of those who reject it, there is less room for a marked revolution in character and conduct. There will be many true saints who can point to no sudden change as their conversion; but have grown up, sometimes from childhood, under Christian influences, or who, if they have distinctly been conscious of a change, have passed through it as gradually as night passes into day. Be it so. In many respects that will be the highest form of experience. Yet even such souls will be aware of a "new man" formed in them which is at vari-

ance with their own old selves, and will not escape the necessity of the conflict with their lower nature, the immolation and casting off of the unregenerate self. But there are also many people who have grown up without God or Christ, who must become Christians by the way of sudden conversion, if they are ever to become Christians at all.

Why should such sudden change be regarded as impossible? Is it not a matter of everyday experience that some long-ignored principle may suddenly come, like a meteor into the atmosphere, into a man's mind and will, may catch fire as it travels, and may explode and blow to pieces the solid habits of a lifetime? And why should not the truth concerning God's great love in Christ, which in too sad certainty is ignored by many, flame in upon blind eyes, and change the look of everything? The New Testament doctrine of conversion asserts that it may and does. It does not insist that everybody must become a Christian in the same fashion. Sometimes there will be a dividing line between the two states, as sharp as the boundary of adjoining kingdoms; sometimes the one will melt imperceptibly into the other. Sometimes the revolution will be as swift as that of the wheel of a locomotive, sometimes slow and silent as the movement of a planet in the sky. The main thing is that, whether suddenly or slowly, the face shall be turned to God.

But however brought about, this putting off of the old sinful self is a certain mark of a Christian man. It can be assumed as true universally, and appealed to as the basis of exhortations such as those of the context. Believing certain truths does not make a Christian. If there have been any reality in the act by which we have laid hold of Christ as our Saviour, our whole being will be revolutionised; old things will have passed away—tastes, desires, ways of looking at the world, memories, habits, pricks of conscience, and all cords that bound us to our God-forgetting past—and all things will have become new, because we ourselves move in the midst of the old things as new creatures with new love burning in our hearts and new motives changing all our lives, and a new aim shining before us, and a new hope illuminating the blackness beyond, and a new song on our lips, and a new power in our hands, and a new Friend by our sides.

This is a wholesome and most needful test for all who call themselves Christians, and who are often tempted to put too much stress on believing and feeling, and to forget the supreme importance of the moral change which true Christianity effects. Nor is it less needful to remember that this resolute casting off of the garment spotted by the flesh, and putting on of the new man, is a consequence of faith in Christ and is only possible as a consequence. Nothing else will strip the foul robes from a man. The moral change comes second, the union with Jesus Christ by faith must come first. To try to begin with the second stage is like trying to begin to build a house at the second story.

But there is a practical conclusion drawn from this taken-for-granted change. Our text is introduced by "seeing that;" and though some doubts may be raised as to that translation and the logical connection of the paragraph, it appears on the whole most congruous with both the preceding and the following context, to retain it and to see here the reason for the exhortation which goes before—"Put off all these," and for that which follows—"Put on, therefore," the beautiful garment of love and compassion.

That great change, though taking place in the inmost nature whensoever a heart turns to Christ, needs to be wrought into character, and to be wrought out in conduct. The leaven is in the dough, but to knead it thoroughly into the mass is a life-long task, which is only accomplished by our own continually repeated efforts. The old garment clings to the limbs like the wet clothes of a half-drowned man, and it takes the work of a lifetime to get quite rid of it. The "old man" dies hard, and we have to repeat the sacrifice hour by hour. The new man has to be put on afresh day by day.

So the apparently illogical exhortation, Put off what you have put off, and put on what you have put on, is fully vindicated. It means, Be consistent with your deepest selves. Carry out in detail what you have already done in bulk. Cast out the enemy, already ejected from the central fortress, from the isolated positions which he still occupies. You may put off the old man, for he is put off already; and the confidence that he is will give you strength for the struggle that still remains. You must put off the old man, for there is still danger of his again wrapping his poisonous rags about your limbs.

II. We have here the continuous growth of the new man, its aim and pattern.

The thought of the garment passes for the moment out of sight, and the Apostle enlarges on the greatness and glory of this "new man," partly as a stimulus to obeying the exhortation, partly, with allusion to some of the errors which he had been combating, and partly because his fervid spirit kindles at the mention of the mighty transformation.

The new man, says he, is "being renewed." This is one of the instances where minute accuracy in translation is not pedantic, but clear gain. When we say, with the Authorised Version, "is renewed," we speak of a completed act; when we say with the Revised Version, "is being renewed," we speak of a continuous process; and there can be no question that the latter is the true idea intended here. The growth of the new man is constant, perhaps slow and difficult to discern, if the intervals of comparison be short. But like all habits and powers it steadily increases. On the other hand, a similar process works to opposite results in the "old man," which, as Paul says in the instructive parallel passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 22), "waxeth corrupt, after the lusts of deceit." Both grow according to their inmost nature, the one steadily upwards; the other with accelerating speed downwards, till they are parted by the whole distance between the highest heaven and the lowest abyss. So mystic and awful is that solemn law of the persistent increase of the true ruling tendency of a man's nature, and its certain subjugation of the whole man to itself!

It is to be observed that this renewing is represented in this clause as done on the new man, not by him. We have heard the exhortation to a continuous appropriation and increase of the new life by our own efforts. But there is a

Divine side too, and the renewing is not merely effected by us, nor due only to the vital power of the new man, though growth is the sign of life there as everywhere, but is "the renewing by the Holy Ghost," whose touch quickens and whose indwelling renovates the inward man day by day. So there is hope for us in our striving, for He helps us; and the thought of that Divine renewal is not a pillow for indolence, but a spur to intenser energy, as Paul well knew when he wove the apparent paradox, "work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you."

The new man is being renewed "unto knowledge." An advanced knowledge of God and Divine realities is the result of the progressive renewal. Possibly there may be a passing reference to the pretensions of the false teachers, who had so much to say about a higher wisdom open to the initiated, and to be won by ceremonial and asceticism. Their claims, hints Paul, are baseless; their pretended secrets a delusion; their method of attaining them a snare. There is but one way to press into the depths of the knowledge of God—namely growth into His likeness. We understand one another best by sympathy. We know God only on condition of resemblance. "If the eye were not sunlike how could it see the sun?" says Goethe. "If thou beest this, thou seest this," said Plotinus. Ever, as we grow in resemblance, shall we grow in knowledge, and ever as we grow in knowledge, shall we grow in resemblance. So in perpetual action and reaction of being and knowing, shall we draw nearer and nearer the unapproachable light, and receiving it full on our faces, shall be changed into the same image, as the moonbeams that touch the dark ocean transfigure its waves into silver radiance like their own. For all simple souls, bewildered by the strife of tongues and unapt for speculation, this is a message of gladness, that the way to know God is to be like Him, and the way to be like Him is to be renewed in the inward man, and the way to be renewed in the inward man is to put on Christ. They may wrangle and philosophise who will, but the path to God leads far away from all that. It may be trodden by a child's foot, and the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein, for all that is needed is a heart that desires to know Him, and is made like Him by love. Half the secret lies in the great word which tells us that "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," and knowledge will work likeness. The other half lies in the great word which tells us that "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," and likeness will work a more perfect knowledge.

This new man is being renewed after the image of Him that created him. As in the first creation man was made in the image of God, so in the new creation. From the first moment in which the supernatural life is derived from Christ into the regenerated spirit, that new life is like its source. It is kindred, therefore it is like, as all derived life is. The child's life is like the father's. But the image of God which the new man bears is more than that which was stamped on man in his creation. That consisted mainly, if not wholly, in the reasonable soul, and the self-conscious personality, the broad distinctions which separate man from other animals. The image of God is often said to have been lost by sin, but Scripture seems rather to consider it as inseparable from humanity, even when stained by transgression. Men are still images of God, though darkened and "carved in ebony." The coin bears His image and superscription, though rusty and defaced. But the image of God, which the new man bears from the beginning in a rudimentary form, and which is continually imprinting itself more deeply upon him, has for its principal feature holiness. Though the majestic infinitudes of God can have no likeness in man, however exalted, and our feebleness cannot copy His strength, nor our poor blind knowledge, with its vast circumference of ignorance, be like His ungrowing and unerring knowledge, we may be "holy as He is holy"; we may be "imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as He hath loved us"; we may "walk in the light as He is in the light," with only the difference between His calm, eternal being, and our changeful and progressive motion therein; we may even "be perfect as our Father is perfect." This is the end of all our putting off the old and putting on the new. This is the ultimate purpose of God, in all His self-revelation. For this Christ has come and died and lives. For this the Spirit of God dwells in us. This is the immortal hope with which we may recreate and encourage our souls in our often weary struggles. Even our poor sinful natures may be transformed into that wondrous likeness. Coal and diamond are but varying forms of carbon, and the blackest lump dug from the deepest mine may be transmuted by the alchemy of that wondrous transforming union with Christ, into a brightness that shall flash back all the glory of the sunlight, and gleam for ever, set in one of His many crowns.

III. We have here finally the grand unity of this new creation.

We may reverse the order of the words as they stand here, and consider the last clause first, inasmuch as it is the reason for the doing away of all distinctions of race, or ceremony, or culture, or social condition.

"Christ is all." Wherever that new nature is found, it lives by the life of Christ. He dwells in all who possess it. The Spirit of life in Christ is in them. His blood passes into their veins. The holy desires, the new tastes, the kindling love, the clearer vision, the gentleness and the strength, and whatsoever things beside are lovely and of good report, are all His—nay, we may say, are all Himself.

And, of course, all who are His are partakers of that common gift, and He is in all. There is no privileged class in Christ's Church, as these false teachers in Colossæ had taught. Against every attempt to limit the universality of the gospel, whether it came from Jewish Pharisees or Eastern philosophers, Paul protested with his whole soul. He has done so already in this Epistle, and does so here in his emphatic assertion that Christ was not the possession of an aristocracy of "intelligence," but belonged to every soul that trusted Him.

Necessarily, therefore, surface distinctions disappear. There is triumph in the roll of his rapid enumeration of these clefts that have so long kept brothers apart, and are now being filled up. He looks round on a world the antagonisms of which we can but faintly imagine, and his eye kindles and his voice rises into vi-

brating emotion, as he thinks of the mighty magnetism that is drawing enemies towards the one centre in Christ. His catalogue here may profitably be compared with his other in the Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 28). There he enumerates the three great distinctions which parted the old world: race (Jew and Greek), social condition (bond and free), and sex (male and female). These, he says, as separating powers, are done away in Christ. Here the list is modified, probably with reference to the errors in the Colossian Church.

"There cannot be Greek and Jew." The cleft of national distinctions, which certainly never yawned more widely than between the Jew and every other people, ceases to separate, and the teachers who had been trying to perpetuate that distinction in the Church were blind to the very meaning of the gospel. "Circumcision and uncircumcision" separated. Nothing makes deeper and bitterer antagonisms than differences in religious forms, and people who have not been born into them are usually the most passionate in adherence to them, so that cleft did not entirely coincide with the former. "Barbarian, Scythian," is not an antithesis, but a climax—the Scythians were looked upon as the most savage of barbarians. The Greek contempt for the outside races, which is reflected in this clause, was largely the contempt for a supposed lower stage of culture. As we have seen, Colossæ especially needed the lesson that differences in culture disappeared in the unity of Christ, for the heretical teachers attached great importance to the wisdom which they professed to impart. A cultivated class is always tempted to superciliousness, and a half-cultivated class is even more so. There is abundance of that arrogance born of education among us to-day, and sorely needing and quite disbelieving the teaching that there are things which can make up for the want of what it possesses. It is in the interest of the humble virtues of the uneducated godly as well as of the nations called uncivilised, that Christianity wars against that most heartless and ruinous of all prides, the pride of culture, by its proclamation that in Christ, barbarian, Scythian, and the most polished thinker or scholar are one.

"Bondman, freeman" is again an antithesis. That gulf between master and slave was indeed wide and deep; too wide for compassion to cross, though not for hatred to stride over. The untold miseries of slavery in the old world are but dimly known; but it and war and degradation of women made an infernal trio which crushed more than half the race into a hell of horrors. Perhaps Paul may have been the more ready to add this clause to his catalogue because his thoughts had been occupied with the relation of master and slave on the occasion of the letter to Philemon which was sent along with this to Colossæ.

Christianity waged no direct war against these social evils of antiquity, but it killed them much more effectually by breathing into the conscience of the world truths which made their continuance impossible. It girdled the tree, and left it to die—a much better and more thorough plan than dragging it out of the ground by main force. Revolution cures nothing. The only way to get rid of evils engrained in the constitution of society is to elevate and change the tone of thought and feeling, and then they die of atrophy. Change the climate, and you change the vegetation. Until you do, neither mowing nor uprooting will get rid of the foul growths.

So the gospel does with all these lines of demarcation between men. What becomes of them? What becomes of the ridges of sand that separate pool from pool at low water? The tide comes up over them and makes them all one, gathered into the oneness of the great sea. They may remain, but they are seen no more, and the roll of the wave is not interrupted by them. The powers and blessings of the Christ pass freely from heart to heart, hindered by no barriers. Christ founds a deeper unity independent of all these superficial distinctions, for the very conception of humanity is the product of Christianity, and the true foundation for the brotherhood of mankind is the revelation in Christ of the fatherhood of God. Christ is the brother of us all; His death is for every man; the blessing of His gospel is offered to each; He will dwell in the heart of any. Therefore all distinctions, national, ceremonial, intellectual, or social, fade into nothingness. Love is of no nation, and Christ is the property of no aristocracy in the Church. That great truth was a miraculous new thing in that old world, all torn apart by deep clefts like the grim cañons of American rivers. Strange it must have seemed to find slaves and their masters, Jew and Greek, sitting at one table and bound in fraternal ties. The world has not yet fully grasped that truth, and the Church has woefully failed in showing it to be a reality. But it arches above all our wars, and schisms, and wretched class distinctions, like a rainbow of promise, beneath whose open portal the world shall one day pass into that bright land where the wandering peoples shall gather together in peace round the feet of Jesus, and there shall be one fold because there is one Shepherd.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GARMENTS OF THE RENEWED SOUL.

COLOSSIANS iii. 12-14 (R. V.).

WE need not repeat what has been already said as to the logic of the inference, You have put off the "old man," therefore put off the vices which belong to him. Here we have the same argument in reference to the "new man" who is to be "put on" because he has been put on. This "therefore" rests the exhortation both on that thought, and on the nearer words, "Christ is all and in all." Because the new nature has been assumed in the very act of conversion, therefore array your souls in vesture corresponding. Because Christ is all and in all, therefore clothe yourselves with all brotherly graces, corresponding to the great unity into which all Christians are brought by their common possession of Christ. The whole field of Christian morality is not traversed here, but only so much of it as concerns the social duties which result from that unity.

But besides the foundation for the exhortations which is laid in the possession of the "New Man," consequent on participation in Christ, another ground for them is added in the

words, "as God's elect, holy and beloved." Those who are in Christ and are thus regenerated in Him, are of the chosen race, are consecrated as belonging especially to God, and receive the warm beams of the special paternal love with which He regards the men who are in some measure conformed to His likeness and moulded after His will. That relation to God should draw after it a life congruous with itself —a life of active goodness and brotherly gentleness. The outcome of it should be not mere glad emotion, nor a hugging of oneself in one's happiness, but practical efforts to turn to men a face lit by the same dispositions with which God has looked on us, or as the parallel passage in Ephesians has it, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children." That is a wide and fruitful principle—the relation to men will follow the relation to God. As we think God has been to us, so let us try to be to others. The poorest little fishing cobble is best guided by celestial observations, and dead reckoning without sun or stars is but second-best. Independent morality cut loose from religion will be feeble morality. On the other hand, religion which does not issue in morality is a ghost without substance. Religion is the soul of morality. Morality is the body of religion, more than ceremonial worship is. The virtues which all men know are the fitting garments of the elect of God.

I. We have here then an enumeration of the fair garments of the new man.

Let us go over the items of this list of the wardrobe of the consecrated soul.

"A heart of compassion." So the Revised Version renders the words given literally in the Authorised as "bowels of mercies," an expression which that very strange thing called conventional propriety regards as coarse, simply because Jews chose one part of the body and we another as the supposed seat of the emotions. Either phrase expresses substantially the Apostle's meaning.

Is it not beautiful that the series should begin with pity? It is the most often needed, for the sea of sorrow stretches so widely that nothing less than a universal compassion can arch it over as with the blue of heaven. Every man would seem in some respect deserving of and needing sympathy, if his whole heart and history could be laid bare. Such compassion is difficult to achieve, for its healing streams are dammed back by many obstructions of inattention and occupation, and dried up by the fierce heat of selfishness. Custom, with its deadening influence, comes in to make us feel least the sorrows which are most common in the society around us. As a man might live so long in an asylum that lunacy would seem to him almost the normal condition, so the most widely diffused griefs are those least observed and least compassionated; and good, tender-hearted men and women walk the streets of our great cities and see sights—children growing up for the gallows and the devil, gin-shops at every corner—which might make angels weep, and suppose them to be as inseparable from our "civilisation" as the noise of wheels from a carriage or bilge water from a ship. Therefore we have to make conscious efforts to "put on" that sympathetic disposition, and to fight against the faults which hinder its free play. Without it, no help will be of much use to the receiver, nor of any to the giver. Benefits bestowed on the needy and sorrowful, if bestowed without sympathy, will hurt like a blow. Much is said about ingratitude, but very often it is but the instinctive recoil of the heart from the unkind doer of a kindness. Aid flung to a man as a bone is to a dog usually gets as much gratitude as the sympathy which it expresses deserves. But if we really make another's sorrows ours, that teaches us tact and gentleness, and makes our clumsy hands light and deft to bind up sore hearts.

Above all things, the practical discipline which cultivates pity will beware of letting it be excited and then not allowing the emotion to act. To stimulate feeling and do nothing in consequence is a short road to destroy the feeling. Pity is meant to be the impulse toward help, and if it is checked and suffered to pass away idly, it is weakened, as certainly as a plant is weakened by being kept close nipped and hindered from bringing its buds to flower and fruit.

"Kindness" comes next—a wider benignity, not only exercised where there is manifest room for pity, but turning a face of good will to all. Some souls are so dowered that they have this grace without effort, and come like the sunshine with welcome and cheer for all the world. But even less happily endowed natures can cultivate the disposition, and the best way to cultivate it is to be much in communion with God. When Moses came down from the mount, his face shone. When we come out from the secret place of the Most High we shall bear some reflection of His great kindness whose "tender mercies are over all His works." This "kindness" is the opposite of that worldly wisdom, on which many men pride themselves as the ripe fruit of their knowledge of men and things, and which keeps up vigilant suspicion of everybody, as in the savage state, where "stranger" and "enemy" had only one word between them. It does not require us to be blind to facts or to live in fancies, but it does require us to cherish a habit of good will, ready to become pity if sorrow appears, and slow to turn away even if hostility appears. Meet your brother with kindness, and you will generally find it returned. The prudent hypocrites who get on in the world, as ships are launched, by "greasing the ways" with flattery and smiles, teach us the value of the true thing, since even a coarse caricature of it wins hearts and disarms foes. This "kindness" is the most powerful solvent of ill will and indifference.

Then follows "humility." That seems to break the current of thought by bringing a virtue entirely occupied with self into the middle of a series referring exclusively to others. But it does not really do so. From this point onwards all the graces named have reference to our demeanour under slights and injuries—and humility comes into view here only as constituting the foundation for the right bearing of these. Meekness and long-suffering must stand on a basis of humility. The proud man, who thinks highly of himself and of his own claims, will be the touchy man, if any one derogates from these.

"Humility," or lowly-mindedness, a lowly estimate of ourselves, is not necessarily blindness to our strong points. If a man can do certain things better than his neighbours, he

can hardly help knowing it, and Christian humility does not require him to be ignorant of it. I suppose Milton would be none the less humble, though he was quite sure that his work was better than that of Sternhold and Hopkins. The consciousness of power usually accompanies power. But though it may be quite right to "know myself" in the strong points, as well as in the weak, there are two considerations which should act as dampers to any unchristian fire of pride which the devil's breath may blow up from that fuel. The one is, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" the other is, "Who is pure before God's judgment-seat?" Your strong points are nothing so very wonderful, after all. If you have better brains than some of your neighbours, well, that is not a thing to give yourself such airs about. Besides, where did you get the faculties you plume yourself on? However cultivated by yourself, how came they yours at first? And, furthermore, whatever superiorities may lift you above any men, and however high you may be elevated, it is a long way from the top of the highest molehill to the sun, and not much longer to the top of the lowest. And, besides all that, you may be very clever and brilliant, may have made books or pictures, may have stamped your name on some invention, may have won a place in public life, or made a fortune—and yet you and the beggar who cannot write his name are both guilty before God. Pride seems out of place in creatures like us, who have all to bow our heads in the presence of His perfect judgment, and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then follow "meekness, long-suffering." The distinction between these two is slight. According to the most thorough investigators, the former is the temper which accepts God's dealings, or evil inflicted by men as His instruments, without resistance, while the latter is the long holding out of the mind before it gives way to a temptation to action, or passion, especially the latter. The opposite of meekness is rudeness or harshness; the opposite of long-suffering, swift resentment or revenge. Perhaps there may be something in the distinction, that while long-suffering does not get angry soon, meekness does not get angry at all. Possibly, too, meekness implies a lowlier position than long-suffering does. The meek man puts himself below the offender; the long-suffering man does not. God is long-suffering, but the incarnate God alone can be "meek and lowly."

The general meaning is plain enough. The "hate of hate," the "scorn of scorn," is not the Christian ideal. I am not to allow my enemy always to settle the terms on which we are to be. Why should I scowl back at him, though he frowns at me? It is hard work, as we all know, to repress the retort that would wound and be so neat. It is hard not to repay slights and offences in kind. But, if the basis of our dispositions to others be laid in a wise and lowly estimate of ourselves, such graces of conduct will be possible, and they will give beauty to our characters.

"Forbearing and forgiving" are not new virtues. They are meekness and long-suffering in exercise, and if we were right in saying that "long-suffering" was not soon angry, and "meekness" was not angry at all, then "forbearance" would correspond to the former and "forgiveness" to the latter; for a man may exercise forbearance, and bite his lips till the blood come rather than speak, and violently constrain himself to keep calm and do nothing unkind, and yet all the while seven devils may be in his spirit; while forgiveness, on the other hand, is an entire wiping of all enmity and irritation clean out of the heart.

Such is the Apostle's outline sketch of the Christian character in its social aspect, all rooted in pity, and full of soft compassion; quick to apprehend, to feel, and to succour sorrow; a kindliness, equable and widespread, illuminating all who come within its reach; a patient acceptance of wrongs without resentment or revenge, because a lowly judgment of self and its claims, a spirit schooled to calmness under all provocations, disdaining to requite wrong by wrong, and quick to forgive.

The question may well be asked—is that a type of character which the world generally admires? Is it not uncommonly like what most people would call "a poor spiritless creature"?

It was "a new man," most emphatically, when Paul drew that sketch, for the heathen world had never seen anything like it. It is a "new man" still; for although the modern world has had some kind of Christianity—at least has had a Church—for all these centuries, that is not the kind of character which is its ideal. Look at the heroes of history and of literature. Look at the tone of so much contemporary biography and criticism of public actions. Think of the ridicule which is poured on the attempt to regulate politics by Christian principles, or, as a distinguished soldier called them in public recently, "puling principles." It may be true that Christianity has not added any new virtues to those which are prescribed by natural conscience, but it has most certainly altered the perspective of the whole, and created a type of excellence, in which the gentler virtues predominate, and the novelty of which is proved by the reluctance of the so-called Christian world to recognise it even yet.

By the side of its serene and lofty beauty, the "heroic virtues" embodied in the world's type of excellence show vulgar and glaring, like some daub representing a soldier, the sign-post of a public-house, by the side of Angelico's white-robed visions on the still convent walls. The highest exercise of these more gaudy and conspicuous qualities is to produce the pity and meekness of the Christian ideal. More self-command, more heroic firmness, more contempt for the popular estimate, more of everything strong and manly, will find a nobler field in subduing passion and cherishing forgiveness, which the world thinks folly and spiritless, than anywhere else. Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

The great pattern and motive of forgiveness is next set forth. We are to forgive as Christ has forgiven us; and that "as" may be applied either as meaning "in like manner," or as meaning "because." The Revised Version, with many others, adopts the various reading of "the Lord," instead of "Christ," which has the advantage of recalling the parable that was no doubt in Paul's mind, about the servant who, having been forgiven by his "Lord" all his great debt, took his fellow-servant by the

throat and squeezed the last farthing out of him.

The great transcendent act of God's mercy brought to us by Christ's cross is sometimes, as in the parallel passage in Ephesians, spoken of as "God for Christ's sake forgiving us," and sometimes as here, Christ is represented as forgiving. We need not pause to do more than point to that interchange of Divine office and attributes, and ask what notion of Christ's person underlies it.

We have already had the death of Christ set forth as in a very profound sense our pattern. Here we have one special case of the general law that the life and death of our Lord are the embodied ideal of human character and conduct. His forgiveness is not merely revealed to us that trembling hearts may be calm, and that a fearful looking for of judgment may no more trouble a foreboding conscience. For whilst we must ever begin with cleaving to it as our hope, we must never stop there. A heart touched and softened by pardon will be a heart apt to pardon, and the miracle of forgiveness which has been wrought for it will constitute the law of its life as well as the ground of its joyful security.

This new pattern and new motive, both in one, make the true novelty and specific difference of Christian morality. "As I have loved you," makes the commandment "love one another" a new commandment. And all that is difficult in obedience becomes easier by the power of that motive. Imitation of one whom we love is instinctive. Obedience to one whom we love is delightful. The far-off ideal becomes near and real in the person of our best friend. Bound to him by obligations so immense, and a forgiveness so costly and complete, we shall joyfully yield to "the cords of love" which draw us after Him. We have each to choose what shall be the pattern for us. The world takes Cæsar, the hero; the Christian takes Christ, in whose meekness is power, and whose gentle long-suffering has been victor in a sterner conflict than any battle of the warrior with garments rolled in blood.

Paul says, "Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." The Lord's prayer teaches us to ask, Forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive. In the one case Christ's forgiveness is the example and the motive for ours. In the other, our forgiveness is the condition of God's. Both are true. We shall find the strongest impulse to pardon others in the consciousness that we have been pardoned by Him. And if we have grudgings against our offending brother in our hearts, we shall not be conscious of the tender forgiveness of our Father in heaven. That is no arbitrary limitation, but inherent in the very nature of the case.

II. We have here the girdle which keeps all the garments in their places.

"Above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness."

"Above all these" does not mean "besides," or "more important than," but is clearly used in its simplest local sense, as equivalent to "over," and thus carries on the metaphor of the dress. Over the other garments is to be put the silken sash or girdle of love, which will brace and confine all the rest into a unity. It is "the girdle of perfectness," by which is not meant, as is often supposed, the perfect principle of union among men. Perfectness is not the quality of the girdle, but the thing which it girds, and is a collective expression for "the various graces and virtues, which together make up perfection." So the metaphor expresses the thought that love knits into a harmonious whole, the graces which without it would be fragmentary and incomplete.

We can conceive of all the dispositions already named as existing in some fashion without love. There might be pity which was not love, though we know it is akin to it. The feeling with which one looks upon some poor outcast, or on some stranger in sorrow, or even on an enemy in misery, may be very genuine compassion, and yet clearly separate from love. So with all the others. There may be kindness most real without any of the diviner emotion, and there may even be forbearance reaching up to forgiveness, and yet leaving the heart untouched in its deepest recesses. But if these virtues were thus exercised, in the absence of love they would be fragmentary, shallow, and would have no guarantee for their own continuance. Let love come into the heart and knit a man to the poor creature whom he had only pitied before, or to the enemy whom he had at the most been able with an effort to forgive, and it lifts these other emotions into a nobler life. He who pities may not love, but he who loves cannot but pity; and that compassion will flow with a deeper current and be of a purer quality than the shrunken stream which does not rise from that higher source.

Nor is it only the virtues enumerated here for which love performs this office; but all the else isolated graces of character, it binds or welds into a harmonious whole. As the broad Eastern girdle holds the flowing robes in position, and gives needed firmness to the figure as well as composed order to the attire; so this broad band, woven of softest fabric, keeps all emotions in their due place and makes the attire of the Christian soul beautiful in harmonious completeness.

Perhaps it is a yet deeper truth that love produces all these graces. Whatsoever things men call virtues, are best cultivated by cultivating it. So with a somewhat similar meaning to that of our text, but if anything, going deeper down, Paul in another place calls love the fulfilling of the law, even as his Master had taught him that all the complex of duties incumbent upon us were summed up in love to God, and love to men. Whatever I owe to my brother will be discharged if I love God, and live my love. Nothing of it, not even the smallest mite of the debt will be discharged, however vast my sacrifices and services, if I do not.

So end the frequent references in this letter to putting off the old and putting on the new. The sum of them all is, that we must first put on Christ by faith, and then by daily effort clothe our spirits in the graces of character which He gives us, and by which we shall be like Him.

We have said that this dress of the Christian soul which we have been now considering does not include the whole of Christian duty. We may recall the other application of the same figure which occurs in the parallel Epistle to the Ephesians, where Paul sketches for us in a few rapid touches the armed Christian soldier. The two pictures may profitably be set side by side.

Here he dresses the Christian soul in the robes of peace, bidding him put on pity and meekness, and above all, the silken girdle of love

> "In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,

then "put on the whole armour of God," the leathern girdle of truth, the shining breastplate of righteousness, and above all, the shield of faith—and so stand a flashing pillar of steel. Are the two pictures inconsistent? must we doff the robes of peace to don the armour, or put off the armour to resume the robes of peace? Not so; both must be worn together, for neither is found in its completeness without the other. Beneath the armour must be the fine linen, clean and white—and at one and the same time, our souls may be clad in all pity, mercifulness, and love, and in all the sparkling panoply of courage and strength for battle.

But both the armour and the dress of peace presuppose that we have listened to Christ's pleading counsel to buy of Him "white raiment that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness do not appear." The garment for the soul, which is to hide its deformities and to replace our own filthy rags, is woven in no earthly looms, and no efforts of ours will bring us into possession of it. We must be content to owe it wholly to Christ's gift, or else we shall have to go without it altogether. The first step in the Christian life is by simple faith to receive from Him the forgiveness of all our sins, and that new nature which He alone can impart, and which we can neither create nor win, but must simply accept. Then, after that, come the field and the time for efforts put forth in His strength, to array our souls in His likeness, and day by day to put on the beautiful garments which He bestows. It is a lifelong work thus to strip ourselves of the rags of our old vices, and to gird on the robe of righteousness. Lofty encouragements, tender motives, solemn warnings, all point to this as our continual task. We should set ourselves to it in His strength, if so be that, being clothed, we may not be found naked—and then, when we lay aside the garment of flesh and the armour needed for the battle, we shall hear His voice welcoming us to the land of peace, and shall walk with Him in victor's robes, glistening "so as no fuller on earth could white them."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST, THE WORD OF CHRIST, AND THE NAME OF CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS iii. 15-17 (R. V.).

THERE are here three precepts somewhat loosely connected, of which the first belongs properly to the series considered in our last chapter, from which it is only separated as not sharing in the metaphor under which the virtues contained in the former verses were set forth. In substance it is closely connected with them, though in form it is different, and in sweep is more comprehensive. The second refers mainly to Christian intercourse, especially to social worship; and the third covers the whole field of conduct, and fitly closes the series, which in it reaches the utmost possible generality, and from it drops to the inculcation of very special domestic duties. The three verses have each a dominant phrase round which we may group their teaching. These three are, the peace of Christ, the **word** of Christ, the name of the Lord Jesus.

I. The Ruling Peace of Christ.

The various reading "peace of Christ," for "peace of God," is not only recommended by manuscript authority, but has the advantage of bringing the expression into connection with the great words of the Lord, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." A strange legacy to leave, and a strange moment at which to speak of His peace! It was but an hour or so since He had been "troubled in spirit," as He thought of the betrayer—and in an hour more He would be beneath the olives of Gethsemane; and yet, even at such a time, He bestows on His friends some share in His own deep repose of spirit. Surely "the peace of Christ" must mean what "My peace" meant; not only the peace which He gives, but the peace which lay, like a great calm on the sea, on His own deep heart; and surely we cannot restrict so solemn an expression to the meaning of mutual concord among brethren. That, no doubt, is included in it, but there is much more than that. Whatever made the strange calm which leaves such unmistakable traces in the picture of Christ drawn in the Gospels, may be ours. When He gave us His peace, He gave us some share in that meek submission of will to His Father's will, and in that stainless purity, which were its chief elements. The hearts and lives of men are made troubled, not by circumstances, but by themselves. Whoever can keep his own will in harmony with God's enters into rest, though many trials and sorrows may be his. Even if within and without are fightings, there may be a central "peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation." We are our own disturbers. The eager swift motions of our own wills keep us restless. Forsake these, and quiet comes. Christ's peace was the result of the perfect harmony of all His nature. All was co-operant to one great purpose; desires and passions did not war with conscience and reason, nor did the flesh lust against the Spirit. Though that complete uniting of all our inner selves in the sweet concord of perfect obedience is not attained on earth, yet its beginnings are given to us by Christ, and in Him we may be at peace with ourselves, and have one great ruling power binding all our conflicting desires in one, as the moon draws after her the heaped waters of the sea.

We are summoned to improve that gift—to "let the peace of Christ" have its way in our hearts. The surest way to increase our possession of it is to decrease our separation from Him. The fulness of our possession of His gift of peace depends altogether on our proximity to the Giver. It evaporates in carrying. It "diminishes as the square of the distance" from the source. So the exhortation to let it rule in us will be best fulfilled by keeping thought and affection in close union with our Lord.

This peace is to "rule" in our hearts. The figure contained in the word here translated "rule" is that of the umpire or arbitrator at

the games, who, looking down on the arena, watches that the combatants strive lawfully, and adjudges the prize. Possibly the force of the figure may have been washed out of the word by use, and "rule" of our rendering may be all that it means. But there seems no reason against keeping the full force of the expression, which adds picturesqueness and point to the precept. The peace of Christ, then, is to sit enthroned as umpire in the heart; or, if we might give a mediæval instead of a classical shape to the figure, that fair sovereign, Peace, is to be Queen of the Tournament, and her "eyes rain influence and adjudge the prize." When contending impulses and reasons distract and seem to pull us in opposite directions, let her settle which is to prevail. How can the peace of Christ do that for us? We may make a rude test of good and evil by their effects on our inward repose. Whatever mars our tranquillity, ruffling the surface so that Christ's image is no longer visible, is to be avoided. That stillness of spirit is very sensitive and shrinks away at the presence of an evil thing. Let it be for us what the barometer is to a sailor, and if it sinks, let us be sure a storm is at hand. If we find that a given course of action tends to break our peace, we may be certain that there is poison in the draught which as in the old stories, has been detected by the shivered cup, and we should not drink any more. There is nothing so precious that it is worth while to lose the peace of Christ for the sake of it. Whenever we find it in peril, we must retrace our steps.

Then follows appended a reason for cultivating the peace of Christ "to which also ye were called in one body." The very purpose of God's merciful summons and invitation to them in the gospel was that they might share in this peace. There are many ways of putting God's design in His call by the gospel—it may be represented under many angles and from many points of view, and is glorious from all and each. No one word can state all the fulness to which we are called by His wonderful love, but none can be tenderer and more blessed than this thought, that God's great voice has summoned us to a share in Christ's peace. Being so called, all who share in it of course find themselves knit to each other by possession of a common gift. What a contradiction, then, to be summoned in order to so blessed a possession, and not to allow it sovereign sway in moulding heart and life! What a contradiction, further, to have been gathered into one body by the common possession of the peace of Christ, and yet not to allow it to bind all the members in its sweet fetters with cords of love! The sway of the "peace of Christ" in our hearts will ensure the perfect exercise of all the other graces of which we have been hearing, and therefore this precept fitly closes the series of exhortations to brotherly affections, and seals all with the thought of the "one body" of which all these "new men" are members.

The very abruptness of the introduction of the next precept gives it force, "and be ye thankful," or, as we might translate with an accuracy which perhaps is not too minute, "become thankful," striving towards deeper gratitude than you have yet attained. Paul is ever apt to catch fire as often as his thought brings him in sight of God's great love in drawing men to Himself, and in giving them such rich gifts. It is quite a feature of his style to break into sudden bursts of praise as often as his path leads him to a summit from which he catches a glimpse of that great miracle of love. This interjected precept is precisely like these sudden jets of praise. It is as if he had broken off for a moment from the line of his thought, and had said to his hearers—Think of that wonderful love of your Father God. He has called you from the midst of your heathenism, He has called you from a world of tumult and a life of troubled unrest to possess the peace which brooded ever, like the mystic dove, over Christ's head; He has called you in one body, having knit in a grand unity us, Jews and Gentiles, so widely parted before. Let us pause and lift up our voices in praise to Him. True thankfulness will well up at all moments, and will underlie and blend with all duties. There are frequent injunctions to thankfulness in this letter, and we have it again enjoined in the closing words of the verses which we are now considering, so that we may defer any further remarks till we come to deal with these.

II. The Indwelling Word of Christ.

The main reference of this verse seems to be to the worship of the Church—the highest expression of its oneness. There are three points enforced in its three clauses, of which the first is the dwelling in the hearts of the Colossian Christians of the "word of Christ," by which is meant, as I conceive, not simply "the presence of Christ in the heart, as an inward monitor," * but the indwelling of the definite body of truths contained in the gospel which had been preached to them. That gospel is the word of Christ, inasmuch as He is its subject. These early Christians received that body of truth by oral teaching. To us it comes in the history of Christ's life and death, and in the exposition of the significance and far-reaching depth and power of these, which are contained in the rest of the New Testament—a very definite body of teaching. How can it abide in the heart? Or what is the dwelling of that word within us but the occupation of mind and heart and will with the truth concerning Jesus revealed to us in Scripture? This indwelling is in our own power, for it is matter of precept and not of promise—and if we want to have it we must do with religious truth just what we do with other truths that we want to keep in our minds—ponder them, use our faculties on them, be perpetually recurring to them, fix them in our memories, like nails fastened in a sure place, and, that we may remember them, "get them by heart," as the children say. Few things are more wanting to-day than this. The popular Christianity of the day is strong in philanthropic service, and some phases of it are full of "evangelistic" activity, but it is woefully lacking in intelligent grasp of the great principles involved and revealed in the gospel. Some Christians have yielded to the popular prejudice against "dogma," and have come to dislike and neglect the doctrinal side of religion, and others are so busy in good works of various kinds that they have no time nor inclination to reflect nor to learn, and for others "the cares of this world and the lusts of other things, entering in, choke the word." A merely intellectual Christianity is a very poor thing, no doubt; but that has been dinned into our ears

* Lightfoot.

so long and loudly for a generation now, that there is much need for a clear preaching of the other side—namely, that a merely emotional Christianity is a still poorer, and that if feeling on the one hand and conduct on the other are to be worthy of men with heads on their shoulders and brains in their heads, both feeling and conduct must be built on a foundation of truth believed and pondered. In the ordered monarchy of human nature, reason is meant to govern, but she is also meant to submit, and for her the law holds good, she must learn to obey that she may be able to rule. She must bow to the word of Christ, and then she will sway aright the kingdom of the soul. It becomes us to make conscience of seeking to get a firm and intelligent grasp of Christian truth as a whole, and not to be always living on milk meant for babes, nor to expect that teachers and preachers should only repeat for ever the things which we know already.

That word is to dwell in Christian men richly. It is their own fault if they possess it, as so many do, in scant measure. It might be a full tide. Why in so many is it a mere trickle, like an Australian river in the heat, a line of shallow ponds with no life or motion, scarcely connected by a thread of moisture, and surrounded by great stretches of blinding shingle, when it might be a broad water—"waters to swim in"? Why, but because they do not do with this word, what all students do with the studies which they love?

The word should manifest the rich abundance of its dwelling in men by opening out in their minds into "every kind of wisdom." Where the gospel in its power dwells in a man's spirit, and is intelligently meditated on and studied, it will effloresce into principles of thought and action applicable to all subjects, and touching the whole round horizon of human life. All, and more than all, the wisdom which these false teachers promised in their mysteries, is given to the babes and the simple ones who treasure the word of Christ in their hearts, and the least among them may say, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation." That gospel which the child may receive has "infinite riches in a narrow room," and, like some tiny black seed, for all its humble form, has hidden in it the promise and potency of wondrous beauty of flower, and nourishment of fruit. Cultured and cared for in the heart where it is sown, it will unfold into all truth which a man can receive or God can give, concerning God and man, our nature, duties, hopes, and destinies, the tasks of the moment, and the glories of eternity. He who has it and lets it dwell richly in his heart is wise; he who has it not, "at his latter end shall be a fool."

The second clause of this verse deals with the manifestations of the indwelling word in the worship of the Church. The individual possession of the word in one's own heart does not make us independent of brotherly help. Rather, it is the very foundation of the duty of sharing our riches with our fellows, and of increasing ours by contributions from their stores. And so—"teaching and admonishing one another" is the outcome of it. The universal possession of Christ's word involves the equally universal right and duty of mutual instruction.

We have already heard the Apostle declaring it to be his work to "admonish every man and to teach every man," and found that the former office pointed to practical ethical instruction, not without rebuke and warning, while the latter referred rather to doctrinal teaching. What he there claimed for himself, he here enjoins on the whole Christian community. We have here a glimpse of the perfectly simple, informal public services of the early Church, which seem to have partaken much more of the nature of a free conference than of any of the forms of worship at present in use in any Church. The evidence both of this passage and of the other Pauline Epistles, especially of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xiv.) unmistakably shows this. The forms of worship in the apostolic Church are not meant for models, and we do not prove a usage as intended to be permanent because we prove it to be primitive; but the principles which underlie the usages are valid always and everywhere, and one of these principles is the universal though not equal inspiration of Christian men, which results in their universal calling to teach and admonish. In what forms that principle shall be expressed, how safe-guarded and controlled, is of secondary importance. Different stages of culture and a hundred other circumstances will modify these, and nobody but a pedant or religious martinet will care about uniformity. But I cannot but believe that the present practice of confining the public teaching of the Church to an official class has done harm. Why should one man be for ever speaking, and hundreds of people who are able to teach sitting dumb to listen or pretend to listen to him? Surely there is a wasteful expenditure there. I hate forcible revolution, and do not believe that any institutions, either political or ecclesiastical, which need violence to sweep them away, are ready to be removed; but I believe that if the level of spiritual life were raised among us, new forms would naturally be evolved, in which there should be a more adequate recognition of the great principle on which the democracy of Christianity is founded, namely, "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh—and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in these days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy." There are not wanting signs that many different classes of Christian worshippers have ceased to find edification in the present manner of teaching. The more cultured write books on "the decay of preaching;" the more earnest take to mission halls and a "freer service," and "lay preaching"; the more indifferent stay at home. When the tide rises, all the idle craft stranded on the mud are set in motion; such a time is surely coming for the Church, when the aspiration that has waited millenniums for its fulfilment, and received but a partial accomplishment at Pentecost, shall at last be a fact: "would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

The teaching and admonishing are here regarded as being effected by means of song. That strikes one as singular, and tempts to another punctuation of the verse, by which "In all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another" should make a separate clause, and "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" should be attached to the following words. But probably the ordinary arrangement of clauses is best

on the whole. The distinction between "psalms" and "hymns" appears to be that the former is a song with a musical accompaniment, and that the latter is vocal praise to God. No doubt the "psalms" meant were chiefly those of the Psalter, the Old Testament element in the early Christian worship, while the "hymns" were the new product of the spirit of devotion which had naturally broken into song, the first beginnings of the great treasure of Christian hymnody. "Spiritual songs" is a more general expression, including all varieties of Christian poesy, provided that they come from the Spirit moving in the heart. We know from many sources that song had a large part in the worship of the early Church. Indeed, whenever a great quickening of religious life comes, a great burst of Christian song comes with it. The onward march of the Church has ever been attended by music of praise; "as well the singers as the players on instruments" have been there. The mediæval Latin hymns cluster round the early pure days of the monastic orders; Luther's rough stormy hymns were as powerful as his treatises; the mystic tenderness and rapture of Charles Wesley's have become the possession of the whole Church. We hear from outside observers that one of the practices of the early Christians which most attracted heathen notice was, that they assembled daily before it was light and "sang hymns of praise to one Christus as to a god."

These early hymns were of a dogmatic character. No doubt, just as in many a missionary Church a hymn is found to be the best vehicle for conveying the truth, so it was in these early Churches, which were made up largely of slaves and women—both uneducated. "Singing the gospel" is a very old invention, though the name be new. The picture which we get here of the meetings of the early Christians is very remarkable. Evidently their gatherings were free and social, with the minimum of form, and that most elastic. If a man had any word of exhortation for the people, he might say on. "Every one of you hath a psalm, a doctrine." If a man had some fragment of an old psalm, or some strain that had come fresh from the Christian heart, he might sing it, and his brethren would listen. We do not have that sort of psalmody now. But what a long way we have travelled from it to a modern congregation, standing with books that they scarcely look at, and "worshipping" in a hymn which half of them do not open their mouths to sing at all, and the other half do in a voice inaudible three pews off.

The best praise, however, is a heart song. So the Apostle adds "singing in your hearts unto God." And it is to be in "grace," that is to say, in it as the atmosphere and element in which the song moves, which is nearly equivalent to "by means of the Divine grace" which works in the heart, and impels to that perpetual music of silent praise. If we have the peace of Christ in our hearts, and the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all wisdom, then an unspoken and perpetual music will dwell there too, "a noise like of a hidden brook" singing for ever its "quiet tune."

III. The all-hallowing Name of Jesus.

From worship the Apostle passes to life, and crowns the entire series of injunctions with an all-comprehensive precept, covering the whole ground of action. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed"—then, not merely worship, specially so called, but everything is to come under the influence of the same motive. That expresses emphatically the sanctity of common life, and extends the idea of worship to all deeds. "Whatsoever ye do in word"—then words are doings, and in many respects the most important of our doings. Some words, though they fade off the ear so quickly, outlast all contemporary deeds, and are more lasting than brass. Not only "the word of the Lord," but, in a very solemn sense, the word of man "endureth for ever."

Do all "in the name of the Lord Jesus." That means at least two things—in obedience to His authority, and in dependence on His help. These two are the twin talismans which change the whole character of our actions, and preserve us, in doing them, from every harm. That name hallows and ennobles all work. Nothing can be so small but this will make it great, nor so monotonous and tame but this will make it beautiful and fresh. The name now, as of old, casts out devils and stills storms. "For the name of the Lord Jesus" is the silken padding which makes our yokes easy. It brings the sudden strength which makes our burdens light. We may write it over all our actions. If there be any on which we dare not inscribe it, they are not for us.

Thus done in the name of Christ, all deeds will become thanksgiving, and so reach their highest consecration and their truest blessedness. "Giving thanks to God the Father through Him" is ever to accompany the work in the name of Jesus. The exhortation to thanksgiving, which is in a sense the Alpha and the Omega of the Christian life, is perpetually on the Apostle's lips, because thankfulness should be in perpetual operation in our hearts. It is so important because it presupposes all-important things, and because it certainly leads to every Christian grace. For continual thankfulness there must be a continual direction of mind towards God and towards the great gifts of our salvation in Jesus Christ. There must be a continual going forth of our love and our desire to these, that is to say—thankfulness rests on the reception and the joyful appropriation of the mercies of God, brought to us by our Lord. And it underlies all acceptable service and all happy obedience. The servant who thinks of God as a harsh exactor is slothful; the servant who thinks of Him as the "giving God" rejoices in toil. He who brings his work in order to be paid for it will get no wages, and turn out no work worth any. He who brings it because he feels that he has been paid plentiful wages beforehand, of which he will never earn the least mite, will present service well pleasing to the Master.

Se we should keep thoughts of Jesus Christ, and of all we owe to Him, ever before us in our common work, in shop and mill and counting-house, in study and street and home. We should try to bring all our actions more under their influence, and, moved by the mercies of God, should yield ourselves living thank-offerings to Him, who is the sin-offering for us. If, as every fresh duty arises, we hear Christ saying, "This do in remembrance of Me," all life will become a true communion with Him, and every common vessel will be as a sacramental

chalice, and the bells of the horses will bear the same inscription as the high priest's mitre—"Holiness to the Lord." To lay work on that altar sanctifies both the giver and the gift. Presented through Him, by whom all blessings come to man and all thanks go to God, and kindled by the flame of gratitude, our poor deeds, for all their grossness and earthliness, shall go up in curling wreaths of incense, an odour of a sweet smell acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

COLOSSIANS iii. 18-iv. 1 (R. V.).

THIS chapter deals with the Christian family, as made up of husband and wife, children, and servants. In the family, Christianity has most signally displayed its power of refining, ennobling, and sanctifying earthly relationships. Indeed, one may say that domestic life, as seen in thousands of Christian homes, is purely a Christian creation, and would have been a new revelation to the heathenism of Colossæ, as it is to-day in many a mission field.

We do not know what may have led Paul to dwell with special emphasis on the domestic duties, in this letter, and in the contemporaneous Epistle to the Ephesians. He does so, and the parallel section there should be carefully compared throughout with this paragraph. The former is considerably more expanded, and may have been written after the verses before us; but, however that may be, the verbal coincidences and variations in the two sections are very interesting as illustrations of the way in which a mind fully charged with a theme will freely repeat itself, and use the same words in different combinations and with infinite shades of modification.

The precepts given are extremely simple and obvious. Domestic happiness and family Christianity are made up of very homely elements. One duty is prescribed for the one member of each of the three family groups, and varying forms of another for the other. The wife, the child, the servant are bid to obey; the husband to love, the father to show his love in gentle considerateness; the master to yield his servants their dues. Like some perfume distilled from common flowers that grow on every bank, the domestic piety which makes home a house of God, and a gate of heaven, is prepared from these two simples—obedience and love. These are all.

We have here then the ideal Christian household in the three ordinary relationships which make up the family; wife and husband, children and father, servant and master.

I. The Reciprocal Duties of wife and husband—subjection and love.

The duty of the wife is "subjection," and it is enforced on the ground that it is "fitting in the Lord"—that is, "it is," or perhaps "it became" at the time of conversion, "the conduct corresponding to or befitting the condition of being in the Lord." In more modern language—the Christian ideal of the wife's duty has for its very centre—subjection.

Some of us will smile at that; some of us will think it an old-fashioned notion, a survival of a more barbarous theory of marriage than this century recognises. But, before we decide upon the correctness of the apostolic precept, let us make quite sure of its meaning. Now, if we turn to the corresponding passage in Ephesians, we find that marriage is regarded from a high and sacred point of view, as being an earthly shadow and faint adumbration of the union between Christ and the Church.

To Paul, all human and earthly relationships were moulded after the patterns of things in the heavens, and the whole fleeting visible life of man was a parable of the "things which are" in the spiritual realm. Most chiefly, the holy and mysterious union of man and woman in marriage is fashioned in the likeness of the only union which is closer and more mysterious than itself, namely that between Christ and His Church.

Such then as are the nature and the spring of the Church's "subjection" to Christ, such will be the nature and the spring of the wife's "subjection" to the husband. That is to say, it is a subjection of which love is the very soul and animating principle. In a true marriage, as in the loving obedience of a believing soul to Christ, the wife submits not because she has found a master, but because her heart has found its rest. Everything harsh or degrading melts away from the requirement when thus looked at. It is a joy to serve where the heart is engaged, and that is eminently true of the feminine nature. For its full satisfaction, a woman's heart needs to look up where it loves. She has certainly the fullest wedded life who can "reverence" her husband. For its full satisfaction, a woman's heart needs to serve where it loves. That is the same as saying that a woman's love is, in the general, nobler, purer, more unselfish than a man's, and therein, quite as much as in physical constitution, is laid the foundation of that Divine ideal of marriage, which places the wife's delight and dignity in sweet loving subjection.

Of course the subjection has its limitations. "We must obey God rather than man" bounds the field of all human authority and control. Then there are cases in which, on the principle of "the tools to the hands that can use them," the rule falls naturally to the wife as the stronger character. Popular sarcasm, however, shows that such instances are felt to be contrary to the true ideal, and such a wife lacks something of repose for her heart.

No doubt, too, since Paul wrote, and very largely by Christian influences, women have been educated and elevated, so as to make mere subjection impossible now, if ever it were so. Woman's quick instinct as to persons, her finer wisdom, her purer discernment as to moral questions, make it in a thousand cases the wisest thing a man can do to listen to the "subtle flow of silver-paced counsel" which his wife gives him. All such considerations are fully consistent with this apostolic teaching, and it remains true that the wife who does not reverence and lovingly obey is to be pitied if she cannot, and to be condemned if she will not.

And what of the husband's duty? He is to love, and because he loves, not to be harsh or bitter, in word, look, or act. The parallel in Ephesians adds the solemn, elevating thought, that a man's love to the woman, whom he has

made his own, is to be like Christ's to the Church. Patient and generous, utterly self-forgetting and self-sacrificing, demanding nothing, grudging nothing, giving all, not shrinking from the extreme of suffering and pain and death itself—that he may bless and help—such was the Lord's love to His bride, such is to be a Christian husband's love to his wife. That solemn example, which lifts the whole emotion high above mere passion or selfish affection, carries a great lesson too as to the connection between man's love and woman's "subjection." The former is to evoke the latter, just as in the heavenly pattern, Christ's love melts and moves human wills to glad obedience, which is liberty. We do not say that a wife is utterly absolved from obedience where a husband fails in self-forgetting love, though certainly it does not lie in his mouth to accuse, whose fault is graver than, and the origin of, hers. But, without going so far as that, we may recognise the true order to be that the husband's love, self-sacrificing and all-bestowing, is meant to evoke the wife's love, delighting in service, and proud to crown him her king.

Where there is such love, there will be no question of mere command and obedience, no tenacious adherence to rights, or jealous defence of independence. Law will be transformed into choice. To obey will be joy; to serve, the natural expression of the heart. Love uttering a wish speaks music to love listening; and love obeying the wish is free and a queen. Such sacred beauty may light up wedded life, if it catches a gleam from the fountain of all light, and shines by reflection from the love that binds Christ to His Church as the links of the golden beams bind the sun to the planet. Husbands and wives are to see to it that this supreme consecration purifies and raises their love. Young men and maidens are to remember that the nobleness and heart-repose of their whole life may be made or marred by marriage, and to take heed where they fix their affections. If there be not unity in the deepest thing of all, love to Christ, the sacredness and completeness will fade away from any love. But if a man and woman love and marry "in the Lord," He will be "in the midst," walking between them, a third who will make them one, and that threefold cord will not be quickly broken.

II. The Reciprocal Duties of children and parents—obedience and gentle, loving authority.

The injunction to children is laconic, decisive, universal. "Obey your parents in all things." Of course, there is one limitation to that. If God's command looks one way and a parent's the opposite, disobedience is duty—but such extreme case is probably the only one which Christian ethics admit as an exception to the rule. The Spartan brevity of the command is enforced by one consideration, "for this is well-pleasing in the Lord," as the Revised Version rightly reads, instead of "to the Lord," as in the Authorised, thus making an exact parallel to the former "fitting in the Lord." Not only to Christ, but to all who can appreciate the beauty of goodness, is filial obedience beautiful. The parallel in Ephesians substitutes "for this is right," appealing to the natural conscience. Right and fair in itself, it is accordant with the law stamped on the very relationship, and it is witnessed as such by the instinctive approbation which it evokes.

No doubt, the moral sentiment of Paul's age stretched parental authority to an extreme, and we need not hesitate to admit that the Christian idea of a father's power and a child's obedience has been much softened by Christianity; but the softening has come from the greater prominence given to love, rather than from the limitation given to obedience.

Our present domestic life seems to me to stand sorely in need of Paul's injunction. One cannot but see that there is great laxity in this matter in many Christian households, in reaction perhaps from the too great severity of past times. Many causes lead to this unwholesome relaxation of parental authority. In our great cities, especially among the commercial classes, children are generally better educated than their fathers and mothers, they know less of early struggles, and one often sees a sense of inferiority making a parent hesitate to command, as well as a misplaced tenderness making him hesitate to forbid. A very misplaced and cruel tenderness it is to say "would you like?" when he ought to say "I wish." It is unkind to lay on young shoulders "the weight of too much liberty," and to introduce young hearts too soon to the sad responsibility of choosing between good and evil. It were better and more loving by far to put off that day, and to let the children feel that in the safe nest of home, their feeble and ignorant goodness is sheltered behind a strong barrier of command, and their lives simplified by having the one duty of obedience. By many parents the advice is needed—consult your children less, command them more.

And as for children, here is the one thing which God would have them do: "Obey your parents in all things." As fathers used to say when I was a boy—"not only obedience, but prompt obedience." It is right. That should be enough. But children may also remember that it is "pleasing"—fair and good to see, making them agreeable in the eyes of all whose approbation is worth having, and pleasing to themselves, saving them from many a bitter thought in after days, when the grave has closed over father and mother. One remembers the story of how Dr. Johnson, when a man, stood in the market place at Lichfield, bareheaded, with the rain pouring on him, in remorseful remembrance of boyish disobedience to his dead father. There is nothing bitterer than the too late tears for wrongs done to those who are gone beyond the reach of our penitence. "Children, obey your parents in all things," that you may be spared the sting of conscience for childish faults, which may be set tingling and smarting again even in old age.

The law for parents is addressed to "fathers," partly because a mother's tenderness has less need of the warning "provoke not your children," than a father's more rigorous rule usually has, and partly because the father is regarded as the head of the household. The advice is full of practical sagacity, How do parents provoke their children? By unreasonable commands, by perpetual restrictions, by capricious jerks at the bridle, alternating with as capricious dropping of the reins altogether, by not governing their own tempers, by shrill or stern tones where quiet, soft ones would do, by frequent checks and rebukes, and sparing praise. And what is sure to follow such mistreatment by father or mother? First, as the parallel passage in

Ephesians has it, "wrath"—bursts of temper, for which probably the child is punished and the parent is guilty—and then spiritless listlessness and apathy. "I cannot please him whatever I do," leads to a rankling sense of injustice, and then to recklessness—"it is useless to try any more." And when a child or a man loses heart, there will be no more obedience. Paul's theory of the training of children is closely connected with his central doctrine, that love is the life of service, and faith the parent of righteousness. To him hope and gladness and confident love underlie all obedience. When a child loves and trusts, he will obey. When he fears and has to think of his father as capricious, exacting, or stern, he will do like the man in the parable, who was afraid because he thought of his master as austere, reaping where he did not sow, and therefore went and hid his talent. Children's obedience must be fed on love and praise. Fear paralyses activity, and kills service, whether it cowers in the heart of a boy to his father, or of a man to his Father in heaven.

So parents are to let the sunshine of their smile ripen their children's love to fruit of obedience, and remember that frost in spring scatters the blossoms on the grass. Many a parent, especially many a father, drives his child into evil by keeping him at a distance. He should make his boy a companion and playmate, teach him to think of his father as his confidant, try to keep his child nearer to himself than to anybody beside, and then his authority will be absolute, his opinions an oracle, and his lightest wish a law. Is not the kingdom of Jesus Christ based on His becoming a brother and one of ourselves, and is it not wielded in gentleness and enforced by love? Is it not the most absolute of rules? And should not the parental authority be like it—having a reed for a sceptre, lowliness and gentleness being stronger to rule and to sway than the "rods of iron" or of gold which earthly monarchs wield?

There is added to this precept, in Ephesians, an injunction on the positive side of parental duty: "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." I fear that is a duty fallen woefully into disuse in many Christian households. Many parents think it wise to send their children away from home for their education, and so hand over their moral and religious training to teachers. That may be right, but it makes the fulfilment of this precept all but impossible. Others, who have their children beside them, are too busy all the week, and too fond of "rest" on Sunday. Many send their children to a Sunday school chiefly that they themselves may have a quiet house and a sound sleep in the afternoon. Every Christian minister, if he keeps his eyes open, must see that there is no religious instruction worth calling by the name in a very large number of professedly Christian households; and he is bound to press very earnestly on his hearers the question, whether the Christian fathers and mothers among them do their duty in this matter. Many of them, I fear, have never opened their lips to their children on religious subjects. Is it not a grief and a shame that men and women with some religion in them, and loving their little ones dearly, should be tongue-tied before them on the most important of all things? What can come of it but what does come of it so often that it saddens one to see how frequently it occurs—that the children drift away from a faith which their parents did not care enough about to teach it to them? A silent father makes prodigal sons, and many a grey head has been brought down with sorrow to the grave, and many a mother's heart broken, because he and she neglected their plain duty, which can be handed over to no schools or masters—the duty of religious instruction. "These words which I command thee, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house."

III. The Reciprocal Duties of servants and masters—obedience and justice.

The first thing to observe here is that these "servants" are slaves, not persons who have voluntarily given their work for wages. The relation of Christianity to slavery is too wide a subject to be touched here. It must be enough to point out that Paul recognises that "sum of all villainies," gives instructions to both parties in it, never says one word in condemnation of it. More remarkable still; the messenger who carried this letter to Colossæ carried in the same bag the Epistle to Philemon, and was accompanied by the fugitive slave Onesimus, on whose neck Paul bound again the chain, so to speak, with his own hands. And yet the gospel which Paul preached has in it principles which cut up slavery by the roots; as we read in this very letter, "In Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free." Why then did not Christ and His apostles make war against slavery? For the same reason for which they did not make war against *any* political or social institutions. "First make the tree good and his fruit good." The only way to reform institutions is to elevate and quicken the general conscience, and then the evil will be outgrown, left behind, or thrown aside. Mould men and the men will mould institutions. So Christianity did not set itself to fell this upas tree, which would have been a long and dangerous task; but girdled it, as we may say, stripped the bark off it, and left it to die—and it has died in all Christian lands now.

But the principles laid down here are quite as applicable to our form of domestic and other service as to the slaves and masters of Colossæ.

Note then the extent of the servant's obedience—"in all things." Here, of course, as in former cases, is there presupposed the limit of supreme obedience to God's commands; that being safe, all else is to give way to the duty of submission. It is a stern command, that seems all on the side of the masters. It might strike a chill into many a slave, who had been drawn to the gospel by the hope of finding some little lightening of the yoke that pressed so heavily on his poor galled neck, and of hearing some voice speaking in tenderer tones than those of harsh command. Still more emphatically, and, as it might seem, still more harshly, the Apostle goes on to insist on the inward completeness of the obedience—"not with eyeservice (a word of Paul's own coining) as men-pleasers." We have a proverb about the worth of the master's eye, which bears witness that the same fault still clings to hired service. One has only to look at the next set of bricklayers one sees on a scaffold, or of haymakers one comes across in a field, to see it. The vice was venial in slaves; it is inexcusable, because it darkens into theft, in paid servants—and it spreads far and wide.

All scamped work, all productions of man's hand or brain which are got up to look better than they are, all fussy parade of diligence when under inspection and slackness afterwards—and all their like which infect and infest every trade and profession, are transfixed by the sharp point of this precept.

"But in singleness of heart," that is, with undivided motive, which is the antithesis and the cure for "eyeservice"—and "fearing God," which is opposed to "pleasing men." Then follows the positive injunction, covering the whole ground of action and lifting the constrained obedience to the earthly master up into the sacred and serene loftiness of religious duty, "whatsoever ye do, work heartily," or from the soul. The word for work is stronger than that for do, and implies effort and toil. They are to put all their power into their work, and not be afraid of hard toil. And they are not only to bend their backs, but their wills, and to labour "from the soul," that is, cheerfully and with interest—a hard lesson for a slave and asking more than could be expected from human nature, as many of them would, no doubt, think. Paul goes on to transfigure the squalor and misery of the slave's lot by a sudden beam of light—"as to the Lord"—your true "Master," for it is the same word as in the previous verse —"and not unto men." Do not think of your tasks as only enjoined by harsh, capricious, selfish men, but lift your thoughts to Christ, who is your Lord, and glorify all these sordid duties by seeing His will in them. He only who works as "to the Lord" will work "heartily." The thought of Christ's command, and of my poor toil as done for His sake, will change constraint into cheerfulness, and make unwelcome tasks pleasant, and monotonous ones fresh, and trivial ones great. It will evoke new powers and renewed consecration. In that atmosphere, the dim flame of servile obedience will burn more brightly, as a lamp plunged into a jar of pure oxygen.

The stimulus of a great hope for the ill-used, unpaid slave is added. Whatever their earthly masters might fail to give them, the true Master whom they really served would accept no work for which He did not return more than sufficient wages. "From the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance." Blows and scanty food and poor lodging may be all that they get from their owners for all their sweat and toil, but if they are Christ's slaves, they will be treated no more as slaves, but as sons, and receive a son's portion, the exact recompense which consists of the "inheritance." The juxtaposition of the two ideas of the slave and the inheritance evidently hints at the unspoken thought, that they are heirs because they are sons—a thought which might well lift up bowed backs and brighten dull faces. The hope of that reward came like an angel into the smoky huts and hopeless lives of these poor slaves. It shone athwart all the gloom and squalor, and taught patience beneath "the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely." Through long, weary generations it has lived in the hearts of men driven to God by man's tyranny, and forced to clutch at heaven's brightness to keep them from being made mad by earth's blackness. It may irradiate our poor lives, especially when we fail, as we all do sometimes, to get recognition of our work, or fruit from it. If we labour for man's appreciation or gratitude, we shall certainly be disappointed; but if for Christ, we have abundant wages beforehand, and we shall have an over-abundant requital, the munificence of which will make us more ashamed of our unworthy service than anything else could do. Christ remains in no man's debt. "Who hath first given, and it shall be recompensed to him again?"

The last word to the slave is a warning against neglect of duty. There is to be a double recompense—to the slave of Christ the portion of a son; to the wrongdoer retribution "for the wrong that he has done." Then, though slavery was itself a wrong, though the master who held a man in bondage was himself inflicting the greatest of all wrongs, yet Paul will have the slave think that he still has duties to his master. That is part of Paul's general position as to slavery. He will not wage war against it, but for the present accept it. Whether he saw the full bearing of the gospel on that and other infamous institutions may be questioned. He has given us the principles which will destroy them, but he is no revolutionist, and so his present counsel is to remember the master's rights, even though they be founded on wrong, and he has no hesitation in condemning and predicting retribution for evil things done by a slave to his master. A superior's injustice does not warrant an inferior's breach of moral law, though it may excuse it. Two blacks do not make a white. Herein lies the condemnation of all the crimes which enslaved nations and classes have done, of many a deed which has been honoured and sung, of the sanguinary cruelties of servile revolts, as well as of the questionable means to which labour often resorts in modern industrial warfare. The homely, plain principle, that a man does not receive the right to break God's laws because he is ill-treated, would clear away much fog from some people's notions of how to advance the cause of the oppressed.

But, on the other hand, this warning may look towards the masters also; and probably the same double reference is also to be discerned in the closing words to the slaves, "and there is no respect of persons." The servants were naturally tempted to think that God was on their side, as indeed He was, but also to think that the great coming day of judgment was mostly meant to be terrible to tyrants and oppressors, and so to look forward to it with a fierce un-Christian joy, as well as with a false confidence built only on their present misery. They would be apt to think that God did "respect persons," in the opposite fashion from that of a partial judge—namely, that He would incline the scale in favour of the ill-used, the poor, the down-trodden; that they would have an easy test and a light sentence, while His frowns and His severity would be kept for the powerful and the rich who had ground the faces of the poor and kept back the hire of the labourer. It was therefore a needful reminder for them, and for us all, that that judgment has nothing to do with earthly conditions, but only with conduct and character; that sorrow and calamity here do not open heaven's gates hereafter, and that the slave and master are tried by the same law.

The series of precepts closes with a brief but most pregnant word to masters. They are bid to give to their slaves "that which is just and equal," that is to say, "equitable." A startling

criterion for a master's duty to the slave who was denied to have any rights at all. They were chattels, not persons. A master might, in regard to them, do what he liked with his own; he might crucify or torture, or commit any crime against manhood either in body or soul, and no voice would question or forbid. How astonished Roman lawgivers would have been if they could have heard Paul talking about justice and equity as applied to a slave! What a strange new dialect it must have sounded to the slave-owners in the Colossian Church! They would not see how far the principle, thus quietly introduced, was to carry succeeding ages; they could not dream of the great tree that was to spring from this tiny seed-precept; but no doubt the instinct which seldom fails an unjustly privileged class, would make them blindly dislike the exhortation, and feel as if they were getting out of their depth when they were bid to consider what was "right" and "equitable" in their dealings with their slaves.

The Apostle does not define what is "right and equal." That will come. The main thing is to drive home the conviction that there are duties owing to slaves, inferiors, employes. We are far enough from a satisfactory discharge of these yet; but, at any rate, everybody now admits the principle—and we have mainly to thank Christianity for that. Slowly the general conscience is coming to recognise that simple truth more and more clearly, and its application is becoming more decisive with each generation. There is much to be done before society is organised on that principle, but the time is coming—and till it is come, there will be no peace. All masters and employers of labour, in their mills and warehouses, are bid to base their relations to "hands" and servants on the one firm foundation of "justice." Paul does not say, Give your servants what is kind and patronising. He wants a great deal more than that. Charity likes to come in and supply the wants which would never have been felt had there been equity. An ounce of justice is sometimes worth a ton of charity.

This duty of the masters is enforced by the same thought which was to stimulate the servants to their tasks: "ye also have a Master in heaven." That is not only stimulus, but it is pattern. I said that Paul did not specify what was just and right, and that his precept might therefore be objected to as vague. Does the introduction of this thought of the master's Master in heaven take away any of the vagueness? If Christ is our Master, then we are to look to Him to see what a master ought to be, and to try to be masters like that. That is precise enough, is it not? That grips tight enough, does it not? Give your servants what you expect and need to get from Christ. If we try to live that commandment for twenty-four hours, it will probably not be its vagueness of which we complain.

"Ye have a Master in heaven" is the great principle on which all Christian duty reposes. Christ's command is my law, His will is supreme, His authority absolute, His example all-sufficient. My soul, my life, my all are His. My will is not my own. My possessions are not my own. My being is not my own. All duty is elevated into obedience to Him, and obedience to Him, utter and absolute, is dignity and freedom. We are Christ's slaves, for He has bought us for Himself, by giving Himself for us. Let that great sacrifice win our heart's love and our perfect submission. "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant, Thou hast loosed my bonds." Then all earthly relationships will be fulfilled by us; and we shall move among men, breathing blessing and raying out brightness, when in all we remember that we have a Master in heaven, and do all our work from the soul as to Him and not to men.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PRECEPTS FOR THE INNERMOST AND OUTERMOST LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iv. 2-6 (R. V.).

So ends the ethical portion of the Epistle. A glance over the series of practical exhortations, from the beginning of the preceding chapter onwards, will show that, in general terms we may say that they deal successively with a Christian's duties to himself, the Church, and the family. And now, these last advices touch the two extremes of life, the first of them having reference to the hidden life of prayer, and the second and third to the outward, busy life of the market-place and the street. That bringing together of the extremes seems to be the link of connection here. The Christian life is first regarded as gathered into itself—coiled as it were on its centre, like some strong spring. Next, it is regarded as it operates in the world, and, like the uncoiling spring, gives motion to wheels and pinions. These two sides of experience and duty are often hard to blend harmoniously. The conflict between busy Martha, who serves, and quiet Mary, who only sits and gazes, goes on in every age and in every heart. Here we may find, in some measure, the principle of reconciliation between their antagonistic claims. Here is, at all events, the protest against allowing either to oust the other. Continual prayer is to blend with unwearied action. We are so to walk the dusty ways of life as to be ever in the secret place of the Most High. "Continue steadfastly in prayer," and withal let there be no unwholesome withdrawal from the duties and relationships of the outer world, but let the prayer pass into, first, a wise walk, and second, an ever-gracious speech.

I. So we have here, first, an exhortation to a hidden life of constant prayer.

The word rendered "continue" in the Authorised Version, and more fully in the Revised Version by "continue steadfastly," is frequently found in reference to prayer, as well as in other connections. A mere enumeration of some of these instances may help to illustrate its full meaning. "We will give ourselves to prayer," said the apostles in proposing the creation of the office of deacon. "Continuing instant in prayer," says Paul to the Roman Church. "They continuing daily with one accord in the Temple" is the description of the early believers after Pentecost. Simon Magus is said to have "continued with Philip," where there is evidently the idea of close adherence as well as of uninterrupted companionship. These examples seem to show that the word implies both earnestness and continuity; so that this injunction not only covers the ground of Paul's other ex-

hortation, "Pray without ceasing," but includes fervour also.

The Christian life, then, ought to be one of unbroken prayer.

What manner of prayer can that be which is to be continuous through a life that must needs be full of toil on outward things? How can such a precept be obeyed? Surely there is no need for paring down its comprehensiveness, and saying that it merely means—a very frequent recurrence to devout exercises, as often as the pressure of daily duties will permit. That is not the direction in which the harmonising of such a precept with the obvious necessities of our position is to be sought. We must seek it in a more inward and spiritual notion of prayer. We must separate between the form and the substance, the treasure and the carthen vessel which carries it. What is prayer? Not the utterance of words—they are but the vehicle; but the attitude of the spirit. Communion, aspiration, and submission, these three are the elements of prayer—and these three may be diffused through a life. It is possible, though difficult. There may be unbroken communion, a constant consciousness of God's presence, and of our contact with Him, thrilling through our souls and freshening them, like some breath of spring reaching the toilers in choky factories and busy streets; or even if the communion do not run like an absolutely unbroken line of light through our lives, the points may be so near together as all but to touch. In such communion words are needless. When spirits draw closest together there is no need for speech. Silently the heart may be kept fragrant with God's felt presence, and sunny with the light of His face. There are towns nestling beneath the Alps, every narrow filthy alley of which looks to the great solemn snow-peaks, and the inhabitants, amid all the squalor of their surroundings, have that apocalypse of wonder ever before them, if they would only lift their eyes. So we, if we will, may live with the majesties and beauties of the great white throne and of Him that sat on it closing every vista and filling the end of every commonplace passage in our lives.

In like manner, there may be a continual, unspoken and unbroken presence of the second element of prayer, which is aspiration, or desire after God. All circumstances, whether duty, sorrow, or joy, should and may be used to stamp more deeply on my consciousness the sense of my weakness and need; and every moment, with its experience of God's swift and punctual grace, and all my communion with Him which unveils to me His beauty—should combine to move longings for Him, for more of Him. The very deepest cry of the heart which understands its own yearnings is for the living God; and perpetual as the hunger of the spirit for the food which will stay its profound desires, will be the prayer, though it may often be voiceless, of the soul which knows where alone that food is.

Continual too may be our submission to His will, which is an essential of all prayer. Many people's notion is that our prayer is urging our wishes on God, and that His answer is giving us what we desire. But true prayer is the meeting in harmony of God's will and man's, and its deepest expression is not, Do this, because I desire it, O Lord; but, I do this because Thou desirest it, O Lord. That submission may be the very spring of all life, and whatsoever work is done in such spirit, however "secular" and however small it be, were it making buttons, is truly prayer.

So there should run all through our lives the music of that continual prayer, heard beneath all our varying occupations like some prolonged deep bass note, that bears up and gives dignity to the lighter melody that rises and falls and changes above it, like the spray on the crest of a great wave. Our lives will then be noble and grave, and woven into a harmonious unity, when they are based upon continual communion with, continual desire after, and continual submission to, God. If they are not, they will be worth nothing and will come to nothing.

But such continuity of prayer is not to be attained without effort; therefore Paul goes on to say, "Watching therein." We are apt to do drowsily whatever we do constantly. Men fall asleep at any continuous work. There is also the constant influence of externals, drawing our thoughts away from their true home in God, so that if we are to keep up continuous devotion, we shall have to rouse ourselves often when in the very act of dropping off to sleep. "Awake up, my glory!" we shall often have to say to our souls. Do we not all know that subtly approaching languor? and have we not often caught ourselves in the very act of falling asleep at our prayers? We must make distinct and resolute efforts to rouse ourselves—we must concentrate our attention and apply the needed stimulants, and bring the interest and activity of our whole nature to bear on this work of continual prayer, else it will become drowsy mumbling as of a man but half awake. The world has strong opiates for the soul, and we must steadfastly resist their influence, if we are to "continue in prayer."

One way of so watching is to have and to observe definite times of spoken prayer. We hear much now-a-days about the small value of times and forms of prayer, and how, as I have been saying, true prayer is independent of these, and needs no words. All that, of course, is true; but when the practical conclusion is drawn that therefore we can do without the outward form, a grave mistake, full of mischief, is committed. I do not, for my part, believe in a devotion diffused through a life and never concentrated and coming to the surface in visible outward acts or audible words; and, as far as I have seen, the men whose religion is spread all through their lives most really are the men who keep the central reservoir full, if I may so say, by regular and frequent hours and words of prayer. The Christ, whose whole life was devotion and communion with the Father, had His nights on the mountains, and rising up a great while before day, He watched unto prayer. We must do the like.

One more word has still to be said. This continual prayer is to be "with thanksgiving"—again the injunction so frequent in this letter, in such various connections. Every prayer should be blended with gratitude, without the perfume of which, the incense of devotion lacks one element of fragrance. The sense of need, or the consciousness of sin, may evoke "strong crying and tears," but the completest prayer rises confident from a grateful heart, which weaves memory into hope, and asks much be-

cause it has received much. A true recognition of the lovingkindness of the past has much to do with making our communion sweet, our desires believing, our submission cheerful. Thankfulness is the feather that wings the arrow of prayer—the height from which our souls rise most easily to the sky.

And now the Apostle's tone softens from exhortation to entreaty, and with very sweet and touching humility he begs a supplemental corner in their prayers. "Withal praying also for us." The "withal" and "also" have a tone of lowliness in them, while the "us," including as it does Timothy, who is associated with him in the superscription of the letter, and possibly others also, increases the impression of modesty. The subject of their prayers for Paul and the others is to be that "God may open unto us a door for the word." That phrase apparently means an unhindered opportunity of preaching the gospel, for the consequence of the door's being opened is added—"to speak (so that I may speak) the mystery of Christ." The special reason for this prayer is, "for which I am also (in addition to my other sufferings) in bonds."

He was a prisoner. He cared little about that or about the fetters on his wrists, so far as his own comfort was concerned; but his spirit chafed at the restraint laid upon him in spreading the good news of Christ, though he had been able to do much in his prison, both among the Prætorian guard, and throughout the whole population of Rome. Therefore he would engage his friends to ask God to open the prison doors, as He had done for Peter, not that Paul might come out, but that the gospel might. The personal was swallowed up; all that he cared for was to do his work.

But he wants their prayers for more than that —"that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." This is probably explained most naturally as meaning his endowment with power to set forth the message in a manner adequate to its greatness. When he thought of what it was that he, unworthy, had to preach, its majesty and wonderfulness brought a kind of awe over his spirit; and endowed, as he was, with apostolic functions and apostolic grace; conscious, as he was, of being anointed and inspired by God, he yet felt that the richness of the treasure made the earthen vessel seem terribly unworthy to bear it. His utterances seemed to himself poor and unmelodious beside the majestic harmonies of the gospel. He could not soften his voice to breathe tenderly enough a message of such love, nor give it strength enough to peal forth a message of such tremendous import and world-wide destination.

If Paul felt his conception of the greatness of the gospel dwarfing into nothing his words when he tried to preach it, what must every other true minister of Christ feel? If he, in the fulness of his inspiration, besought a place in his brethren's prayers, how much more must they need it, who try with stammering tongues to preach the truth that made his fiery words seem ice? Every such man must turn to those who love him and listen to his poor presentment of the riches of Christ, with Paul's entreaty. His friends cannot do a kinder thing to him than to bear him on their hearts in their prayers to God.

II. We have here next, a couple of precepts, which spring at a bound from the inmost secret of the Christian life to its circumference, and refer to the outward life in regard to the non-Christian world, enjoining, in view of it, a wise walk and gracious speech.

"Walk in wisdom towards them that are without." Those that are within are those who have "fled for refuge" to Christ, and are within the fold, the fortress, the ark. Men who sit safe within while the storm howls, may simply think with selfish complacency of the poor wretches exposed to its fierceness. The phrase may express spiritual pride and even contempt. All close corporations tend to generate dislike and scorn of outsiders, and the Church has had its own share of such feeling; but there is no trace of anything of the sort here. Rather are there pathos and pity in the word, and a recognition that their sad condition gives these outsiders a claim on Christian men, who are bound to go out to their help and bring them in. Precisely because they are "without" do those within owe them a wise walk, that "if any will not hear the word, they may without the word be won." The thought is in some measure parallel to our Lord's words, of which perhaps it is a reminiscence. "Behold I send you forth"—a strange thing for a careful shepherd to do—"as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents." Think of that picture—the handful of cowering frightened creatures huddled against each other, and ringed round by that yelping, white-toothed crowd, ready to tear them to pieces! So are Christ's followers in the world. Of course, things have changed in many respects since those days; partly because persecution has gone out of fashion, and partly because "the world" has been largely influenced by Christian morality, and partly because the Church has been largely secularised. The temperature of the two has become nearly equalised over a large tract of professing Christendom. So a tolerably good understanding and a brisk trade have sprung up between the sheep and the wolves. But for all that, there is fundamental discord, however changed may be its exhibition, and if we are true to our Master and insist on shaping our lives by His rules, we shall find out that there is.

We need, therefore, to "walk in wisdom" towards the non-Christian world; that is, to let practical prudence shape all our conduct. If we are Christians, we have to live under the eyes of vigilant and not altogether friendly observers, who derive satisfaction and harm from any inconsistency of ours. A plainly Christian life that needs no commentary to exhibit its harmony with Christ's commandments is the first duty we owe to them.

And the wisdom which is to mould our lives in view of these outsiders will "discern both time and judgment," will try to take the measure of men and act accordingly. Common sense and practical sagacity are important accompaniments of Christian zeal. What a singularly complex character, in this respect, was Paul's—enthusiastic and yet capable of such diplomatic adaptation; and withal never dropping to cunning, nor sacrificing truth! Enthusiasts who despise worldly wisdom, and therefore often lash themselves against stone walls, are not rare; cool calculators who abhor all generous glow of feeling and have ever a pailful of

cold water for any project which shows it, are only too common—but fire and ice together, like a volcano with glaciers streaming down its cone, are rare. Fervour married to tact, common sense which keeps close to earth and enthusiasm which flames heaven-high, are a rare combination. It is not often that the same voice can say, "I count not my life dear to myself," and "I became all things to all men."

A dangerous principle that last, a very slippery piece of ground to get upon!—say people, and quite truly. It is dangerous, and one thing only will keep a man's feet when on it, and that is, that his wise adaptation shall be perfectly unselfish, and that he shall ever keep clear before him the great object to be gained, which is nothing personal, but "that I might by all means save some." If that end is held in view, we shall be saved from the temptation of hiding or maiming the very truth which we desire should be received, and our wise adaptation of ourselves and of our message to the needs and weaknesses and peculiarities of those "who are without," will not degenerate into handling the word of God deceitfully. Paul advised "walking in wisdom;" he abhorred "walking in craftiness."

We owe them that are without such a walk as may tend to bring them in. Our life is to a large extent their Bible. They know a great deal more about Christianity as they see it in us than as it is revealed in Christ or recorded in Scripture—and if, as seen in us, it does not strike them as very attractive, small wonder if they still prefer to remain where they are. Let us take care lest instead of being doorkeepers to the house of the Lord, to beckon passers-by and draw them in, we block the doorway, and keep them from seeing the wonders within.

The Apostle adds a special way in which this wisdom shows itself—namely, "redeeming the time." The last word here does not denote time in general, but a definite season, or opportunity. The lesson, then, is not that of making the best use of all the moments as they fly, precious as that lesson is, but that of discerning and eagerly using appropriate opportunities for Christian service. The figure is simple enough; to "buy up" means to make one's own. "Make much of time, let not advantage slip," is an advice in exactly the same spirit. Two things are included in it; the watchful study of characters, so as to know the right times to bring influences to bear on them, and an earnest diligence in utilising these for the highest purposes. We have not acted wisely towards those who are without unless we have used every opportunity to draw them in.

But besides a wise walk, there is to be "gracious speech." "Let your speech be always with grace." A similar juxtaposition of "wisdom" and "grace" occurred in chapter iii. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . . singing with grace in your hearts"; and there as here, "grace" may be taken either in its lower æsthetic sense, or in its higher spiritual. It may mean either favour, agreeableness, or the Divine gift, bestowed by the indwelling Spirit. The former is supposed by many good expositors to be the meaning here. But is it a Christian's duty to make his speech always agreeable? Sometimes it is his plain duty to make it very disagreeable indeed. If our speech is to be true, and wholesome, it must sometimes rasp and go against the grain. Its pleasantness depends on the inclinations of the hearers rather than on the will of the honest speaker. If he is to "redeem the time" and "walk wisely to them that are without," his speech cannot be always with such grace. The advice to make our words always pleasing may be a very good maxim for worldly success, but it smacks of Chesterfield's Letters rather than of Paul's Epistles.

We must go much deeper for the true import of this exhortation. It is substantially this—whether you can speak smooth things or no, and whether your talk is always directly religious or no—and it need not and cannot always be that—let there ever be in it the manifest influence of God's Spirit, Who dwells in the Christian heart, and will mould and sanctify your speech. Of you, as of your Master, let it be true, "Grace is poured into thy lips." He in whose spirit the Divine Spirit abides will be truly "Golden-mouthed"; his speech shall distil as the dew, and whether his grave and lofty words please frivolous and prurient ears or no, they will be beautiful in the truest sense, and show the Divine life pulsing through them, as some transparent skin shows the throbbing of the blue veins. Men who feed their souls on great authors catch their style, as some of our great living orators, who are eager students of English poetry. So if we converse much with God, listening to His voice in our hearts, our speech will have in it a tone that will echo that deep music. Our accent will betray our country. Then our speech will be with grace in the lower sense of pleasingness. The truest gracefulness, both of words and conduct, comes from heavenly grace. The beauty caught from God, the fountain of all things lovely, is the highest.

The speech is to be "seasoned with salt." That does not mean the "Attic salt" of wit. There is nothing more wearisome than the talk of men who are always trying to be piquant and brilliant. Such speech is like a "pillar of salt"—it sparkles, but is cold, and has points that wound, and it tastes bitter. That is not what Paul recommends. Salt was used in sacrifice—let the sacrificial salt be applied to all our words; that is, let all we say be offered up to God, "a sacrifice of praise to God continually." Salt preserves. Put into your speech what will keep it from rotting, or, as the parallel passage in Ephesians has it, "let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Frivolous talk, dreary gossip, ill-natured talk, idle talk, to say nothing of foul and wicked words, will be silenced when your speech is seasoned with salt.

The following words make it probable that salt here is used also with some allusion to its power of giving savour to food. Do not deal in insipid generalities, but suit your words to your hearers, "that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one." Speech that fits close to the characteristics and wants of the people to whom it is spoken is sure to be interesting, and that which does not will for them be insipid. Commonplaces that hit full against the hearer will be no commonplaces to him, and the most brilliant words that do not meet his mind or needs will to him be tasteless "as the white of an egg."

Individual peculiarities, then, must determine

the wise way of approach to each man, and there will be wide variety in the methods. Paul's language to the wild hill tribes of Lycaonia was not the same as to the cultivated, curious crowd on Mars' Hill, and his sermons in the synagogues have a different tone from his reasonings of judgment to come before Felix.

All that is too plain to need illustration. But one word may be added. The Apostle here regards it as the task of every Christian man to speak for Christ. Further, he recommends dealing with individuals rather than masses, as being within the scope of each Christian, and as being much more efficacious. Salt has to be rubbed in, if it is to do any good. It is better for most of us to fish with the rod than with the net, to angle for single souls, rather than to try and enclose a multitude at once. Preaching to a congregation has its own place and value; but private and personal talk, honestly and wisely done, will effect more than the most eloquent preaching. Better to drill in the seeds, dropping them one by one into the little pits made for their reception, than to sow them broadcast.

And what shall we say of Christian men and women, who can talk animatedly and interestingly of anything but of their Saviour and His kingdom? Timidity, misplaced reverence, a dread of seeming to be self-righteous, a regard for conventional proprieties, and the national reserve account for much of the lamentable fact that there are so many such. But all these barriers would be floated away like straws, if a great stream of Christian feeling were pouring from the heart. What fills the heart will overflow by the floodgates of speech. So that the real reason for the unbroken silence in which many Christian people conceal their faith is mainly the small quantity of it which there is to conceal.

A solemn ideal is set before us in these parting injunctions—a higher righteousness than was thundered from Sinai. When we think of our hurried, formal devotions, our prayers forced from us sometimes by the pressure of calamity, and so often suspended when the weight is lifted; of the occasional glimpses that we get of God—as sailors may catch sight of a guiding star for a moment through driving fog, and of the long tracts of life which would be precisely the same, as far as our thoughts are concerned, if there were no God at all, or He had nothing to do with us—what an awful command that seems, "Continue steadfastly in prayer"!

When we think of our selfish disregard of the woes and dangers of the poor wanderers without, exposed to the storm, while we think ourselves safe in the fold, and of how little we have meditated on and still less discharged our obligations to them, and of how we have let precious opportunities slip through our slack hands, we may well bow rebuked before the exhortation, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without."

When we think of the stream of words ever flowing from our lips, and how few grains of gold that stream has brought down amid all its sand, and how seldom Christ's name has been spoken by us to hearts that heed Him not nor know Him, the exhortation, "Let your speech be always with grace," becomes an indictment as truly as a command.

There is but one place for us, the foot of the cross, that there we may obtain forgiveness for all the faulty past and thence may draw consecration and strength for the future, to enable us to keep that lofty law of Christian morality, which is high and hard if we think only of its precepts, but becomes light and easy when we open our hearts to receive the power for obedience, "which," as this great Epistle manifoldly teaches, "is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TYCHICUS AND ONESIMUS, THE LETTER-BEARERS.

COLOSSIANS iv. 7-9 (R. V.).

IN Paul's days it was perhaps more difficult to get letters delivered than to write them. It was a long, weary journey from Rome to Colossæ,—across Italy, then by sea to Greece, across Greece, then by sea to the port of Ephesus, and thence by rough ways to the upland valley where lay Colossæ, with its neighbouring towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis. So one thing which the Apostle has to think about is to find messengers to carry his letter. He pitches upon these two, Tychicus and Onesimus. The former is one of his personal attendants, told off for this duty; the other, who has been in Rome under very peculiar circumstances, is going home to Colossæ, on a strange errand, in which he may be helped by having a message from Paul to carry.

We shall not now deal with the words before us, so much as with these two figures, whom we may regard as representing certain principles, and embodying some useful lessons.

I. Tychicus may stand as representing the greatness and sacredness of small and secular service done for Christ.

We must first try, in as few words as may be, to change the name into a man. There is something very solemn and pathetic in these shadowy names which appear for a moment on the page of Scripture, and are swallowed up of black night, like stars that suddenly blaze out for a week or two, and then dwindle and at last disappear altogether. They too lived, and loved, and strove, and suffered, and enjoyed: and now—all is gone, gone; the hot fire burned down to such a little handful of white ashes. Tychicus and Onesimus! two shadows that once were men! and as they are, so we shall be.

As to Tychicus, there are several fragmentary notices about him in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's letters, and although they do not amount to much, still by piecing them together, and looking at them with some sympathy, we can get a notion of the man.

He does not appear till near the end of Paul's missionary work, and was probably one of the fruits of the Apostle's long residence in Ephesus on his last missionary tour, as we do not hear of him till after that period. That stay in Ephesus was cut short by the silversmiths' riot —the earliest example of trades' unions—when they wanted to silence the preaching of the gospel because it damaged the market for "shrines," and "also" was an insult to the great goddess! Thereupon Paul retired to Europe, and after some months there, decided

on his last fateful journey to Jerusalem. On the way he was joined by a remarkable group of friends, seven in number, and apparently carefully selected so as to represent the principal fields of the Apostle's labours. There were three Europeans, two from "Asia"—meaning by that name, of course, only the Roman province, which included mainly the western seaboard—and two from the wilder inland country of Lycaonia. Tychicus was one of the two from Asia; the other was Trophimus, whom we know to have been an Ephesian (Acts xxi. 29), as Tychicus may not improbably have also been.

We do not know that all the seven accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. Trophimus we know did, and another of them, Aristarchus, is mentioned as having sailed with him on the return voyage from Palestine (Acts xxvii. 2). But if they were not intended to go to Jerusalem, why did they meet him at all? The sacredness of the number seven, the apparent care to secure a representation of the whole field of apostolic activity, and the long distances that some of them must have travelled, make it extremely unlikely that these men should have met him at a little port in Asia Minor for the mere sake of being with him for a few days. It certainly seems much more probable that they joined his company and went on to Jerusalem. What for? Probably as bearers of money contributions from the whole area of the Gentile Churches, to the "poor saints" there—a purpose which would explain the composition of the delegation. Paul was too sensitive and too sagacious to have more to do with money matters than he could help. We learn from his letter to the Church at Corinth that he insisted on another brother being associated with him in the administration of their alms, so that no man could raise suspicions against him. Paul's principle was that which ought to guide every man entrusted with other people's money to spend for religious or charitable purposes—"I shall not be your almoner unless some one appointed by you stands by me to see that I spend your money rightly"—a good example which, it is much to be desired, were followed by all workers, and required to be followed as a condition of all giving.

These seven, at all events, began the long journey with Paul. Among them is our friend Tychicus, who may have learned to know the Apostle more intimately during it, and perhaps developed qualities in travel which marked him out as fit for the errand on which we here find him.

This voyage was about the year 58 A. D. Then comes an interval of some three or four years, in which occur Paul's arrest and imprisonment at Cæsarea, his appearance before governors and kings, his voyage to Italy and shipwreck, with his residence in Rome. Whether Tychicus was with him during all this period, as Luke seems to have been, we do not know, nor at what point he joined the Apostle, if he was not his companion throughout. But the verses before us show that he was with Paul during part of his first Roman captivity, probably about A. D. 62 or 63; and their commendation of him as "a faithful minister," or helper of Paul, implies that for a considerable period before this he had been rendering services to the Apostle.

He is now despatched all the long way to Colossæ to carry this letter, and to tell the Church by word of mouth all that had happened in Rome. No information of that kind is in the letter itself. That silence forms a remarkable contrast to the affectionate abundance of personal details in another prison letter, that to the Philippians, and probably marks this Epistle as addressed to a Church never visited by Paul. Tychicus is sent, according to the most probable reading, that "ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts"—encouraging the brethren to Christian steadfastness, not only by his news of Paul, but by his own company and exhortations.

The very same words are employed about him in the contemporaneous letter to the Ephesians. Evidently, then, he carried both epistles on the same journey; and one reason for selecting him as messenger is plainly that he was a native of the province, and probably of Ephesus. When Paul looked round his little circle of attendant friends, his eye fell on Tychicus, as the very man for such an errand. "You go, Tychicus. It is your home; they all know you."

The most careful students now think that the Epistle to the Ephesians was meant to go the round of the Churches of Asia Minor, beginning, no doubt, with that in the great city of Ephesus. If that be so, and Tychicus had to carry it to these Churches in turn, he would necessarily come, in the course of his duty, to Laodicea, which was only a few miles from Colossæ, and so could most conveniently deliver this Epistle. The wider and the narrower mission fitted into each other.

No doubt he went, and did his work. We can fancy the eager groups, perhaps in some upper room, perhaps in some quiet place of prayer by the river side; in their midst the two messengers, with a little knot of listeners and questioners round each. How they would have to tell the story a dozen times over! How every detail would be precious! How tears would come and hearts would glow! How deep into the night they would talk! And how many a heart that had begun to waver would be confirmed in cleaving to Christ by the exhortations of Tychicus, by the very sight of Onesimus, and by Paul's words of fire!

What became of Tychicus after that journey we do not know. Perhaps he settled down at Ephesus for a time, perhaps he returned to Paul. At any rate, we get two more glimpses of him at a later period—one in the Epistle to Titus, in which we hear of the Apostle's intention to despatch him on another journey to Crete, and the last in the close of the second Epistle to Timothy, written from Rome probably about A. D. 67. The Apostle believes that his death is near, and seems to have sent away most of his staff. Among the notices of their various appointments we read, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." He is not said to have been sent on any mission connected with the Churches. It may be that he was simply sent away because, by reason of his impending martyrdom, Paul had no more need of him. True, he still has Luke by him, and he wishes Timothy to come and bring his first "minister," Mark, with him. But he has sent away Tychicus, as if he had said, Now, go back to your home, my friend! You have been a faithful servant for ten years. I need you no more. Go to your own people, and take my blessing. God be

with you! So they parted, he that was for death, to die! and he that was for life, to live and to treasure the memory of Paul in his heart for the rest of his days. These are the facts; ten years of faithful service to the Apostle, partly during his detention in Rome, and much of it spent in wearisome and dangerous travelling undertaken to carry a couple of letters.

As for his character, Paul has given us something of it in these few words, which have commended him to a wider circle than the handful of Christians at Colossæ. As for his personal godliness and goodness, he is "a beloved brother," as are all who love Christ; but he is also a "faithful minister," or personal attendant upon the Apostle. Paul always seems to have had one or two such about him, from the time of his first journey, when John Mark filled the post, to the end of his career. Probably he was no great hand at managing affairs, and needed some plain common-sense nature beside him, who would be secretary or amanuensis sometimes, and general helper and factotum. Men of genius and men devoted to some great cause which tyrannously absorbs attention, want some person to fill such a homely office. The person who filled it would be likely to be a plain man, not gifted in any special degree for higher service. Common sense, willingness to be troubled with small details of purely secular arrangements, and a hearty love for the chief, and desire to spare him annoyance and work, were the qualifications. Such probably was Tychicus —no orator, no organiser, no thinker, but simply an honest, loving soul, who did not shrink from rough outward work, if only it might help the cause. We do not read that he was a teacher or preacher, or miracle worker. His gift was—ministry, and he gave himself to his ministry. His business was to run Paul's errands, and, like a true man, he ran them "faithfully."

So then, he is fairly taken as representing the greatness and sacredness of small and secular service for Christ. For the Apostle goes on to add something to his eulogium as a "faithful minister"—when he calls him "a fellow-servant," or slave, "in the Lord." As if he had said, Do not suppose that because I write this letter, and Tychicus carries it, there is much difference between us. We are both slaves of the same Lord who has set each of us his tasks; and though the tasks be different, the obedience is the same, and the doers stand on one level. I am not Tychicus' master, though he be my minister. We have both, as I have been reminding you that you all have, an owner in heaven. The delicacy of the turn thus given to the commendation is a beautiful indication of Paul's generous, chivalrous nature. No wonder that such a soul bound men like Tychicus to him!

But there is more than merely a revelation of a beautiful character in the words; there are great truths in them. We may draw them out in two or three thoughts.

Small things done for Christ are great. Trifles that contribute and are indispensable to a great result are great; or perhaps, more properly, both words are out of place. In some powerful engine there is a little screw, and if it drop out, the great piston cannot rise nor the huge crank turn. What have big and little to do with things which are equally indispensable? There is a great rudder that steers an ironclad. It moves on a "pintle" a few inches long. If that bit of iron were gone, what would become of the rudder, and what would be the use of the ship with all her guns? There is an old jingling rhyme about losing a shoe for want of a nail, and a horse for want of a shoe, and a man for want of a horse, and a battle for want of a man, and a kingdom for loss of a battle. The intervening links may be left out—and the nail and the kingdom brought together. In a similar spirit, we may say that the trifles done for Christ which help the great things are as important as these. What is the use of writing letters if you cannot get them delivered? It takes both Paul and Tychicus to get the letter into the hands of the people at Colossæ.

Another thought suggested by the figure of Paul's minister, who was also his fellow-slave, is the sacredness of secular work done for Christ. When Tychicus is caring for Paul's comfort, and looking after common things for him, he is serving Christ, and his work is "in the Lord." That is equivalent to saying that the distinction between sacred and secular, religious and non-religious, like that of great and small, disappears from work done for and in Jesus. Whenever there is organisation, there must be much work concerned with purely material things: and the most spiritual forces must have some organisation. There must be men for "the outward business of the house of God" as well as white-robed priests at the altar, and the rapt gazer in the secret place of the Most High. There are a hundred matters of detail and of purely outward and mechanical sort which must be seen to by somebody. The alternative is to do them in a purely mechanical and secular manner and so to make the work utterly dreary and contemptible, or in a devout and earnest manner and so to hallow them all, and make worship of them all. The difference between two lives is not in the material on which, but in the motive from which, and in the end for which, they are respectively lived. All work done in obedience to the same Lord is the same in essence; for it is all obedience; and all work done for the same God is the same in essence, for it is all worship. The distinction between secular and sacred ought never to have found its way into Christian morals, and ought for evermore to be expelled from Christian life.

Another thought may be suggested—fleeting things done for Christ are eternal. How astonished Tychicus would have been if anybody had told him on that day when he got away from Rome, with the two precious letters in his scrip, that these bits of parchment would outlast all the ostentatious pomp of the city, and that his name, because written in them, would be known to the end of time all over the world! The eternal things are the things done for Christ. They are eternal in His memory who has said, "I will never forget any of their works," however they may fall from man's remembrance. They are perpetual in their consequences. True, no man's contribution to the mighty sum of things "that make for righteousness" can very long be traced as separate from the others, any more than the raindrop that refreshed the harebell on the moor can be traced in burn, and river, and sea. But for all that, it is there. So our influence for good blends with a thousand others, and may not be traceable beyond a short

distance, still it is there: and no true work for Christ, abortive as it may seem, but goes to swell the great aggregate of forces which are working on through the ages to bring the perfect Order.

That Colossian Church seems a failure. Where is it now? Gone. Where are its sister Churches of Asia? Gone. Paul's work and Tychicus' seem to have vanished from the earth, and Mohammedanism to have taken its place. Yes! and here are we to-day in England, and Christian men all over the world in lands that were mere slaughterhouses of savagery then, learning our best lessons from Paul's words, and owing something for our knowledge of them to Tychicus' humble care. Paul meant to teach a handful of obscure believers—he has edified the world. Tychicus thought to carry the precious letter safely over the sea—he was helping to send it across the centuries, and to put it into our hands. So little do we know where our work will terminate. Our only concern is where it begins. Let us look after this end, the motive; and leave God to take care of the other, the consequences.

Such work will be perpetual in its consequences on ourselves. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious." Whether our service for Christ does others any good or no, it will bless ourselves, by strengthening the motives from which it springs, by enlarging our own knowledge and enriching our own characters, and by a hundred other gracious influences which His work exerts upon the devout worker, and which become indissoluble parts of himself, and abide with Him for ever, over and above the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

And, as the reward is given not to the outward deed, but to the motive which settles its value, all work done from the same motive is alike in reward, howsoever different in form. Paul in the front, and Tychicus obscure in the rear, the great teachers and path-openers whom Christ through the ages raises up for large spiritual work, and the little people whom Christ through the ages raises up to help and sympathise—shall share alike at last, if the Spirit that moved them has been the same, and if in different administrations they have served the same Lord. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet"—though no prophecy come from his lips—"shall receive a prophet's reward."

II. We must now turn to a much briefer consideration of the second figure here, Onesimus, as representing the transforming and uniting power of Christian faith.

No doubt this is the same Onesimus as we read of in the Epistle to Philemon. His story is familiar and need not be dwelt on. He had been an "unprofitable servant," good-for-nothing, and apparently had robbed his master, and then fled. He had found his way to Rome, to which all the scum of the empire seemed to drift. There he had burrowed in some hole, and found obscurity and security. Somehow or other he had come across Paul—surely not, as has been supposed, having sought the Apostle as a friend of his master's, which would rather have been a reason for avoiding him. However that may be, he had found Paul, and Paul's Master had found *him* by the gospel which Paul spoke. His heart had been touched. And now he is to go back to his owner. With beautiful considerateness the Apostle unites him with Tychicus in his mission, and refers the Church to him as an authority. That is most delicate and thoughtful. The same sensitive regard for his feelings marks the language in which he is commended to them. There is now no word about "a fellow-slave"—that might have been misunderstood and might have hurt. Paul will only say about him half of what he said about Tychicus. He cannot leave out the "faithful," because Onesimus had been eminently unfaithful, and so he attaches it to that half of his former commendation which he retains, and testifies to him as "a faithful and beloved brother." There are no references to his flight or to his peculations. Philemon is the person to be spoken to about these. The Church has nothing to do with them. The man's past was blotted out—enough that he is "faithful," exercising trust in Christ, and therefore to be trusted. His condition was of no moment—enough that he is "a brother," therefore to be beloved.

Does not then that figure stand forth a living illustration of the transforming power of Christianity? Slaves had well-known vices, largely the result of their position—idleness, heartlessness, lying, dishonesty. And this man had had his full share of the sins of his class. Think of him as he left Colossæ, slinking from his master, with stolen property in his bosom, madness and mutiny in his heart, an ignorant heathen, with vices and sensualities holding carnival in his soul. Think of him as he came back, Paul's trusted representative, with desires after holiness in his deepest nature, the light of the knowledge of a loving and pure God in his soul, a great hope before him, ready for all service and even to put on again the abhorred yoke! What had happened? Nothing but this—the message had come to him, "Onesimus! fugitive, rebel, thief as thou art, Jesus Christ has died for thee, and lives to cleanse and bless thee. Believest thou this?" And he believed, and leant his whole sinful self on that Saviour, and the corruption faded away from his heart, and out of the thief was made a trustworthy man, and out of the slave a beloved brother. The cross had touched his heart and will. That was all. It had changed his whole being. He is a living illustration of Paul's teaching in this very letter. He is dead with Christ to his old self; he lives with Christ a new life.

The gospel can do that. It can and does do so to-day and to us, if we will. Nothing else can; nothing else ever has done it; nothing else ever will. Culture may do much; social reformation may do much; but the radical transformation of the nature is only effected by the "love of God shed abroad in the heart," and by the new life which we receive through our faith in Christ.

That change can be produced on all sorts and conditions of men. The gospel despairs of none. It knows of no hopelessly irreclaimable classes. It can kindle a soul under the ribs of death. The filthiest rags can be cleaned and made into spotlessly white paper, which may have the name of God written upon it. None is beyond its power; neither the savages in other lands, nor the more hopeless heathens festering and rotting in our back slums, the opprobrium of our civilisation and the indictment of our Christianity. Take the gospel that

transformed this poor slave to them, and some hearts will own it, and we shall pick out of the kennel souls blacker than his, and make them like him, brethren, faithful and beloved.

Further, here is a living illustration of the power which the gospel has of binding men into a true brotherhood. We can scarcely picture to ourselves the gulf which separated the master from his slave. "So many slaves, so many enemies," said Seneca. That great crack running through society was a chief weakness and peril of the ancient world. Christianity gathered master and slave into one family, and set them down at one table to commemorate the death of the Saviour who held them all in the embrace of His great love.

All true union among men must be based upon their oneness in Jesus Christ. The brotherhood of man is a consequence of the fatherhood of God, and Christ shows us the Father. If the dreams of men's being knit together in harmony are ever to be more than dreams, the power that makes them facts must flow from the cross. The world must recognise that "One is your master," before it comes to believe as anything more than the merest sentimentality that "all ye are brethren."

Much has to be done before the dawn of that day reddens in the east, "when, man to man, the wide world o'er, shall brothers be," and much in political and social life has to be swept away before society is organised on the basis of Christian fraternity. The vision tarries. But we may remember how certainly, though slowly, the curse of slavery has disappeared, and take courage to believe that all other evils will fade away in like manner, until the cords of love shall bind all hearts in fraternal unity, because they bind each to the cross of the Elder Brother, through whom we are no more slaves, but sons, and if sons of God, then brethren of one another.

CHAPTER XXV.

SALUTATIONS FROM THE PRISONER'S FRIENDS.

COLOSSIANS iv. 10-14 (R. V.).

HERE are men of different races, unknown to each other by face, clasping hands across the seas, and feeling that the repulsions of nationality, language, conflicting interests, have disappeared in the unity of faith. These greetings are a most striking, because unconscious, testimony to the reality and strength of the new bond that knit Christian souls together.

There are three sets of salutations here, sent from Rome to the little far-off Phrygian town in its secluded valley. The first is from three large-hearted Jewish Christians, whose greeting has a special meaning as coming from that wing of the Church which had least sympathy with Paul's work or converts. The second is from the Colossians' townsman Epaphras; and the third is from two Gentiles like themselves, one well known as Paul's most faithful friend, one almost unknown, of whom Paul has nothing to say, and of whom nothing good can be said. All these may yield us matter for consideration. It is interesting to piece together what we know of the bearers of these shadowy names. It is profitable to regard them as exponents of certain tendencies and principles.

I. These three sympathetic Jewish Christians may stand as types of a progressive and non-ceremonial Christianity.

We need spend little time in outlining the figures of these three, for he in the centre is well known to every one, and his two supporters are little known to any one. Aristarchus was a Thessalonian (Acts xx. 4), and so perhaps one of Paul's early converts on his first journey to Europe. His purely Gentile name would not have led us to expect him to be a Jew. But we have many similar instances in the New Testament, such for instance, as the names of six of the seven deacons (Acts vii. 5), which show that the Jews of "the dispersion," who resided in foreign countries, often bore no trace of their nationality in their names. He was with Paul in Ephesus at the time of the riot, and was one of the two whom the excited mob, in their zeal for trade and religion, dragged into the theatre, to the peril of their lives. We next find him, like Tychicus, a member of the deputation which joined Paul on his voyage to Jerusalem. Whatever was the case with the other, Aristarchus was in Palestine with Paul, for we learn that he sailed with him thence (Acts xxvii. 2). Whether he kept company with Paul during all the journey we do not know. But more probably he went home to Thessalonica, and afterwards rejoined Paul at some point in his Roman captivity. At any rate here he is, standing by Paul, having drunk in his spirit, and enthusiastically devoted to him and his work.

He receives here a remarkable and honourable title, "my fellow-prisoner." I suppose that it is to be taken literally, and that Aristarchus was, in some way, at the moment of writing, sharing Paul's imprisonment. Now it has been often noticed that, in the Epistle to Philemon, where almost all these names re-appear, it is not Aristarchus, but Epaphras, who is honoured with this epithet; and that interchange has been explained by an ingenious supposition that Paul's friends took it in turn to keep him company, and were allowed to live with him, on condition of submitting to the same restrictions, military guardianship, and so on. There is no positive evidence in favour of this, but it is not improbable, and, if accepted, helps to give an interesting glimpse of Paul's prison life, and of the loyal devotion which surrounded him.

Mark comes next. His story is well known—how twelve years before he had joined the first missionary band from Antioch, of which his cousin Barnabas was the leader, and had done well enough as long as they were on known ground, in Barnabas' (and perhaps his own) native island of Cyprus, but had lost heart and run home to his mother as soon as they crossed into Asia Minor. He had long ago effaced the distrust of him which Paul naturally conceived on account of this collapse. How he came to be with Paul at Rome is unknown. It has been conjectured that Barnabas was dead, and that so, Mark was free to join the Apostle; but that is unsupported supposition. Apparently he is now purposing a journey to Asia Minor, in the course of which, if he should come to Colossæ (which was doubtful, perhaps on account of its insignificance), Paul repeats his previous injunction, that the church should give him a cordial welcome. Probably this commendation was

given because the evil odour of his old fault might still hang about his name. The calculated emphasis of the exhortation, "receive him," seems to show that there was some reluctance to give him a hearty reception and take him to their hearts. So we have an "undesigned coincidence." The tone of the injunction here is naturally explained by the story in the Acts.

So faithful a friend did he prove, that the lonely old man, fronting death, longed to have his affectionate tending once more; and his last word about him, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry," condones the early fault, and restores him to the office which, in a moment of selfish weakness, he had abandoned. So it is possible to efface a faultful past, and to acquire strength and fitness for work to which we are by nature most inapt and indisposed. Mark is an instance of early faults nobly atoned for, and a witness of the power of repentance and faith to overcome natural weakness. Many a ragged colt makes a noble horse.

The third man is utterly unknown—"Jesus, which is called Justus." How startling to come across that name, borne by this obscure Christian! How it helps us to feel the humble manhood of Christ, by showing us that many another Jewish boy bore the same name; common and undistinguished then, though too holy to be given to any since. His surname Justus may, perhaps, like the same name given to James, the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, hint his rigorous adherence to Judaism, and so may indicate that, like Paul himself, he came from the straitest sect of their religion into the large liberty in which he now rejoiced.

He seems to have been of no importance in the Church, for his name is the only one in this context which does not reappear in Philemon, and we never hear of him again. A strange fate his! to be made immortal by three words—and because he wanted to send a loving message to the Church at Colossæ! Why, men have striven and schemed, and broken their hearts, and flung away their lives, to grasp the bubble of posthumous fame; and how easily this good "Jesus which is called Justus" has got it! He has his name written for ever on the world's memory, and he very likely never knew it, and does not know it, and was never a bit the better for it! What a satire on "the last infirmity of noble minds!"

These three men are united in this salutation, because they are all three, "of the circumcision;" that is to say, are Jews, and being so, have separated themselves from all the other Jewish Christians in Rome, and have flung themselves with ardour into Paul's missionary work among the Gentiles, and have been his fellow-workers for the advancement of the kingdom—aiding him, that is, in seeking to win willing subjects to the loving, kingly will of God. By this co-operation in the aim of his life, they have been a "comfort" to him. He uses a half medical term, which perhaps he had caught from the physician at his elbow, which we might perhaps parallel by saying they had been a "cordial" to him—like a refreshing draught to a weary man, or some whiff of pure air stealing into a close chamber and lifting the damp curls on some hot brow.

Now these three men, the only three Jewish Christians in Rome who had the least sympathy with Paul and his work, give us, in their isolation, a vivid illustration of the antagonism which he had to face from that portion of the early Church. The great question for the first generation of Christians was, not whether Gentiles might enter the Christian community, but whether they must do so by circumcision, and pass through Judaism on their road to Christianity. The bulk of the Palestinian Jewish Christians naturally held that they must; while the bulk of Jewish Christians who had been born in other countries as naturally held that they need not. As the champion of this latter decision, Paul was worried and counter-worked and hindered all his life by the other party. They had no missionary zeal, or next to none, but they followed in his wake and made mischief wherever they could. If we can fancy some modern sect that sends out no missionaries of its own, but delights to come in where better men have forced a passage, and to upset their work by preaching its own crotchets, we get precisely the kind of thing which dogged Paul all his life.

There was evidently a considerable body of these men in Rome; good men no doubt in a fashion, believing in Jesus as the Messiah, but unable to comprehend that he had antiquated Moses, as the dawning day makes useless the light in a dark place. Even when he was a prisoner, their unrelenting antagonism pursued the Apostle. They preached Christ of "envy and strife." Not one of them lifted a finger to help him, or spoke a word to cheer him. With none of them to say, God bless him! he toiled on. Only these three were large-hearted enough to take their stand by his side, and by this greeting to clasp the hands of their Gentile brethren in Colossæ and thereby to endorse the teaching of this letter as to the abrogation of Jewish rites.

It was a brave thing to do, and the exuberance of the eulogium shows how keenly Paul felt his countrymen's coldness, and how grateful he was to "the dauntless three." Only those who have lived in an atmosphere of misconstruction, surrounded by scowls and sneers, can understand what a cordial the clasp of a hand, or the word of sympathy is. These men were like the old soldier that stood on the street of Worms, as Luther passed in to the Diet, and clapped him on the shoulder, with "Little monk! little monk! you are about to make a nobler stand to-day than we in all our battles have ever done. If your cause is just, and you are sure of it, go forward in God's name, and fear nothing." If we can do no more, we can give some one who is doing more a cup of cold water, by our sympathy and taking our place at his side, and so can be fellow-workers to the kingdom of God.

We note, too, that the best comfort Paul could have was help in his work. He did not go about the world whimpering for sympathy. He was much too strong a man for that. He wanted men to come down into the trench with him, and to shovel and wheel there till they had made in the wilderness some kind of a highway for the King. The true cordial for a true worker is that others get into the traces and pull by his side.

But we may further look at these men as representing for us progressive as opposed to

reactionary, and spiritual as opposed to ceremonial, Christianity. Jewish Christians looked backwards; Paul and his three sympathisers looked forward. There was much excuse for the former. No wonder that they shrank from the idea that things divinely appointed could be laid aside. Now there is a broad distinction between the divine in Christianity and the divine in Judaism. For Jesus Christ is God's last word, and abides for ever. His divinity, His perfect sacrifice, His present life in glory for us, His life within us, these and their related truths are the perennial possession of the Church. To Him we must look back, and every generation till the end of time will have to look back, as the full and final expression of the wisdom and will and mercy of God. "Last of all He sent unto them His Son."

That being distinctly understood, we need not hesitate to recognise the transitory nature of much of the embodiment of the eternal truth concerning the eternal Christ. To draw the line accurately between the permanent and the transient would be to anticipate history and read the future. But the clear recognition of the distinction between the Divine revelation and the vessels in which it is contained, between Christ and creed, between Churches, forms of worship, formularies of faith on the one hand, and the everlasting word of God spoken to us once for all in His Son, and recorded in Scripture, on the other, is needful at all times, and especially at such times of sifting and unsettlement as the present. It will save some of us from an obstinate conservatism which might read its fate in the decline and disappearance of Jewish Christianity. It will save us equally from needless fears, as if the stars were going out, when it is only men-made lamps that are paling. Men's hearts often tremble for the ark of God, when the only things in peril are the cart that carries it, or the oxen that draw it. "We have received a kingdom that cannot be moved," because we have received a King eternal, and therefore may calmly see the removal of things that can be shaken, assured that the things which cannot be shaken will but the more conspicuously assert their permanence. The existing embodiments of God's truth are not the highest, and if Churches and forms crumble and disintegrate, their disappearance will not be the abolition of Christianity, but its progress. These Jewish Christians would have found all that they strove to keep, in higher form and more real reality, in Christ; and what seemed to them the destruction of Judaism was really its coronation with undying life.

II. Epaphras is for us the type of the highest service which love can render.

All our knowledge of Epaphras is contained in these brief notices in this Epistle. We learn from the first chapter that he had introduced the gospel to Colossæ, and perhaps also to Laodicea and Hierapolis. He was "one of you," a member of the Colossian community, and a resident in, possibly a native of, Colossæ. He had come to Rome, apparently to consult the Apostle about the views which threatened to disturb the Church. He had told him, too, of their love, not painting the picture too black, and gladly giving full prominence to any bits of brightness. It was his report which led to the writing of this letter.

Perhaps some of the Colossians were not over pleased with his having gone to speak with Paul, and having brought down this thunderbolt on their heads; and such a feeling may account for the warmth of Paul's praises of him as his "fellow-slave," and for the emphasis of his testimony on his behalf. However they might doubt it, Epaphras' love for them was warm. It showed itself by continual fervent prayers that they might stand "perfect and fully persuaded in all the will of God," and by toil of body and mind for them. We can see the anxious Epaphras, far away from the Church of his solicitude, always burdened with the thought of their danger, and ever wrestling in prayer on their behalf.

So we may learn the noblest service which Christian love can do—prayer. There is a real power in Christian intercession. There are many difficulties and mysteries round that thought. The manner of the blessing is not revealed, but the fact that we help one another by prayer is plainly taught, and confirmed by many examples, from the day when God heard Abraham and delivered Lot, to the hour when the loving authoritative words were spoken, "Simon, Simon, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." A spoonful of water sets a hydraulic press in motion, and brings into operation a force of tons' weight; so a drop of prayer at the one end may move an influence at the other which is omnipotent. It is a service which all can render. Epaphras could not have written this letter, but he could pray. Love has no higher way of utterance than prayer. A prayerless love may be very tender, and may speak murmured words of sweetest sound, but it lacks the deepest expression, and the noblest music of speech. We never help our dear ones so well as when we pray for them. Do we thus show and consecrate our family loves and our friendships?

We notice too the kind of prayer which love naturally presents. It is constant and earnest—"always striving," or as the word might be rendered, "agonising." That word suggests first the familiar metaphor of the wrestling-ground. True prayer is the intensest energy of the spirit pleading for blessing with a great striving of faithful desire. But a more solemn memory gathers round the word, for it can scarcely fail to recall the hour beneath the olives of Gethsemane, when the clear paschal moon shone down on the suppliant who, "being in an agony, prayed the more earnestly." And both Paul's word here, and the evangelist's there, carry us back to that mysterious scene by the brook Jabbok, where Jacob "wrestled" with "a man" until the breaking of the day, and prevailed. Such is prayer; the wrestle in the arena, the agony in Gethsemane, the solitary grapple with the "traveller unknown"; and such is the highest expression of Christian love.

Here, too, we learn what love asks for its beloved. Not perishable blessings, not the prizes of earth—fame, fortune, friends; but that "ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God." The first petition is for steadfastness. To stand has for opposites—to fall, or totter, or give ground; so the prayer is that they may not yield to temptation, or opposition, nor waver in their fixed faith, nor go down in the struggle; but keep erect, their feet planted on the rock, and holding their own against every foe. The prayer is also for their

maturity of Christian character, that they may stand firm, because perfect, having attained that condition which Paul in this Epistle tells us is the aim of all preaching and warning. As for ourselves, so for our dear ones, we are to be content with nothing short of entire conformity to the will of God. His merciful purpose for us all is to be the goal of our efforts for ourselves, and of our prayers for others. We are to widen our desires to coincide with His gift, and our prayers are to cover no narrower space than His promises enclose.

Epaphras' last desire for his friends, according to the true reading, is that they may be "fully assured" in all the will of God. There can be no higher blessing than that—to be quite sure of what God desires me to know and do and be—if the assurance comes from the clear light of His illumination, and not from hasty self-confidence in my own penetration. To be free from the misery of intellectual doubts and practical uncertainties, to walk in the sunshine —is the purest joy. And it is granted in needful measure to all who have silenced their own wills, that they may hear what God says,—"If any man wills to do His will, he shall know."

Does our love speak in prayer? and do our prayers for our dear ones plead chiefly for such gifts? Both our love and our desires need purifying if this is to be their natural language. How can we offer such prayers for them if, at the bottom of our hearts, we had rather see them well off in the world than steadfast, matured, and assured Christians? How can we expect an answer to such prayers if the whole current of our lives shows that neither for them nor for ourselves do we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"?

III. The last salutation comes from a singularly contrasted couple—Luke and Demas, the types respectively of faithfulness and apostasy. These two unequally yoked together stand before us like the light and the dark figures that Ary Scheffer delights to paint, each bringing out the colouring of the other more vividly by contrast. They bear the same relation to Paul which John, the beloved disciple, and Judas did to Paul's master.

As for Luke, his long and faithful companionship of the Apostle is too well known to need repetition here. His first appearance in the Acts nearly coincides with an attack of Paul's constitutional malady, which gives probability to the suggestion that one reason for Luke's close attendance on the Apostle was the state of his health. Thus the form and warmth of the reference here would be explained—"Luke the physician, the beloved." We trace Luke as sharing the perils of the winter voyage to Italy, making his presence known only by the modest "we" of the narrative. We find him here sharing the Roman captivity, and, in the second imprisonment, he was Paul's only companion. All others had been sent away, or had fled; but Luke could not be spared, and would not desert him, and no doubt was by his side till the end, which soon came.

As for Demas, we know no more about him except the melancholy record, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world; and is departed unto Thessalonica." Perhaps he was a Thessalonian, and so went home. His love of the world, then, was his reason for abandoning Paul. Probably it was on the side of danger that the world tempted him. He was a coward, and preferred a whole skin to a clear conscience. In immediate connection with the record of his desertion we read, "At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." As the same word is used, probably Demas may have been one of those timid friends, whose courage was not equal to standing by Paul when, to use his own metaphor, he thrust his head into the lion's mouth. Let us not be too hard on the constancy that warped in so fierce a heat. All that Paul charges him with is, that he was a faithless friend, and too fond of the present world. Perhaps his crime did not reach the darker hue. He may not have been an apostate Christian, though he was a faithless friend. Perhaps, if there were departure from Christ as well as from Paul, he came back again, like Peter, whose sins against love and friendship were greater than his—and, like Peter, found pardon and a welcome. Perhaps, away in Thessalonica, he repented him of his evil, and perhaps Paul and Demas met again before the throne, and there clasped inseparable hands. Let us not judge a man of whom we know so little, but take to ourselves the lesson of humility and self-distrust!

How strikingly these two contrasted characters bring out the possibility of men being exposed to the same influences and yet ending far away from each other! These two set out from the same point, and travelled side by side, subject to the same training, in contact with the magnetic attraction of Paul's strong personality, and at the end they are wide as the poles asunder. Starting from the same level, one line inclines ever so little upwards, the other imperceptibly downwards. Pursue them far enough, and there is room for the whole solar system with all its orbits in the space between them. So two children trained at one mother's knee, subjects of the same prayers, with the same sunshine of love and rain of good influences upon them both, may grow up, one to break a mother's heart and disgrace a father's home, and the other to walk in the ways of godliness and serve the God of his fathers. Circumstances are mighty; but the use we make of circumstances lies with ourselves. As we trim our sails and set our rudder, the same breeze will take us in opposite directions. We are the architects and builders of our own characters, and may so use the most unfavourable influences as to strengthen and wholesomely harden our natures thereby, and may so misuse the most favourable as only thereby to increase our blameworthiness for wasted opportunities.

We are reminded, also, from these two men who stand before us like a double star—one bright and one dark—that no loftiness of Christian position, nor length of Christian profession, is a guarantee against falling and apostasy. As we read in another book, for which also the Church has to thank a prison cell—the place where so many of its precious possessions have been written—there is a back way to the pit from the gate of the Celestial City. Demas had stood high in the Church, had been admitted to the close intimacy of the Apostle, was evidently no raw novice, and yet the world could drag him back from so eminent a place in which he had long stood. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The world that was too strong for Demas will

be too strong for us if we front it in our own strength. It is ubiquitous, working on us everywhere and always, like the pressure of the atmosphere on our bodies. Its weight will crush us unless we can climb to and dwell on the heights of communion with God, where pressure is diminished. It acted on Demas through his fears. It acts on us through our ambitions, affections, and desires. So, seeing that miserable wreck of Christian constancy, and considering ourselves lest we also be tempted, let us not judge another, but look at home. There is more than enough there to make profound self-distrust our truest wisdom, and to teach us to pray, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLOSING MESSAGES.

COLOSSIANS iv. 15-end (R. V.).

THERE is a marked love of triplets in these closing messages. There were three of the circumcision who desired to salute the Colossians; and there were three Gentiles whose greetings followed these. Now we have a triple message from the Apostle himself—his greeting to Laodicea, his message as to the interchange of letters with that Church, and his grave, stringent charge to Archippus. Finally, the letter closes with a few hurried words in his own handwriting, which also are threefold, and seem to have been added in extreme haste, and to be compressed to the utmost possible brevity.

I. We shall first look at the threefold greeting and warnings to Laodicea.

In the first part of this triple message we have a glimpse of the Christian life of that city. "Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea." These are, of course, the whole body of Christians in the neighbouring town, which was a much more important place than Colossæ. They are the same persons as "the Church of the Laodiceans." Then comes a special greeting to "Nymphas," who was obviously a brother of some importance and influence in the Laodicean Church, though to us he has sunk to be an empty name. With him Paul salutes "the Church that is in their house" (Rev. Ver.). Whose house? Probably that belonging to Nymphas and his family. Perhaps that belonging to Nymphas and the Church that met in it, if these were other than his family. The more difficult expression is adopted by preponderating textual authorities, and "his house" is regarded as a correction to make the sense easier. If so, then the expression is one of which in our ignorance we have lost the key, and which we must be content to leave unexplained.

But what was this "Church in the house"? We read that Prisca and Aquila had such both in their house in Rome (Rom. xvi. 5) and in Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 19), and that Philemon had such in his house at Colossæ. It may be that only the household of Nymphas is meant, and that the words import no more than that it was a Christian household; or it may be, and more probably is, that in all these cases there was some gathering of a few of the Christians resident in each city, who were closely connected with the heads of the household, and met in their houses, more or less regularly, to worship and to help one another in the Christian life. We have no facts that decide which of these two suppositions is correct. The early Christians had, of course, no buildings especially used for their meetings, and there may often have been difficulty in finding suitable places, particularly in cities where the Church was numerous. It may have been customary, therefore, for brethren who had large and convenient houses, to gather together portions of the whole community in these. In any case, the expression gives us a glimpse of the primitive elasticity of Church order, and of the early fluidity, so to speak, of ecclesiastical language. The word "Church" had not yet been hardened and fixed to its present technical sense. There was but one Church in Laodicea, and yet within it there was this little Church—an *imperium in imperio*—as if the word had not yet come to mean more than an assembly, and as if all arrangements of order and worship, and all the terminology of later days, were undreamed of yet. The life was there, but the forms which were to grow out of the life, and to protect it sometimes, and to stifle it often, were only beginning to show themselves, and were certainly not yet felt to be forms.

We may note, too, the beautiful glimpse we get here of domestic and social religion.

If the Church in the house of Nymphas consisted of his own family and dependents, it stands for us as a lesson of what every family, which has a Christian man or woman at its head, ought to be. Little knowledge of the ordering of so-called Christian households is needed to be sure that domestic religion is woefully neglected to-day. Family worship and family instruction are disused, one fears, in many homes, the heads of which can remember both in their fathers' houses; and the unspoken aroma and atmosphere of religion does not fill the house with its odour, as it ought to do. If a Christian householder have not "a Church in his house," the family union is tending to become "a synagogue of Satan." One or other it is sure to be. It is a solemn question for all parents and heads of households, What am I doing to make my house a Church, my family a family united by faith in Jesus Christ?

A like suggestion may be made if, as is possible, the Church in the house of Nymphas included more than relatives and dependents. It is a miserable thing when social intercourse plays freely round every other subject, and tabooes all mention of religion. It is a miserable thing when Christian people choose and cultivate society for worldly advantages, business connections, family advancement, and for every reason under heaven—sometimes a long way under—except those of a common faith, and of the desire to increase it.

It is not needful to lay down extravagant, impracticable restrictions, by insisting either that we should limit our society to religious men, or our conversation to religious subjects. But it is a bad sign when our chosen associates are chosen for every other reason but their religion, and when our talk flows copiously on all other subjects, and becomes a constrained driblet when religion comes to be spoken of. Let us try to carry about with us an influence which shall permeate all our social intercourse, and make it, if not directly religious, yet never antagonistic to religion, and always capable of

passing easily and naturally into the highest regions. Our godly forefathers used to carve texts over their house doors. Let us do the same in another fashion, so that all who cross the threshold may feel that they have come into a Christian household, where cheerful godliness sweetens and brightens the sanctities of home.

We have next a remarkable direction as to the interchange of Paul's letters to Colossæ and Laodicea. The present Epistle is to be sent over to the neighbouring Church of Laodicea —that is quite clear. But what is "the Epistle from Laodicea" which the Colossians are to be sure to get and to read? The connection forbids us to suppose that a letter written by the Laodicean Church is meant. Both letters are plainly Pauline epistles, and the latter is said to be "from Laodicea," simply because the Colossians were to procure it from that place. The "from" does not imply authorship, but transmission. What then has become of this letter? Is it lost? So say some commentators; but a more probable opinion is that it is no other than the Epistle which we know as that to the Ephesians. This is not the occasion to enter on a discussion of that view. It will be enough to notice that very weighty textual authorities omit the words "In Ephesus," in the first verse of that Epistle. The conjecture is a very reasonable one, that the letter was intended for a circle of Churches, and had originally no place named in the superscription, just as we might issue circulars "To the Church in ——," leaving a blank to be filled in with different names. This conjecture is strengthened by the marked absence of personal references in the letter, which in that respect forms a striking contrast to the Epistle to the Colossians, which it so strongly resembles in other particulars. Probably, therefore, Tychicus had both letters put into his hands for delivery. The circular would go first to Ephesus as the most important Church in Asia, and thence would be carried by him to one community after another, till he reached Laodicea, from which he would come further up the valley to Colossæ, bringing both letters with him. The Colossians are not told to *get* the letter from Laodicea, but to be sure that they *read* it. Tychicus would see that it came to them; their business was to see that they marked, learned, and inwardly digested it.

The urgency of these instructions that Paul's letters should be read reminds us of a similar but still more stringent injunction in his earliest epistle (1 Thess. v. 27), "I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." Is it possible that these Churches did not much care for Paul's words, and were more willing to admit that they were weighty and powerful, than to study them and lay them to heart? It looks almost like it. Perhaps they got the same treatment then as they often do now, and were more praised than read, even by those who professed to look upon him as their teacher in Christ!

But passing by that, we come to the last part of this threefold message, the solemn warning to a slothful servant.

"Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." A sharp message that—and especially sharp, as being sent through others, and not spoken directly to the man himself. If this Archippus were a member of the Church at Colossæ, it is remarkable that Paul should not have spoken to him directly, as he did to Euodia and Syntyche, the two good women at Philippi, who had fallen out. But it is by no means certain that he was. We find him named again, indeed, at the beginning of the Epistle to Philemon, in such immediate connection with the latter, and with his wife Apphia, that he has been supposed to be their son. At all events, he was intimately associated with the Church in the house of Philemon, who, as we know, was a Colossian. The conclusion, therefore, seems at first sight most natural that Archippus too belonged to the Colossian Church. But on the other hand the difficulty already referred to seems to point in another direction; and if it be further remembered that this whole section is concerned with the Church at Laodicea, it will be seen to be a likely conclusion from all the facts that Archippus, though perhaps a native of Colossæ, or even a resident there, had his "ministry" in connection with that other neighbouring Church.

It may be worth notice, in passing, that all these messages to Laodicea, occurring here, strongly favour the supposition that the epistle from that place cannot have been a letter especially meant for the Laodicean church, as, if it had been, these would have naturally been inserted in it. So far, therefore, they confirm the hypothesis that it was a circular.

Some may say, Well, what in the world does it matter where Archippus worked? Not very much perhaps; and yet one cannot but read this grave exhortation to a man who was evidently getting languid and negligent, without remembering what we hear about Laodicea and the angel of the Church there, when next we meet it in the page of Scripture. It is not impossible that Archippus was that very "angel," to whom the Lord Himself sent the message through His servant John, more awful than that which Paul had sent through his brethren at Colossæ, "Because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

Be that as it may, the message is for us all. Each of us has a "ministry," a sphere of service. We may either fill it full, with earnest devotion and patient heroism, as some expanding gas fills out the silken round of its containing vessel, or we may breathe into it only enough to occupy a little portion, while all the rest hangs empty and flaccid. We have to "fulfil our ministry."

A sacred motive enhances the obligation—we have received it "in the Lord." In union with Him it has been laid on us. No human hand has imposed it, nor does it arise merely from earthly relationships, but our fellowship with Jesus Christ, and incorporation into the true Vine, have laid on us responsibilities, and exalted us by service.

There must be diligent watchfulness in order to fulfil our ministry. We must take heed to our service, and we must take heed to ourselves. We have to reflect upon it, its extent, nature, imperativeness, upon the manner of discharging it, and the means of fitness for it. We have to keep our work ever before us. Unless we are absorbed in it, we shall not fulfil it. And we have to take heed to ourselves, ever feeling our weakness and the strong antagonisms in our own natures which hinder

our discharge of the plainest, most imperative duties.

And let us remember, too, that if once we begin, like Archippus, to be a little languid and perfunctory in our work, we may end where the Church of Laodicea ended, whether he were its angel or no, with that nauseous lukewarmness which sickens even Christ's long-suffering love, and forces Him to reject it with loathing.

II. And now we come to the end of our task, and have to consider the hasty last words in Paul's own hand.

We can see him taking the reed from the amanuensis and adding the three brief sentences which close the letter. He first writes that which is equivalent to our modern usage of signing the letter—"the salutation of me Paul with mine own hand." This appears to have been his usual practice, or, as he says in 2 Thess. (iii. 17), it was "his token in every epistle"—the evidence that each was the genuine expression of his mind. Probably his weak eyesight, which appears certain, may have had something to do with his employing a secretary, as we may assume him to have done, even when there is no express mention of his autograph in the closing salutations. We find, for example, in the Epistle to the Romans no words corresponding to these, but the modest amanuensis steps for a moment into the light near the end: "I Tertius, who write the epistle, salute you in the Lord."

The endorsement with his name is followed by a request singularly pathetic in its abrupt brevity, "Remember my bonds." This is the one personal reference in the letter, unless we add as a second, his request for their prayers that he may speak the mystery of Christ, for which he is in bonds. There is a striking contrast in this respect with the abundant allusions to his circumstances in the Epistle to the Philippians, which also belongs to the period of his captivity. He had been swept far away from thoughts of self by the enthusiasm of his subject. The vision that opened before him of his Lord in His glory, the Lord of Creation, the Head of the Church, the throned helper of every trusting soul, had flooded his chamber with light, and swept guards and chains and restrictions out of his consciousness. But now the spell is broken, and common things reassert their power. He stretches out his hand for the reed to write his last words, and as he does so, the chain which fastens him to the Prætorian guard at his side pulls and hinders him. He wakes to the consciousness of his prison. The seer, swept along by the storm wind of a Divine inspiration, is gone. The weak man remains. The exhaustion after such an hour of high communion makes him more than usually dependent; and all his subtle, profound teachings, all his thunderings and lightnings, end in the simple cry, which goes straight to the heart, "Remember my bonds."

He wished their remembrance because he needed their sympathy. Like the old rags put round the ropes by which the prophet was hauled out of his dungeon, the poorest bit of sympathy twisted round a fetter makes it chafe less. The petition helps us to conceive how heavy a trial Paul felt his imprisonment to be, little as he said about it, and bravely as he bore it. He wished their remembrance too, because his bonds added weight to his words. His sufferings gave him a right to speak. In times of persecution confessors are the highest teachers, and the marks of the Lord Jesus borne in a man's body give more authority than diplomas and learning. He wished their remembrance because his bonds might encourage them to steadfast endurance if need for it should arise. He points to his own sufferings, and would have them take heart to bear their lighter crosses and to fight their easier battle.

One cannot but recall the words of Paul's Master, so like these in sound, so unlike them in deepest meaning. Can there be a greater contrast than between "Remember my bonds," the plaintive appeal of a weak man seeking sympathy, coming as an appendix, quite apart from the subject of the letter, and "Do this in remembrance of Me," the royal words of the Master? Why is the memory of Christ's death so unlike the memory of Paul's chains? Why is the one merely for the play of sympathy, and the enforcement of his teaching, and the other the very centre of our religion? For one reason alone. Because Christ's death is the life of the world, and Paul's sufferings, whatever their worth, had nothing in them that bore, except indirectly, on man's redemption. "Was Paul crucified for you?" We remember his chains, and they give him sacredness in our eyes. But we remember the broken body and shed blood of our Lord, and cleave to it in faith as the one sacrifice for the world's sin.

And then comes the last word: "Grace be with you." The apostolic benediction, with which he closes all his letters, occurs in many different stages of expression. Here it is pared down to the very quick. No shorter form is possible—and yet even in this condition of extreme compression, all good is in it.

All possible blessing is wrapped up in that one word, Grace. Like the sunshine, it carries life and fruitfulness in itself. If the favour and kindness of God, flowing out to men so far beneath Him, who deserve such different treatment, be ours, then in our hearts will be rest and a great peacefulness, whatever may be about us, and in o. characters will be all beauties and capacities, in the measure of our possession of that grace.

That all-producing germ of joy and excellence is here parted among the whole body of Colossian Christians. The dew of this benediction falls upon them all—the teachers of error if they still held by Christ, the Judaisers, the slothful Archippus, even as the grace which it invokes will pour itself into imperfect natures and adorn very sinful characters, if beneath the imperfection and the evil there be the true affiance of the soul on Christ.

That communication of grace to a sinful world is the end of all God's deeds, as it is the end of this letter. That great revelation which began when man began, which has spoken its complete message in the Son, the heir of all things, as this Epistle tells us, has this for the purpose of all its words—whether they are terrible or gentle, deep or simple—that God's grace may dwell among men. The mystery of Christ's being, the agony of Christ's cross, the hidden glories of Christ's dominion are all for this end, that of His fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace. The Old Testament, true to its genius, ends with stern onward-looking words which point to a future coming of the Lord and

to the possible terrible aspect of that coming—"Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." It is the last echo of the long-drawn blast of the trumpets of Sinai. The New Testament ends, as our Epistle ends, and as we believe the weary history of the world will end, with the benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

That grace, the love which pardons and quickens and makes good and fair and wise and strong, is offered to all in Christ. Unless we have accepted it, God's revelation and Christ's work have failed as far as we are concerned. "We therefore, as fellow-workers with Him, beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

CHAPTER I.

PHILEMON 1-3 (R. V.).

THIS Epistle stands alone among Paul's letters in being addressed to a private Christian, and in being entirely occupied with a small, though very singular, private matter; its aim being merely to bespeak a kindly welcome for a runaway slave who had been induced to perform the unheard-of act of voluntarily returning to servitude. If the New Testament were simply a book of doctrinal teaching, this Epistle would certainly be out of place in it; and if the great purpose of revelation were to supply material for creeds, it would be hard to see what value could be attached to a simple, short letter, from which no contribution to theological doctrine or ecclesiastical order can be extracted. But if we do not turn to it for discoveries of truth, we can find in it very beautiful illustrations of Christianity at work. It shows us the operation of the new forces which Christ has lodged in humanity—and that on two planes of action. It exhibits a perfect model of Christian friendship, refined and ennobled by a half-conscious reflection of the love which has called us "no longer slaves, but friends," and adorned by delicate courtesies and quick consideration, which divines with subtlest instinct what it will be sweetest to the friend to hear, while it never approaches by a hair-breadth to flattery, nor forgets to counsel high duties. But still more important is the light which the letter casts on the relation of Christianity to slavery, which may be taken as a specimen of its relation to social and political evils generally, and yields fruitful results for the guidance of all who would deal with such.

It may be observed, too, that most of the considerations which Paul urges on Philemon as reasons for his kindly reception of Onesimus do not even need the alteration of a word, but simply a change in their application, to become worthy statements of the highest Christian truths. As Luther puts it, "We are all God's Onesimuses"; and the welcome which Paul seeks to secure for the returning fugitive, as well as the motives to which he appeals in order to secure it, do shadow forth in no uncertain outline our welcome from God, and the treasures of His heart towards us, because they are at bottom the same. The Epistle then is valuable, as showing in a concrete instance how the Christian life, in its attitude to others, and especially to those who have injured us, is all modelled upon God's forgiving love to us. Our Lord's parable of the forgiven servant who took his brother by the throat finds here a commentary, and the Apostle's own precept, "Be imitators of God, and walk in love," a practical exemplification.

Nor is the light which the letter throws on the character of the Apostle to be regarded as unimportant. The warmth, the delicacy, and what, if it were not so spontaneous, we might call tact, the graceful ingenuity with which he pleads for the fugitive, the perfect courtesy of every word, the gleam of playfulness—all fused together and harmonised to one end, and that in so brief a compass and with such unstudied ease and complete self-oblivion, make this Epistle a pure gem. Without thought of effect, and with complete unconsciousness, this man beats all the famous letter-writers on their own ground. That must have been a great intellect, and closely conversant with the Fountain of all light and beauty, which could shape the profound and far-reaching teachings of the Epistle to the Colossians, and pass from them to the graceful simplicity and sweet kindliness of this exquisite letter; as if Michael Angelo had gone straight from smiting his magnificent Moses from the marble mass to incise some delicate and tiny figure of Love or Friendship on a cameo.

The structure of the letter is of the utmost simplicity. It is not so much a structure as a flow. There is the usual superscription and salutation, followed, according to Paul's custom, by the expression of his thankful recognition of the love and faith of Philemon and his prayer for the perfecting of these. Then he goes straight to the business in hand, and with incomparable persuasiveness pleads for a welcome to Onesimus, bringing all possible reasons to converge on that one request, with an ingenuous eloquence born of earnestness. Having poured out his heart in this pleasure adds no more but affectionate greetings from his companions and himself.

In the present section we shall confine our attention to the superscription and opening salutation.

I. We may observe the Apostle's designation of himself, as marked by consummate and instinctive appreciation of the claims of friendship, and of his own position in this letter as a suppliant. He does not come to his friend clothed with apostolic authority. In his letters to the Churches he always puts that in the forefront, and when he expected to be met by opponents, as in Galatia, there is a certain ring of defiance in his claim to receive his commission through no human intervention, but straight from heaven. Sometimes, as in the Epistle to the Colossians, he unites another strangely contrasted title, and calls himself also "the slave" of Christ; the one name asserting authority, the other bowing in humility before his Owner and Master. But here he is writing as a friend to a friend, and his object is to win his friend to a piece of Christian conduct which may be somewhat against the grain. Apostolic authority will not go half so far as personal influence in this case. So he drops all reference to it, and, instead, lets Philemon hear the fetters jangling on his limbs—a more powerful plea. "Paul, a prisoner," surely

that would go straight to Philemon's heart, and give all but irresistible force to the request which follows. Surely if he could do anything to show his love and gratify even momentarily his friend in prison, he would not refuse it. If this designation had been calculated to produce effect, it would have lost all its grace; but no one with any ear for the accents of inartificial spontaneousness, can fail to hear them in the unconscious pathos of these opening words, which say the right thing, all unaware of how right it is.

There is great dignity also, as well as profound faith, in the next words, in which the Apostle calls himself a prisoner "of Christ Jesus." With what calm ignoring of all subordinate agencies he looks to the true author of his captivity! Neither Jewish hatred nor Roman policy had shut him up in Rome. Christ Himself had riveted his manacles on his wrists; therefore he bore them as lightly and proudly as a bride might wear the bracelet that her husband had clasped on her arm. The expression reveals both the author of and the reason for his imprisonment, and discloses the conviction which held him up in it. He thinks of his Lord as the Lord of providence, whose hand moves the pieces on the board—Pharisees, and Roman governors, and guards, and Cæsar; and he knows that he is an ambassador in bonds, for no crime but for the testimony of Jesus. We need only notice that his younger companion Timothy is associated with the Apostle in the superscription, but disappears at once. The reason for the introduction of his name may either have been the slight additional weight thereby given to the request of the letter, or more probably, the additional authority thereby given to the junior, who would, in all likelihood, have much of Paul's work devolved on him when Paul was gone.

The names of the receivers of the letter bring before us a picture seen, as by one glimmering light across the centuries, of a Christian household in that Phrygian valley. The head of it, Philemon, appears to have been a native of, or at all events a resident in, Colossæ; for Onesimus, his slave, is spoken of in the Epistle to the Church there as "one of you." He was a person of some standing and wealth, for he had a house large enough to admit of a "Church" assembling in it, and to accommodate the Apostle and his travelling companions if he should visit Colossæ. He had apparently the means for large pecuniary help to poor brethren, and willingness to use them, for we read of the refreshment which his kindly deeds had imparted. He had been one of Paul's converts, and owed his own self to him; so that he must have met the Apostle,—who had probably not been in Colossæ,—on some of his journeys, perhaps during his three years' residence in Ephesus. He was of mature years if, as is probable, Archippus, who was old enough to have service to do in the Church (Col. iv. 17), was his son.

He is called "our fellow-labourer." The designation may imply some actual co-operation at a former time. But more probably, the phrase, like the similar one in the next verse, "our fellow-soldier," is but Paul's gracefully affectionate way of lifting these good people's humbler work out of its narrowness, by associating it with his own. They in their little sphere, and he in his wider, were workers at the same task. All who toil for furtherance of Christ's kingdom, however widely they may be parted by time or distance, are fellow-workers. Division of labour does not impair unity of service. The field is wide, and the months between seedtime and harvest are long; but all the husbandmen have been engaged in the same great work, and though they have toiled alone shall "rejoice together." The first man who dug a shovelful of earth for the foundations of Cologne Cathedral, and he who fixed the last stone on the topmost spire a thousand years after, are fellow-workers. So Paul and Philemon, though their tasks were widely different in kind, in range, and in importance, and were carried on apart and independent of each other, were fellow-workers. The one lived a Christian life and helped some humble saints in an insignificant, remote corner; the other flamed through the whole then civilised western world, and sheds light to-day: but the obscure, twinkling taper and the blazing torch were kindled at the same source, shone with the same light, and were parts of one great whole. Our narrowness is rebuked, our despondency cheered, our vulgar tendency to think little of modest, obscure service rendered by commonplace people, and to exaggerate the worth of the more conspicuous, is corrected by such a thought. However small may be our capacity or sphere, and however solitary we may feel, we may summon up before the eyes of our faith a mighty multitude of apostles, martyrs, toilers in every land and age as our—even our—work-fellows. The field stretches far beyond our vision, and many are toiling in it for Him, whose work never comes near ours. There are differences of service, but the same Lord, and all who have the same master are companions in labour. Therefore Paul, the greatest of the servants of Christ, reaches down his hand to the obscure Philemon, and says, "He works the work of the Lord, as I also do."

In the house at Colossæ there was a Christian wife by the side of a Christian husband; at least, the mention of Apphia here in so prominent a position is most naturally accounted for by supposing her to be the wife of Philemon. Her friendly reception of the runaway would be quite as important as his, and it is therefore most natural that the letter bespeaking it should be addressed to both. The probable reading "our sister" (R. V.), instead of "our beloved" (A. V.), gives the distinct assurance that she too was a Christian, and like-minded with her husband.

The prominent mention of this Phrygian matron is an illustration of the way in which Christianity, without meddling with social usages, introduced a new tone of feeling about the position of woman, which gradually changed the face of the world, is still working, and has further revolutions to effect. The degraded classes of the Greek world were slaves and women. This Epistle touches both, and shows us Christianity in the very act of elevating both. The same process strikes the fetters from the slave and sets the wife by the side of the husband, "yoked in all exercise of noble end,"—namely, the proclamation of Christ as the Saviour of all mankind, and of all human creatures as equally capable of receiving an equal salvation. That annihilates all distinctions. The old world was parted by deep gulfs. There were three of special depth and width, across which it was hard for sympathy to fly. These were the distinctions of race, sex, and condition. But the good news that Christ

has died for all men, and is ready to live in all men, has thrown a bridge across, or rather has filled up, the ravine; so the Apostle bursts into this triumphant proclamation, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

A third name is united with those of husband and wife, that of Archippus. The close relation in which the names stand, and the purely domestic character of the letter, make it probable that he was a son of the wedded pair. At all events, he was in some way part of their household, possibly some kind of teacher and guide. We meet his name also in the Epistle to the Colossians, and from the nature of the reference to him there, we draw the inference that he filled some "ministry" in the Church of Laodicea. The nearness of the two cities made it quite possible that he should live in Philemon's house in Colossæ and yet go over to Laodicea for his work.

The Apostle calls him "his fellow-soldier," a phrase which is best explained in the same fashion as is the previous "fellow-worker," namely, that by it Paul graciously associates Archippus with himself, different as their tasks were. The variation of soldier for worker probably is due to the fact of Archippus' being the bishop of the Laodicean Church. In any case, it is very beautiful that the grizzled veteran officer should thus, as it were, clasp the hand of this young recruit, and call him his comrade. How it would go to the heart of Archippus!

A somewhat stern message is sent to Archippus in the Colossian letter. Why did not Paul send it quietly in this Epistle instead of letting a whole Church know of it? It seems at first sight as if he had chosen the harshest way; but perhaps further consideration may suggest that the reason was an instinctive unwillingness to introduce a jarring note into the joyous friendship and confidence which sound through this Epistle, and to bring public matters into this private communication. The warning would come with more effect from the Church, and this cordial message of good will and confidence would prepare Archippus to receive the other, as rain showers make the ground soft for the good seed. The private affection would mitigate the public exhortation with whatever rebuke may have been in it.

A greeting is sent, too, to "the Church in thy house." As in the case of the similar community in the house of Nymphas (Col. iv. 15), we cannot decide whether by this expression is meant simply a Christian family, or some little company of believers who were wont to meet beneath Philemon's roof for Christian converse and worship. The latter seems the more probable supposition. It is natural that they should be addressed; for Onesimus, if received by Philemon, would naturally become a member of the group, and therefore it was important to secure their good will.

So we have here shown to us, by one stray beam of twinkling light, for a moment, a very sweet picture of the domestic life of that Christian household in their remote valley. It shines still to us across the centuries, which have swallowed up so much that seemed more permanent, and silenced so much that made far more noise in its day. The picture may well set us asking ourselves the question whether we, with all our boasted advancement, have been able to realise the true ideal of Christian family life as these three did. The husband and wife dwelling as heirs together of the grace of life, their child beside them sharing their faith and service, their household ordered in the ways of the Lord, their friends Christ's friends, and their social joys hallowed and serene—what nobler form of family life can be conceived than that? What a rebuke to, and satire on, many a so-called Christian household!

II. We may deal briefly with the apostolic salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," as we have already had to speak of it in considering the greeting to the Colossians. The two main points to be observed in these words are the comprehensiveness of the Apostle's loving wish, and the source to which he looks for its fulfilment. Just as the regal title of the King whose Throne was the Cross was written in the languages of culture, of law, and of religion, as an unconscious prophecy of His universal reign; so, with like unintentional felicity, we have blended here the ideals of good which the East and the West have framed for those to whom they wish good, in token that Christ is able to slake all the thirsts of the soul, and that whatsoever things any races of men have dreamed as the chiefest blessings, these are all to be reached through Him and Him only.

But the deeper lesson here is to be found by observing that "grace" refers to the action of the Divine heart, and "peace" to the result thereof in man's experience. As we have noted in commenting on Col. i. 2, "grace" is free, undeserved, unmotived, self-springing love. Hence it comes to mean, not only the deep fountain in the Divine nature, that His love, which, like some strong spring, leaps up and gushes forth by an inward impulse, in neglect of all motives drawn from the lovableness of its objects, such as determine our poor human loves, but also the results of that bestowing love in men's characters, or, as we say, the "graces" of the Christian soul. They are "grace," not only because in the æsthetic sense of the word they are beautiful, but because, in the theological meaning of it, they are the products of the giving love and power of God. "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report," all nobilities, tendernesses, exquisite beauties, and steadfast strengths of mind and heart, of will and disposition—all are the gifts of God's undeserved and open-handed love.

The fruit of such grace received is peace. In other places the Apostle twice gives a fuller form of this salutation, inserting "mercy" between the two here named; as also does St. John in his second Epistle. That fuller form gives us the source in the Divine heart, the manifestation of grace in the Divine act, and the outcome in human experience; or, as we may say, carrying on the metaphor, the broad, calm lake which the grace, flowing to us in the stream of mercy, makes, when it opens out in our hearts. Here, however, we have but the ultimate source, and the effect in us.

All the discords of our nature and circumstances can be harmonised by that grace which is ready to flow into our hearts. Peace with God, with ourselves, with our fellows, repose in the midst of change, calm in conflict, may be ours. All these various applications of the one idea

should be included in our interpretation, for they are all included in fact in the peace which God's grace brings where it lights. The first and deepest need of the soul is conscious amity and harmony with God, and nothing but the consciousness of His love as forgiving and healing brings that. We are torn asunder by conflicting passions, and our hearts are the battleground for conscience and inclination, sin and goodness, hopes and fears, and a hundred other contending emotions. Nothing but a heavenly power can make the lion within lie down with the lamb. Our natures are "like the troubled sea, which cannot rest," whose churning waters cast up the foul things that lie in their slimy beds; but where God's grace comes, a great calm hushes the tempests, "and birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave."

We are compassed about by foes with whom we have to wage undying warfare, and by hostile circumstances and difficult tasks which need continual conflict; but a man with God's grace in his heart may have the rest of submission, the repose of trust, the tranquillity of him who "has ceased from his own works"; and so, while the daily struggle goes on and the battle rages round, there may be quiet, deep and sacred, in his heart.

The life of nature, which is a selfish life, flings us into unfriendly rivalries with others, and sets us battling for our own hands, and it is hard to pass out of ourselves sufficiently to live peaceably with all men. But the grace of God in our hearts drives out self, and changes the man who truly has it into its own likeness. He who knows that he owes everything to a Divine love which stooped to his lowliness, and pardoned his sins, and enriched him with all which he has that is worthy and noble, cannot but move among men, doing with them, in his poor fashion, what God has done with him.

Thus, in all the manifold forms in which restless hearts need peace, the grace of God brings it to them. The great river of mercy which has its source deep in the heart of God, and in His free, undeserved love, pours into poor, unquiet spirits, and there spreads itself into a placid lake, on whose still surface all heaven is mirrored.

The elliptical form of this salutation leaves it doubtful whether we are to see in it a prayer or a prophecy, a wish or an assurance. According to the probable reading of the parallel greeting in the second Epistle of John, the latter would be the construction; but probably it is best to combine both ideas, and to see here, as Bengel does in the passage referred to in John's Epistle, *votum cum affirmatione*—a desire which is so certain of its own fulfilment that it is a prophecy, just because it is a prayer.

The ground of the certainty lies in the source from which the grace and peace come. They flow "from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The placing of both names under the government of one preposition implies the mysterious unity of the Father with the Son; while conversely St. John, in the parallel passage just mentioned, by employing two prepositions, brings out the distinction between the Father, who is the fontal source, and the Son, who is the flowing stream. But both forms of the expression demand for their honest explanation the recognition of the divinity of Jesus Christ. How dare a man, who thought of Him as other than Divine, put His name thus by the side of God's, as associated with the Father in the bestowal of grace? Surely such words, spoken without any thought of a doctrine of the Trinity, and which are the spontaneous utterance of Christian devotion, are demonstration, not to be gainsaid, that to Paul, at all events, Jesus Christ was, in the fullest sense, Divine. The double source is one source, for in the Son is the whole fulness of the Godhead; and the grace of God, bringing with it the peace of God, is poured into that spirit which bows humbly before Jesus Christ, and trusts Him when He says, with love in His eyes and comfort in His tones, "My grace is sufficient for thee"; "My peace give I unto you."

CHAPTER II.

Philemon 4-7 (R. V.).

Paul's was one of those regal natures to which things are possible that other men dare not do. No suspicion of weakness attaches to him when he pours out his heart in love, nor any of insincerity when he speaks of his continual prayers for his friends, or when he runs over in praise of his converts. Few men have been able to talk so much of their love without betraying its shallowness and self-consciousness, or of their prayers without exciting a doubt of their manly sincerity. But the Apostle could venture to do these things without being thought either feeble or false, and could unveil his deepest affections and his most secret devotions without provoking either a smile or a shrug.

He has the habit of beginning all his letters with thankful commendations and assurances of a place in his prayers. The exceptions are 2 Corinthians, where he writes under strong and painful emotion, and Galatians, where a vehement accusation of fickleness takes the place of the usual greeting. But these exceptions make the habit more conspicuous. Though this is a habit, it is not a form, but the perfectly simple and natural expression of the moment's feelings. He begins his letters so, not in order to please and to say smooth things, but because he feels lovingly, and his heart fills with a pure joy which speaks most fitly in prayer. To recognise good is the way to make good better. Teachers must love if their teaching is to help. The best way to secure the doing of any signal act of Christian generosity, such as Paul wished of Philemon, is to show absolute confidence that it will be done, because it is in accordance with what we know of the doer's character. "It's a shame to tell Arnold a lie: he always trusts us," the Rugby boys used to say. Nothing could so powerfully have swayed Philemon to grant Paul's request, as Paul's graceful mention of his beneficence, which mention is yet by no means conscious diplomacy, but instinctive kindliness.

The words of this section are simple enough, but their order is not altogether clear. They are a good example of the hurry and rush of the Apostle's style, arising from his impetuosity of nature. His thoughts and feelings come knocking at "the door of his lips" in a crowd, and do not always make their way out in logical order. For instance, he begins here with thankfulness, and that suggests the mention of his prayers, verse 4. Then he gives the occasion of

his thankfulness in verse 5, "Hearing of thy love and of the faith which thou hast," etc. He next tells Philemon the subject-matter of his prayers in verse 6, "That the fellowship of thy faith may become effectual," etc. These two verses thus correspond to the two clauses of verse 4, and finally in verse 7 he harks back once more to his reasons for thankfulness in Philemon's love and faith, adding, in a very lovely and pathetic way, that the good deeds done in far-off Colossæ had wafted a refreshing air to the Roman prison house, and, little as the doer knew it, had been a joy and comfort to the solitary prisoner there.

I. We have, then, here the character of Philemon, which made Paul glad and thankful. The order of the language is noteworthy. Love is put before faith. The significance of this sequence comes out by contrast with similar expressions in Ephesians i. 15: "Your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints" (A. V.) and Colossians i. 4: "Your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have toward all the saints," where the same elements are arranged in the more natural order, corresponding to their logical relation; viz., faith first, and love as its consequence. The reason for the change here is probably that Onesimus and Epaphras, from whom Paul would be likely to hear of Philemon, would enlarge upon his practical benevolence, and would naturally say less about the root than about the sweet and visible fruit. The arrangement then is an echo of the talks which had gladdened the Apostle. Possibly, too, love is put first, because the object of the whole letter is to secure its exercise towards the fugitive slave; and seeing that the Apostle would listen with that purpose in view, each story which was told of Philemon's kindness to others made the deeper impression on Paul. The order here is the order of analysis, digging down from manifestation to cause: the order in the parallel passages quoted is the order of production ascending from root to flower.

Another peculiarity in the arrangement of the words is that the objects of love and faith are named in the reverse order to that in which these graces are mentioned, "the Lord Jesus" being first, and "all the saints" last. Thus we have, as it were, "faith towards the Lord Jesus" imbedded in the centre of the verse, while "thy love . . . toward all the saints," which flows from it, wraps it round. The arrangement is like some forms of Hebrew poetical parallelism, in which the first and fourth members correspond, and the second and third, or like the pathetic measure of "In Memoriam," and has the same sweet lingering cadence; while it also implies important truths as to the central place in regard to the virtues which knit hearts in soft bonds of love and help, of the faith which finds its sole object in Jesus Christ.

The source and foundation of goodness and nobility of character is faith in Jesus the Lord. That must be buried deep in the soul if tender love toward men is to flow from it. It is "the very pulse of the machine." All the pearls of goodness are held in solution in faith. Or, to speak more accurately, faith in Christ gives possession of His life and Spirit, from which all good is unfolded; and it further sets in action strong motives by which to lead to every form of purity and beauty of soul; and still further, it brings the heart into glad contact with a Divine love which forgives its Onesimuses, and so it cannot but touch the heart into some glad imitation of that love which is its own dearest treasure. So that, for all these and many more reasons, love to men is the truest visible expression, as it is the direct and necessary result, of faith in Christ. What is exhaled from the heart and drawn upwards by the favours of Christ's self-sacrificing love is faith; when it falls on earth again, as a sweet rain of pity and tenderness, it is love.

Further, the true object of faith and one phase of its attitude towards that object are brought out in this central clause. We have the two names which express, the one the divinity, the other the humanity of Christ. So the proper object of faith is the whole Christ, in both His natures, the Divine-human Saviour. Christian faith sees the divinity in the humanity, and the humanity around the divinity. A faith which grasps only the manhood is maimed, and indeed has no right to the name. Humanity is not a fit object of trust. It may change; it has limits; it must die. "Cursed be the man that maketh flesh his arm," is as true about faith in a merely human Christ as about faith in any other man. There may be reverence, there may be in some sense love, obedience, imitation; but there should not be, and I see not how there can be, the absolute reliance, the utter dependence, the unconditional submission, which are of the very essence of faith, in the emotions which men cherish towards a human Christ. The Lord Jesus only can evoke these. On the other hand, the far-off splendour and stupendous glory of the Divine nature become the object of untrembling trust, and draw near enough to be known and loved, when we have them mellowed to our weak eyes by shining through the tempering medium of His humanity.

The preposition here used to define the relation of faith to its object is noteworthy. Faith is "toward" Him. The idea is that of a movement of yearning after an unattained good. And that is one part of the true office of faith. There is in it an element of aspiration, as of the soaring eagle to the sun, or the climbing tendrils to the summit of the supporting stem. In Christ there is always something beyond, which discloses itself the more clearly, the fuller is our present possession of Him. Faith builds upon and rests in the Christ possessed and experienced, and just therefore will it, if it be true, yearn towards the Christ unpossessed. A great reach of flashing glory beyond opens on us, as we round each new headland in that unending voyage. Our faith should and will be an ever-increasing fruition of Christ, accompanied with increasing perception of unreached depths in Him, and increasing longing after enlarged possession of His infinite fulness.

Where the centre is such a faith, its circumference and outward expression will be a widely diffused love. That deep and most private emotion of the soul, which is the flight of the lonely spirit to the single Christ, as if these two were alone in the world, does not bar a man off from his kind, but effloresces into the largest and most practical love. When one point of the compasses is struck deeply and firmly into that centre of all things, the other can steadily sweep a wide circle. The widest is not here drawn, but a somewhat narrower, concentric one. The love is "toward all saints." Clearly their rela-

tion to Jesus Christ puts all Christians into relation with one another. That was an astounding thought in Philemon's days, when such high walls separated race from race, the slave from the free, woman from man; but the new faith leaped all barriers, and put a sense of brotherhood into every heart that learned God's fatherhood in Jesus. The nave of the wheel holds all the spokes in place. The sun makes the system called by its name a unity, though some planets be of giant bulk and swing through a mighty orbit, waited on by obedient satellites, and some be but specks and move through a narrow circle, and some have scarce been seen by human eye. All are one, because all revolve round one sun, though solemn abysses part them, and though no message has ever crossed the gulfs from one to another.

The recognition of the common relation which all who bear the same relation to Christ bear to one another has more formidable difficulties to encounter to-day than it had in these times when the Church had no stereotyped creeds and no stiffened organisations, and when to the flexibility of its youth were added the warmth of new conviction and the joy of a new field for expanding emotions of brotherly kindness. But nothing can absolve from the duty. Creeds separate, Christ unites. The road to "the reunion of Christendom" is through closer union to Jesus Christ. When that is secured, barriers which now keep brethren apart will be leaped, or pulled down, or got rid of somehow. It is of no use to say, "Go to, let us love one another." That will be unreal, mawkish, histrionic. "The faith which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus" will be the productive cause, as it is the measure, of "thy love toward all the saints."

But the love which is here commended is no a mere feeling, nor does it go off in gushes, however fervid, of eloquent emotion. Clearly Philemon was a benefactor of the brotherhood, and his love did not spend only the paper money of words and promises to pay, but the solid coin of kindly deeds. Practical charity is plainly included in that love of which it had cheered Paul in his imprisonment to hear. Its mention, then, is one step nearer to the object of the letter. Paul conducts his siege of Philemon's heart skilfully, and opens here a fresh parallel, and creeps a yard or two closer up. "Surely you are not going to shut out one of your own household from that wide-reaching kindness." So much is most delicately hinted, or rather, left to Philemon to infer, by the recognition of his brotherly love. A hint lies in it that there may be a danger of cherishing a cheap and easy charity that reverses the law of gravity, and increases as the square of the distance, having tenderness and smiles for people and Churches which are well out of our road, and frowns for some nearer home. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love" his brother "whom he hath not seen?"

II. In verse 6 we have the apostolic prayer for Philemon, grounded on the tidings of his love and faith. It is immediately connected with "the prayers" of verse 4 by the introductory "that," which is best understood as introducing the subject-matter of the prayer. Whatever then may be the meaning of this supplication, it is a prayer for Philemon, and not for others. That remark disposes of the explanations which widen its scope, contrary, as it seems to me, to the natural understanding of the context.

"The fellowship of thy faith" is capable of more than one meaning. The signification of the principal word and the relation expressed by the preposition may be variously determined. "Fellowship" is more than once used in the sense of sharing material wealth with Christ's poor, or more harshly and plainly, charitable contribution. So we find it in Romans xv. 26 and 2 Corinthians ix. 13. Adopting that meaning here, the "of" must express, as it often does, the origin of Philemon's kindly gifts, namely, his faith; and the whole phrase accords with the preceding verse in its view of the genesis of beneficence to the brethren as the result of faith in the Lord.

The Apostle prays that this faith-begotten practical liberality may became **effica**cious, or may acquire still more power; *i. e.*, may increase in activity, and so may lead to "the knowledge of every good thing that is in us." The interpretation has found extensive support, which takes this as equivalent to a desire that Philemon's good deeds might lead others, whether enemies or friends, to recognise the beauties of sympathetic goodness in the true Christian character. Such an explanation hopelessly confuses the whole, and does violence to the plain requirements of the context, which limit the prayer to Philemon. It is this "knowledge" of which Paul is thinking. The same profound and pregnant word is used here which occurs so frequently in the other epistles of the captivity, and which always means that deep and vital knowledge which knows because it possesses. Usually its object is God as revealed in the great work and person of Christ. Here its object is the sum total of spiritual blessings, the whole fulness of the gifts given us by, and, at bottom, consisting of, that same Christ dwelling in the heart, who is revealer, because He is communicator, of God. The full, deep knowledge of this manifold and yet one good is no mere theoretical work of the understanding, but is an experience which is only possible to him who enjoys it.

The meaning of the whole prayer, then, put into feebler and more modern dress is simply that Philemon's liberality and Christian love may grow more and more, and may help him to a fuller appropriation and experience of the large treasures "which are in us," though in germ and potentiality only, until brought into consciousness by our own Christian growth. The various readings "in us," or "in you" only widen the circle of possessors of these gifts to the whole Church, or narrow it to the believers of Colossæ.

There still remain for consideration the last words of the clause, "unto Christ." They must be referred back to the main subject of the sentence, "may become effectual." They seem to express the condition on which Christian "fellowship," like all Christian acts, can be quickened with energy, and tend to spiritual progress; namely, that it shall be done as to the Lord. There is perhaps in this appended clause a kind of lingering echo of our Lord's own words, in which he accepts as done unto Him the kindly deeds done to the least of His brethren.

So then this great prayer brings out very strongly the goal to which the highest perfection of Christian character has still to aspire. Philemon was no weakling or laggard in the Christian conflict and race. His attainments sent a

thrill of thankfulness through the Apostle's spirit. But there remained "very much land to be possessed"; and precisely because he had climbed so far, does his friend pray that he may mount still higher, where the sweep of view is wider, and the air clearer still. It is an endless task to bring into conscious possession and exercise all the fulness with which Christ endows His feeblest servant. Not till all that God can give, or rather has given, has been incorporated in the nature and wrought out in the life, is the term reached. This is the true sublime of the Christian life, that it begins with the reception of a strictly infinite gift, and demands immortality as the field for unfolding its worth. Continual progress in all that ennobles the nature, satisfies the heart, and floods the mind with light is the destiny of the Christian soul, and of it alone. Therefore unwearied effort, buoyancy, and hope which no dark memories can dash nor any fears darken should mark their temper, to whom the future offers an absolutely endless and limitless increase in the possession of the infinite God.

There is also brought out in this prayer the value of Christian beneficence as a means of spiritual growth. Philemon's "communication of faith" will help him to the knowledge of the fulness of Christ. The reaction of conduct on character and growth in godliness is a familiar idea with Paul, especially in the prison epistles. Thus we read in his prayer for the Colossians, "fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." The faithful carrying out in life of what we already know is not the least important condition of increasing knowledge. If a man does not live up to his religion, his religion shrinks to the level of his life. Unoccupied territory lapses. We hold our spiritual gifts on the terms of using them. The practice of convictions deepens convictions; not that the exercise of Christian graces will make theologians, but it will give larger possession of the knowledge which is life.

While this general principle is abundantly enforced in Scripture and confirmed by experience, the specific form of it here is that the right administration of wealth is a direct means of increasing a Christian's possession of the large store treasured in Christ. Every loving thought towards the sorrowful and the needy, every touch of sympathy yielded to, and every kindly, Christlike deed flowing from these, thins away some film of the barriers between the believing soul and a full possession of God, and thus makes it more capable of beholding Him and of rising to communion with Him. The possibilities of wealth lie, not only in the direction of earthly advantages, but in the fact that men may so use it as to secure their being "received into everlasting habitations." Modern evangelical teachers have been afraid to say what Paul ventured to say on this matter, for fear of obscuring the truth which Paul gave his life to preach. Surely they need not be more jealous for the doctrine of "justification by faith" than he was; and if he had no scruples in telling rich men to "lay up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come," by being "ready to communicate," they may safely follow. There is probably no more powerful cause of the comparative feebleness of average English Christianity than the selfish use of money, and no surer means of securing a great increase in the depth and richness of the individual Christian life than the fuller application of Christian principle, that is, of the law of sacrifice, to the administration of property.

The final clause of the verse seems to state the condition on which Philemon's good deeds will avail for his own growth in grace, and implies that in him that condition is fulfilled. If a man does deeds of kindness and help to one of these little ones, as "unto Christ," then his beneficence will come back in spiritual blessing on his own head. If they are the result of simple natural compassion, beautiful as it is, they will reinforce it, but have no tendency to strengthen that from which they do not flow. If they are tainted by any self-regard, then they are not charitable deeds at all. What is done for Christ will bring to the doer more of Christ as its consequence and reward. All life, with all its varied forms of endurance and service, comes under this same law, and tends to make more assured and more blessed and more profound the knowledge and grasp of the fulness of Christ, in the measure in which it is directed to Him, and done or suffered for His sake.

III. The present section closes with a very sweet and pathetic representation of the Apostle's joy in the character of his friend.

The "for" of verse 7 connects not with the words of petition immediately before, but with "I thank my God" (verse 4), and gives a graceful turn—graceful only because so unforced and true—to the sentence. "My thanks are due to you for your kindness to others, for, though you did not think of it you have done me as much good as you did them." The "love" which gives Paul such "great joy and consolation" is not love directed to himself, but to others; and the reason why it gladdened the Apostle was because it had "refreshed the hearts" of sorrowful and needy saints in Colossæ. This tender expression of affectionate joy in Philemon's good deeds is made wonderfully emotional by that emphatic "brother" which ends the verse, and by its unusual position in the sentence assumes the character of a sudden, irrepressible shoot of love from Paul's heart towards Philemon, like the quick impulse with which a mother will catch up her child, and cover it with caresses. Paul was never ashamed of showing his tenderness, and it never repels us.

These final words suggest the unexpected good which good deeds may do. No man can ever tell how far the blessing of his trivial acts of kindness, or other pieces of Christian conduct, may travel. They may benefit one in material fashion, but the fragrance may reach many others. Philemon little dreamed that his small charity to some suffering brother in Colossæ would find its way across the sea, and bring a waft of coolness and refreshing into the hot prison house. Neither Paul nor Philemon dreamed that, made immortal by the word of the former, the same transient act would find its way across the centuries, and would "smell sweet and blossom in the dust" to-day. Men know not who are their audiences, or who may be spectators of their works; for they are all bound so mystically and closely together, that none can tell how far the vibrations which he sets in motion will thrill. This is true about all deeds, good and bad, and invests them all with solemn importance. The arrow shot travels beyond the archer's eye, and may wound where he

knows not. The only thing certain about the deed once done is that its irrevocable consequences will reach much farther than the doer dreamed, and that no limits can be set to the subtle influence which, for blessing or harm, it exerts.

Since the diameter of the circle which our acts may fill is unknown and unknowable, the doer who stands at the centre is all the more solemnly bound to make sure of the only thing of which he can make sure, the quality of the influence sent forth; and since his deed may blight or bless so widely, to clarify his motives and guard his doings, that they may bring only good wherever they light.

May we not venture to see shining through the Apostle's words the Master's face? "Even as Christ did for us with God the Father," says Luther, "thus also doth St. Paul for Onesimus with Philemon"; and that thought may permissibly be applied to many parts of this letter, to which it gives much beauty. It may not be all fanciful to say that, as Paul's heart was gladdened when he heard of the good deeds done in far-off Colossæ by a man who "owed to him his own self," so we may believe that Christ is glad and has "great joy in our love" to His servants and in our kindliness, when He beholds the poor work done by the humblest for His sake. He sees and rejoices, and approves when there are none but Himself to know or praise; and at last many, who did lowly service to His friends, will be surprised to hear from His lips the acknowledgment that it was Himself whom they had visited and succoured, and that they had been ministering to the Master's joy when they had only known themselves to be succouring His servants' need.

CHAPTER III.

Philemon 8-11 (R. V.).

After honest and affectionate praise of Philemon, the Apostle now approaches the main purpose of his letter. But even now he does not blurt it out at once. He probably anticipated that his friend was justly angry with his runaway slave, and therefore, in these verses, he touches a kind of prelude to his request with what we should call the finest tact, if it were not so manifestly the unconscious product of simple good feeling. Even by the end of them he has not ventured to say what he wishes done, though he has ventured to introduce the obnoxious name. So much persuading and sanctified ingenuity does it sometimes take to induce good men to do plain duties which may be unwelcome.

These verses not only present a model for efforts to lead men in right paths, but they unveil the very spirit of Christianity in their pleadings. Paul's persuasives to Philemon are echoes of Christ's persuasives to Paul. He had learned his method from his Master, and had himself experienced that gentle love was more than commandments. Therefore he softens his voice to speak to Philemon, as Christ had softened His to speak to Paul. We do not arbitrarily "spiritualise" the words, but simply recognise that the Apostle moulded his conduct after Christ's pattern, when we see here a mirror reflecting some of the highest truths of Christian ethics.

I. Here is seen love which beseeches where it might command. The first word "wherefore," leads back to the preceding sentence, and makes Philemon's past kindness to the saints the reason for his being asked to be kind now. The Apostle's confidence in his friend's character, and in his being amenable to the appeal of love, made Paul waive his apostolic authority, and sue instead of commanding. There are people, like the horse and the mule, who understand only rough imperatives, backed by force; but they are fewer than we are apt to think, and perhaps gentleness is never wholly thrown away. No doubt, there must be adaptation of method to different characters, but we should try gentleness before we make up our minds that to try it is to throw pearls before swine.

The careful limits put to apostolic authority here deserve notice. "I might be much bold in Christ to command." He has no authority in himself, but he has "in Christ." His own personality gives him none, but his relation to his Master does. It is a distinct assertion of right to command, and an equally distinct repudiation of any such right, except as derived from his union with Jesus.

He still further limits his authority by that noteworthy clause, "that which is befitting." His authority does not stretch so far as to create new obligations, or to repeal plain laws of duty. There was a standard by which his commands were to be tried. He appeals to Philemon's own sense of moral fitness, to his natural conscience, enlightened by communion with Christ.

Then comes the great motive which he will urge, "for love's sake"—not merely his to Philemon, or Philemon's to him, but the bond which unites all Christian souls together, and binds them all to Christ. "That grand, sacred principle," says Paul, "bids me put away authority, and speak in entreaty." Love naturally beseeches, and does not order. The harsh voice of command is simply the imposition of another's will, and it belongs to relationships in which the heart has no share. But wherever love is the bond, grace is poured into the lips, and "I enjoin" becomes "I pray." So that even where the outward form of authority is still kept, as in a parent to young children, there will ever be some endearing word to swathe the harsh imperative in tenderness, like a sword blade wrapped about with wool, lest it should wound. Love tends to obliterate the hard distinction of superior and inferior, which finds its expression in laconic imperatives and silent obedience. It seeks not for mere compliance with commands, but for oneness of will. The lightest wish breathed by loved lips is stronger than all stern injunctions, often, alas! than all laws of duty. The heart is so tuned as to vibrate only to that one tone. The rocking stones, which all the storms of winter may howl round and not move, can be set swinging by a light touch. Una leads the lion in a silken leash. Love controls the wildest nature. The demoniac, whom no chains can bind, is found sitting at the feet of incarnate gentleness. So the wish of love is all-powerful with loving hearts, and its faintest whisper louder and more constraining than all the trumpets of Sinai.

There is a large lesson here for all human relationships. Fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, friends and companions, teachers and guides of all sorts, should set their conduct by this pattern, and let the law of love sit ever upon their lips. Authority is the weapon of a weak

man, who is doubtful of his own power to get himself obeyed, or of a selfish one, who seeks for mechanical submission rather than for the fealty of willing hearts. Love is the weapon of a strong man who can cast aside the trappings of superiority, and is never loftier than when he descends, nor more absolute than when he abjures authority, and appeals with love to love. Men are not to be dragooned into goodness. If mere outward acts are sought, it may be enough to impose another's will in orders as curt as a soldier's word of command; but if the joyful inclination of the heart to the good deed is to be secured, that can only be done when law melts into love, and is thereby transformed to a more imperative obligation, written not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart.

There is a glimpse here into the very heart of Christ's rule over men. He too does not merely impose commands, but stoops to entreat, where He indeed might command. "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends"; and though He does go on to say, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you," yet His commandment has in it so much tenderness, condescension, and pleading love, that it sounds far liker beseeching than enjoining. His yoke is easy, for this among other reasons, that it is, if one may say so, padded with love. His burden is light because it is laid on His servant's shoulders by a loving hand; and so, as St. Bernard says, it is *onus quod portantem portat*, a burden which carries him who carries it.

II. There is in these verses the appeal which gives weight to the entreaties of love. The Apostle brings personal considerations to bear on the enforcement of impersonal duty, and therein follows the example of his Lord. He presents his own circumstances as adding power to his request, and, as it were, puts himself into the scale. He touches with singular pathos on two things which should sway his friend. "Such a one as Paul the aged." The alternative rendering "ambassador," while quite possible, has not congruity in its favour, and would be a recurrence to that very motive of official authority which he has just disclaimed. The other rendering is every way preferable. How old was he? Probably somewhere about sixty—not a very great age, but life was somewhat shorter then than now, and Paul was, no doubt, aged by work, by worry, and by the unresting spirit that "o'er-informed his tenement of clay." Such temperaments as his soon grow old. Perhaps Philemon was not much younger; but the prosperous Colossian gentleman had had a smoother life, and, no doubt, carried his years more lightly.

The requests of old age should have weight. In our days, what with the improvements in education, and the general loosening of the bonds of reverence, the old maxim that "the utmost respect is due to children," receives a strange interpretation, and in many a household the Divine order is turned upside down, and the juniors regulate all things. Other still more sacred things will be likely to lose their due reverence when silver hairs no longer receive theirs.

But usually the aged who are "such" aged "as Paul" was, will not fail of obtaining honour and deference. No more beautiful picture of the bright energy and freshness still possible to the old was ever painted than may be gathered from the Apostle's unconscious sketch of himself. He delighted in having young life about him—Timothy, Titus, Mark, and others, boys in comparison with himself, whom yet he admitted to close intimacy, as some old general might the youths of his staff, warming his age at the genial flame of their growing energies and unworn hopes. His was a joyful old age too, notwithstanding many burdens of anxiety and sorrow. We hear the clear song of his gladness ringing through the epistle of joy, that to the Philippians, which, like this, dates from his Roman captivity. A Christian old age should be joyful, and only it will be; for the joys of the natural life burn low, when the fuel that fed them is nearly exhausted, and withered hands are held in vain over the dying embers. But Christ's joy "remains," and a Christian old age may be like the polar midsummer days, when the sun shines till midnight, and dips but for an imperceptible interval ere it rises for the unending day of heaven.

Paul the aged was full of interest in the things of the day; no mere "praiser of time gone by," but a strenuous worker, cherishing a quick sympathy and an eager interest which kept him young to the end. Witness that last chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy, where he is seen in the immediate expectation of death, entering heartily into passing trifles, and thinking it worth while to give little pieces of information about the movements of his friends, and wishful to get his books and parchments, that he might do some more work while waiting for the headsman's sword. And over his cheery, sympathetic, busy old age there is thrown the light of a great hope, which kindles desire and onward looks in his dim eyes, and parts "such a one as Paul the aged" by a whole universe from the old whose future is dark and their past dreary, whose hope is a phantom and their memory a pang.

The Apostle adds yet another personal characteristic as a motive with Philemon to grant his request: "Now a prisoner also of Christ Jesus." He has already spoken of himself in these terms in verse 1. His sufferings were imposed by and endured for Christ. He holds up his fettered wrist, and in effect says, "Surely you will not refuse anything that you can do to wrap a silken softness round the cold, hard iron, especially when you remember for Whose sake and by Whose will I am bound with this chain." He thus brings personal motives to reinforce duty which is binding from other and higher considerations. He does not merely tell Philemon that he ought to take back Onesimus as a piece of self-sacrificing Christian duty. He does imply that highest motive throughout his pleadings, and urges that such action is "fitting" or in consonance with the position and obligations of a Christian man. But he backs up this highest reason with these others: "If you hesitate to take him back because you ought, will you do it because I ask you? and, before you answer that question, will you remember my age, and what I am bearing for the Master?" If he can get his friend to do the right thing by the help of these subsidiary motives, still, it is the right thing; and the appeal to these motives will do Philemon no harm, and, if successful, will do both him and Onesimus a great deal of good.

Does not this action of Paul remind us of the highest example of a similar use of motives of personal attachment as aids to duty? Christ does thus with his servants. He does not simply hold up before us a cold law of duty, but warms it by

introducing our personal relation to Him as the main motive for keeping it. Apart from Him, morality can only point to the tables of stone and say: "There! that is what you ought to do. Do it or face the consequences." But Christ says: "I have given Myself for you. My will is your law. Will you do it for My sake?" Instead of the chilling, statuesque ideal, as pure as marble and as cold, a Brother stands before us with a heart that beats, a smile on His face, a hand outstretched to help; and His word is, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." The specific difference of Christian morality lies not in its precepts, but in its motive, and in its gift of power to obey. Paul could only urge regard to him as a subsidiary inducement. Christ puts it as the chief, nay, as the sole motive for obedience.

III. The last point suggested by these verses is the gradual opening up of the main subject-matter of the Apostle's request. Very noteworthy is the tenderness of the description of the fugitive as "my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds." Paul does not venture to name him at once, but prepares the way by the warmth of this affectionate reference. The position of the name in the sentence is most unusual, and suggests a kind of hesitation to take the plunge, while the hurried passing on to meet the objection which he knew would spring immediately to Philemon's mind is almost as if Paul laid his hand on his friend's lips to stop his words,—"Onesimus, then, is it? that good-for-nothing!" Paul admits the indictment, will say no word to mitigate the condemnation due to his past worthlessness, but, with a playful allusion to the slave's name, which conceals his deep earnestness, assures Philemon that he will find the formerly inappropriate name, Onesimus—*i. e.*, profitable—true yet, for all that is past. He is sure of this, because he, Paul, has proved his value. Surely never were the natural feelings of indignation and suspicion more skilfully soothed, and never did repentant good-for-nothing get sent back to regain the confidence which he had forfeited, with such a certificate of character in his hand!

But there is something of more importance than Paul's inborn delicacy and tact to notice here. Onesimus had been a bad specimen of a bad class. Slavery must needs corrupt both the owner and the chattel; and, as a matter of fact, we have classical allusions enough to show that the slaves of Paul's period were deeply tainted with the characteristic vices of their condition. Liars, thieves, idle, treacherous, nourishing a hatred of their masters all the more deadly that it was smothered, but ready to flame out, if opportunity served, in blood-curdling cruelties—they constitued an ever-present danger, and needed an ever-wakeful watchfulness. Onesimus had been known to Philemon only as one of the idlers who were more of a nuisance than a benefit, and cost more than they earned; and he apparently ended his career by theft. And this degraded creature with scars on his soul deeper and worse than the marks of fetters on his limbs, had somehow found his way to the great jungle of a city, where all foul vermin could crawl and hiss and sting with comparative safety. There he had somehow come across the Apostle, and had received into his heart, filled with ugly desires and lusts, the message of Christ's love, which had swept it clean and made him over again. The Apostle has had but short experience of his convert, but he is quite sure that he is a Christian; and, that being the case, he is as sure that all the bad black past is buried, and that the new leaf now turned over will be covered with fair writing, not in the least like the blots that were on the former page, and have now been dissolved from off it, by the touch of Christ's blood.

It is a typical instance of the miracles which the gospel wrought as every-day events in its transforming career. Christianity knows nothing of hopeless cases. It professes its ability to take the most crooked stick and bring it straight, to flash a new power into the blackest carbon, which will turn it into a diamond. Every duty will be done better by a man if he have the love and grace of Jesus Christ in his heart. New motives are brought into play, new powers are given, new standards of duty are set up. The small tasks become great, and the unwelcome sweet, and the difficult easy, when done for and through Christ. Old vices are crushed in their deepest source; old habits driven out by the force of a new affection, as the young leaf-buds push the withered foliage from the tree. Christ can make any man over again, and does so re-create every heart that trusts to Him. Such miracles of transformation are wrought to-day as truly as of old. Many professing Christians experience little of that quickening and revolutionising energy; many observers see little of it, and some begin to croak, as if the old power had ebbed away. But wherever men give the gospel fair play in their lives, and open their spirits, in truth and not merely in profession, to its influence, it vindicates its undiminished possession of all its former energy; and if ever it seems to fail, it is not that the medicine is ineffectual, but that the sick man has not really taken it. The low tone of much modern Christianity and its dim exhibition of the transforming power of the gospel is easily and sadly accounted for without charging decrepitude on that which was once so mighty, by the patent fact that much modern Christianity is little better than lip acknowledgment, and that much more of it is woefully unfamiliar with the truth which it in some fashion believes, and is sinfully negligent of the spiritual gifts which it professes to treasure. If a Christian man does not show that his religion is changing him into the fair likeness of his Master, and fitting him for all relations of life, the reason is simply that he has so little of it, and that little so mechanical and tepid.

Paul pleads with Philemon to take back his worthless servant, and assures him that he will find Onesimus helpful now. Christ does not need to be besought to welcome His runaway good-for-nothings, however unprofitable they have been. That Divine charity of His forgives all things, and "hopes all things" of the worst, and can fulfil its own hope in the most degraded. With bright, unfaltering confidence in His own power He fronts the most evil, sure that He can cleanse; and that, no matter what the past has been, His power can overcome all defects of character, education, or surroundings, can set free from all moral disadvantages adhering to men's station, class, or calling, can break the entail of sin. The worst needs no intercessor to sway that tender heart of our great Master whom we may dimly see shadowed in the very name of "Philemon," which means one who is loving or kindly. Whoever confesses to him that he has

"been an unprofitable servant," will be welcomed to His heart, made pure and good by the Divine Spirit breathing new life into him, will be trained by Christ for all joyful toil as His slave, and yet His freedman and friend; and at last each fugitive and unprofitable Onesimus will hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

CHAPTER IV.

Philemon 12-14 (R. V.).

The characteristic features of the Epistle are all embodied in these verses. They set forth, in the most striking manner, the relation of Christianity to slavery and to other social evils. They afford an exquisite example of the courteous delicacy and tact of the Apostle's intervention on behalf of Onesimus; and there shine through them, as through a semi-transparent medium, adumbrations and shimmering hints of the greatest truths of Christianity.

I. The first point to notice is that decisive step of sending back the fugitive slave. Not many years ago the conscience of England was stirred because the Government of the day sent out a circular instructing captains of men-of-war, on the decks of which fugitive slaves sought asylum, to restore them to their "owners." Here an Apostle does the same thing—seems to side with the oppressor, and to drive the oppressed from the sole refuge left him, the very horns of the altar. More extraordinary still, here is the fugitive voluntarily going back, travelling all the weary way from Rome to Colossæ in order to put his neck once more beneath the yoke. Both men were acting from Christian motives, and thought that they were doing a piece of plain Christian duty. Then does Christianity sanction slavery? Certainly not; its principles cut it up by the roots. A gospel, of which the starting-point is that all men stand on the same level, as loved by the one Lord, and redeemed by the one cross, can have no place for such an institution. A religion which attaches the highest importance to man's awful prerogative of freedom, because it insists on every man's individual responsibility to God, can keep no terms with a system which turns men into chattels. Therefore Christianity cannot but regard slavery as sin against God, and as treason towards man. The principles of the gospel worked into the conscience of a nation destroy slavery. Historically it is true that as Christianity has grown slavery has withered. But the New Testament never directly condemns it, and by regulating the conduct of Christian masters, and recognising the obligations of Christian slaves, seems to contemplate its continuance, and to be deaf to the sighing of the captives.

This attitude was probably not a piece of policy or a matter of calculated wisdom on the part of the Apostle. He no doubt saw that the gospel brought a great unity in which all distinctions were merged, and rejoiced in thinking that "in Christ Jesus there is neither bond or free"; but whether he expected the distinction ever to disappear from actual life is less certain. He may have thought of slavery as he did of sex, that the fact would remain, while yet "we are all one in Christ Jesus." It is by no means necessary to suppose that the Apostles saw the full bearing of the truths they had to preach, in their relation to social conditions. They were inspired to give the Church the principles. It remained for future ages, under Divine guidance, to apprehend the destructive and formative range of these principles.

However this may be, the attitude of the New Testament to slavery is the same as to other unchristian institutions. It brings the leaven, and lets it work. That attitude is determined by three great principles. First, the message of Christianity is primarily to individuals, and only secondarily to society. It leaves the units whom it has influenced to influence the mass. Second, it acts on spiritual and moral sentiment, and only afterwards and consequently on deeds or institutions. Third, it hates violence, and trusts wholly to enlightened conscience. So it meddles directly with no political or social arrangements, but lays down principles which will profoundly affect these, and leaves them to soak into the general mind. If an evil needs force for its removal, it is not ready for removal. If it has to be pulled up by violence, a bit of the root will certainly be left and will grow again. When a dandelion head is ripe, a child's breath can detach the winged seeds; but until it is, no tempest can move them. The method of violence is noisy and wasteful, like the winter torrents that cover acres of good ground with mud and rocks, and are past in a day. The only true way is, by slow degrees to create a state of feeling which shall instinctively abhor and cast off the evil. Then there will be no hubbub and no waste, and the thing once done will be done for ever.

So it has been with slavery; so it will be with war, and intemperance, and impurity, and the miserable anomalies of our present civilisation. It has taken eighteen hundred years for the whole Church to learn the inconsistency of Christianity with slavery. We are no quicker learners than the past generations were. God is patient, and does not seek to hurry the march of His purposes. We have to be imitators of God, and shun the "raw haste" which is "half-sister to delay."

But patience is not passivity. It is a Christian's duty to "hasten the day of the Lord," and to take part in the educational process which Christ is carrying on through the ages, by submitting himself to it in the first place, and then by endeavouring to bring others under its influence. His place should be in the van of all social progress. It does not become Christ's servants to be content with the attainments of any past or present, in the matter of the organisation of society on Christian principles. "God has more light to break forth from His word." Coming centuries will look back on the obtuseness of the moral perceptions of nineteenth-century Christians in regard to matters of Christian duty which, hidden from us, are sun-clear to them, with the same half-amused, half-tragic wonder with which we look back to Jamaica planters or South Carolina rice-growers, who defended slavery as a missionary institution, and saw no contradiction between their religion and their practice. We have to stretch our charity to believe in these men's sincere religion. Succeeding ages will have to make the same allowance for us, and will need it for themselves from their successors. The main thing is, for us to try to keep our spirits open to all the incidence of the gospel on social and civic life, and to see that we are on the right side, and trying to help

on the approach of that kingdom which does "not cry nor lift up, nor cause its voice to be heard in the streets," but has its coming "prepared as the morning," that swims up, silent and slow, and flushes the heavens with an unsetting light.

II. The next point in these verses is Paul's loving identification of himself with Onesimus.

The A. V. here follows another reading from the R. V.; the former has "thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels." The additional words are unquestionably inserted without authority in order to patch a broken construction. The R. V. cuts the knot in a different fashion by putting the abrupt words, "himself that is, my very own heart," under the government of the preceding verb. But it seems more probable that the Apostle began a new sentence with them, which he meant to have finished as the A. V. does for him, but which, in fact, got hopelessly upset in the swift rush of his thoughts, and does not right itself grammatically till the "receive him" of verse 17.

In any case the main thing to observe is the affectionate plea which he puts in for the cordial reception of Onesimus. Of course "mine own bowels" is simply the Hebrew way of saying "mine own heart." We think the one phrase graceful and sentimental, and the other coarse. A Jew did not think so, and it might be difficult to say why he should. It is a mere question of difference in localising certain emotions. Onesimus was a piece of Paul's very heart, part of himself; the unprofitable slave had wound himself round his affections, and become so dear that to part with him was like cutting his heart out of his bosom. Perhaps some of the virtues, which the servile condition helps to develop in undue proportion, such as docility, lightheartedness, serviceableness, had made him a soothing and helpful companion. What a plea that would be with one who loved Paul as well as Philemon did! He could not receive harshly one whom the Apostle had so honoured with his love. "Take care of him, be kind to him as if it were to me."

Such language from an Apostle about a slave would do more to destroy slavery than any violence would do. Love leaps the barrier, and it ceases to separate. So these simple, heartfelt words are an instance of one method by which Christianity wars against all social wrongs, by casting its caressing arm around the outcast, and showing that the abject and oppressed are objects of its special love.

They teach, too, how interceding love makes its object part of its very self; the same thought recurs still more distinctly in verse 17, "Receive him as myself." It is the natural language of love; some of the deepest and most blessed Christian truths are but the carrying out of that identification to its fullest extent. We are all Christ's Onesimuses, and He, out of His pure love, makes Himself one with us, and us one with Him. The union of Christ with all who trust in Him, no doubt, presupposes His Divine nature, but still there is a human side to it, and it is the result of His perfect love. All love delights to fuse itself with its object, and as far as may be to abolish the distinction of "I" and "thou." But human love can travel but a little way on that road; Christ's goes much farther. He that pleads for some poor creature feels that the kindness is done to himself when the former is helped or pardoned. Imperfectly but really these words shadow forth the great fact of Christ's intercession for us sinners, and our acceptance in Him. We need no better symbol of the stooping love of Christ, who identifies Himself with His brethren, and of our wondrous identification with Him, our High Priest and Intercessor, than this picture of the Apostle pleading for the runaway and bespeaking a welcome for him as part of himself. When Paul says, "Receive him, that is, my very heart," his words remind us of the yet more blessed ones, which reveal a deeper love and more marvellous condescension, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me," and may reverently be taken as a faint shadow of that prevailing intercession, through which he that is joined to the Lord and is one spirit with Him is received of God as part of Christ's mystical body, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.

III. Next comes the expression of a half-formed purpose which was put aside for a reason to be immediately stated. "Whom I would fain have kept with me"; the tense of the verb indicating the incompleteness of the desire. The very statement of it is turned into a graceful expression of Paul's confidence in Philemon's good will to him, by the addition of that "on thy behalf." He is sure that, if his friend had been beside him, he would have been glad to lend him his servant, and so he would have liked to have had Onesimus as a kind of representative of the service which he knows would have been so willingly rendered. The purpose for which he would have liked to keep him is defined as being, "that he might minister to me in the bonds of the Gospel." If the last words be connected with "me," they suggest a tender reason why Paul should be ministered to, as suffering for Christ, their common Master, and for the truth, their common possession. If, as is perhaps less probable, they be connected with "minister," they describe the sphere in which the service is to be **rendered.** Either the master or the slave would be bound by the obligations which the Gospel laid on them to serve Paul. Both were his converts, and therefore knit to him by a welcome chain, which made service a delight.

There is no need to enlarge on the winning courtesy of these words, so full of happy confidence in the friend's disposition, that they could not but evoke the love to which they trusted so completely. Nor need I do more than point their force for the purpose of the whole letter, the procuring a cordial reception for the returning fugitive. So dear had he become, that Paul would like to have kept him. He goes back with a kind of halo round him, now that he is not only a good-for-nothing runaway, but Paul's friend, and so much prized by him. It would be impossible to do anything but welcome him, bringing such credentials; and yet all this is done with scarcely a word of direct praise, which might have provoked contradiction. One does not know whether the confidence in Onesimus or in Philemon is the dominant note in the harmony. In the preceding clause, he was spoken of as, in some sense, part of the Apostle's very self. In this, he is regarded as, in some sense, part of Philemon. So he is a link between them. Paul would have taken his service as if it had been his master's. Can the master fail to take him as if he were Paul?

IV. The last topic in these verses is the de-

cision which arrested the half-formed wish. "I was wishing indeed, but I willed otherwise." The language is exact. There is a universe between "I wished" and "I willed." Many a good wish remains fruitless, because it never passes into the stage of firm resolve. Many who wish to be better will to be bad. One strong "I will" can paralyse a million wishes.

The Apostle's final determination was, to do nothing without Philemon's cognisance and consent. The reason for the decision is at once a very triumph of persuasiveness, which would be ingenious if it were not so spontaneous, and an adumbration of the very spirit of Christ's appeal for service to us. "That thy benefit,"—the good done to me by him, which would in my eyes be done by you—"should not be as of necessity, but willingly." That "as" is a delicate addition. He will not think that the benefit would really have been by constraint, but it might have looked as if it were.

Do not these words go much deeper than this small matter? And did not Paul learn the spirit that suggested them from his own experience of how Christ treated him? The principle underlying them is, that where the bond is love, compulsion takes the sweetness and goodness out of even sweet and good things. Freedom is essential to virtue. If a man "could not help it" there is neither praise nor blame due. That freedom Christianity honours and respects. So in reference to the offer of the gospel blessings, men are not forced to accept them, but appealed to, and can turn deaf ears to the pleading voice, "Why will ye die?" Sorrows and sins and miseries without end continue, and the gospel is rejected, and lives of wretched godlessness are lived, and a dark future pulled down on the rejecters' heads—and all because God knows that these things are better than that men should be forced into goodness, which indeed would cease to be goodness if they were. For nothing is good but the free turning of the will to goodness, and nothing bad but its aversion therefrom.

The same solemn regard for the freedom of the individual and low estimate of the worth of constrained service influence the whole aspect of Christian ethics. Christ wants no pressed men in His army. The victorious host of priestly warriors, which the Psalmist saw following the priest-king in the day of his power, numerous as the dewdrops, and radiant with reflected beauty as these, were all "willing"—volunteers. There were no conscripts in the ranks. These words might be said to be graven over the gates of the kingdom of heaven, "Not as of necessity, but willingly." In Christian morals, law becomes love, and love, law. "Must" is not in the Christian vocabulary, except as expressing the sweet constraint which bows the will of him who loves to harmony, which is joy, with the will of Him who is loved. Christ takes no offerings which the giver is not glad to render. Money, influence, service, which are not offered by a will moved by love, which love, in its turn, is set in motion by the recognition of the infinite love of Christ in His sacrifice are, in His eyes, nought. An earthenware cup with a drop of cold water in it, freely given out of a glad heart, is richer and more precious in His sight than golden chalices swimming with wine and melted pearls, which are laid by constraint on His table. "I delight to do Thy will" is the foundation of all Christian obedience; and the servant had caught the very tone of the Lord's voice when he said, "Without thy mind I will do nothing, that thy benefit should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly."

CHAPTER V.

Philemon 15-19 (R. V.).

The first words of these verses are connected with the preceding by the "for" at the beginning; that is to say, the thought that possibly the Divine purpose in permitting the flight of Onesimus was his restoration, in eternal and holy relationship, to Philemon, was Paul's reason for not carrying out his wish to keep Onesimus as his own attendant and helper. "I did not decide, though I very much wished, to retain him without your consent, because it is possible that he was allowed to flee from you, though his flight was his own blamable act, in order that he might be given back to you, a richer possession, a brother instead of a slave."

I. There is here a Divine purpose discerned as shining through a questionable human act.

The first point to note is, with what charitable delicacy of feeling the Apostle uses a mild word to express the fugitive's flight. He will not employ the harsh, naked word "ran away." It might irritate Philemon. Besides, Onesimus has repented of his faults, as is plain from the fact of his voluntary return, and therefore there is no need for dwelling on them. The harshest, sharpest words are best when callous consciences are to be made to wince; but words that are balm and healing are to be used when men are heartily ashamed of their sins. So the deed for which Philemon's forgiveness is asked is half veiled in the phrase "he was parted."

Not only so, but the word suggests that behind the slave's mutiny and flight there was another Will working, of which, in some sense, Onesimus was but the instrument. He "was parted"—not that he was not responsible for his flight, but that, through his act, which in the eyes of all concerned was wrong, Paul discerns as dimly visible a great Divine purpose.

But he puts that as only a possibility: "Perhaps he departed from thee."—He will not be too sure of what God means by such and such a thing, as some of us are wont to be, as if we had been sworn of God's privy council. "Perhaps" is one of the hardest words for minds of a certain class to say; but in regard to all such subjects, and to many more, it is the motto of the wise man, and the shibboleth which sifts out the patient, modest lovers of truth from rash theorists and precipitate dogmatisers. Impatience of uncertainty is a moral fault which mars many an intellectual process; and its evil effects are nowhere more visible than in the field of theology. A humble "perhaps" often grows into a "verily, verily"—and a hasty, over-confident "verily, verily," often dwindles to a hesitating "perhaps." Let us not be in too great a hurry to make sure that we have the key of the cabinet where God keeps His purposes, but content ourselves with "perhaps" when we are interpreting the often questionable ways of His providences, each of which has many meanings and many ends. But however modestly he may hesitate as to the application of the principle, Paul has no doubt as to the principle itself:

namely, that God, in the sweep of His wise providence, utilises men's evil, and works it in, to the accomplishment of great purposes far beyond their ken, as nature, in her patient chemistry, takes the rubbish and filth of the dunghill and turns them into beauty and food. Onesimus had no high motives in his flight; he had run away under discreditable circumstances, and perhaps to escape deserved punishment. Laziness and theft had been the hopeful companions of his flight, which, so far as he was concerned, had been the outcome of low and probably criminal impulses; and yet God had known how to use it so as to lead to his becoming a Christian. "With the wrath of man Thou girdest Thyself," twisting and bending it so as to be flexible in Thy hands, and "the remainder Thou dost restrain." How unlike were the seed and the fruit —the flight of a good-for-nothing thief and the return of a Christian brother! He meant it not so; but in running away from his master, he was running straight into the arms of his Saviour. How little Onesimus knew what was to be the end of that day's work, when he slunk out of Philemon's house with his stolen booty hid away in his bosom! And how little any of us know where we are going, and what strange results may evolve themselves from our actions! Blessed they who can rest in the confidence that, however modest we should be in our interpretation of the events of our own or of other men's lives, the infinitely complex web of circ mstance is woven by a loving, wise Hand, and takes shape, with all its interlacing threads, according to a pattern in His hand, which will vindicate itself when it is finished!

The contrast is emphatic between the short absence and the eternity of the new relationship: "for a season"—literally an hour—and "for ever." There is but one point of view which gives importance to this material world, with all its fleeting joys and fallacious possessions. Life is not worth living, unless it be the vestibule to a life beyond. Why all its discipline, whether of sorrow or joy, unless there be another, ampler life, where we can use to nobler ends the powers acquired and greatened by use here? What an inconsequent piece of work is man, if the few years of earth are his all! Surely, if nothing is to come of all this life here, men are made in vain, and had better not have been at all. Here is a narrow sound, with a mere ribbon of sea in it, shut in between grim, echoing rocks. How small and meaningless it looks as long as the fog hides the great ocean beyond! But when the mist lifts, and we see that the narrow strait leads out into a boundless sea that lies flashing in the sunshine to the horizon, then we find out the worth of that little driblet of water at our feet. It connects with the open sea, and that swathes the world. So is it with "the hour" of life; it opens out and debouches into the "for ever," and therefore it is great and solemn. This moment is one of the moments of that hour. We are the sport of our own generalisations, and ready to admit all these fine and solemn things about life, but we are less willing to apply them to the single moments as they fly. We should not rest content with recognising the general truth, but ever make conscious effort to feel that this passing instant has something to do with our eternal character and with our eternal destiny.

That is an exquisitely beautiful and tender thought which the Apostle puts here, and one which is susceptible of many applications. The temporary loss may be eternal gain. The dropping away of the earthly form of a relationship may, in God's great mercy, be a step towards its renewal in higher fashion and for evermore. All our blessings need to be past before reflection can be brought to bear upon them, to make us conscious how blessed we were. The blossoms have to perish before the rich perfume, which can be kept in undiminished fragrance for years, can be distilled from them. When death takes away dear ones, we first learn that we were entertaining angels unawares; and as they float away from us into the light, they look back with faces already beginning to brighten into the likeness of Christ, and take leave of us with His valediction, "It is expedient for you that I go away." Memory teaches us the true character of life. We can best estimate the height of the mountain peaks when we have left them behind. The softening and hallowing influence of death reveals the nobleness and sweetness of those who are gone. Fair country never looks so fair as when it has a curving river for a foreground; and fair lives look fairer than before, when seen across the Jordan of death.

To us who believe that life and love are not killed by death, the end of their earthly form is but the beginning of a higher heavenly. Love which is "in Christ" is eternal. Because Philemon and Onesimus were two Christians, therefore their relationship was eternal. Is it not yet more true, if that were possible, that the sweet bonds which unite Christian souls here on earth are in their essence indestructible, and are affected by death only as the body is? Sown in weakness, will they not be raised in power? Nothing of them shall die but the encompassing death. Their mortal part shall put on immortality. As the farmer gathers the green flax with its blue bells blooming on it, and throws it into a tank to rot, in order to get the fine fibre which cannot rot, and spin it into a strong cable, so God does with our earthly loves. He causes all about them that is perishable to perish, that the central fibre, which is eternal, may stand clear and disengaged from all that was less Divine than itself. Wherefore mourning hearts may stay themselves on this assurance, that they will never lose the dear ones whom they have loved in Christ, and that death itself but changes the manner of the communion, and refines the tie. They were as for a moment dead, but they are alive again. To our bewildered sight they departed and were lost for a season, but they are found, and we can fold them in our heart of hearts for ever.

But there is also set forth here a change, not only in the duration, but in the quality of the relation between the Christian master and his former slave, who continues a slave indeed, but is also a brother. "No longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother, beloved specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord." It is clear from these words that Paul did not anticipate the manumission of Onesimus. What he asks is, that he should not be received as a slave. Evidently then he is to be still a slave in so far as the outward fact goes—but a new spirit is to be breathed into the relationship. "Specially to me"; he is more than a slave to me. I have not looked on him as such, but have taken him to my heart as a brother, as a son indeed, for he is especially

dear to me as my convert. But however dear he is to me, he should be more so to thee, to whom his relation is permanent, while to me it is temporary. And this Brotherhood of the slave is to be felt and made visible "both in the flesh"—that is, in the earthly and personal relations of common life, "and in the Lord"—that is, in the spiritual and religious relationships of worship and the Church.

As has been well said, "In the flesh, Philemon has the brother for his slave; in the Lord, Philemon has the slave for his brother." He is to treat him as his brother therefore both in the common relationships of every-day life and in the acts of religious worship.

That is a pregnant word. True, there is no gulf between Christian people nowadays like that which in the old times parted owner and slave; but, as society becomes more and more differentiated, as the diversities of wealth become more extreme in our commercial communities, as education comes to make the educated man's whole way of looking at life differ more and more from that of the less cultured classes, the injunction implied in our text encounters enemies quite as formidable as slavery ever was. The highly educated man is apt to be very oblivious of the brotherhood of the ignorant Christian, and he, on his part, finds the recognition just as hard. The rich mill-owner has not much sympathy with the poor brother who works at his spinning-jennies. It is often difficult for the Christian mistress to remember that her cook is her sister in Christ. There is quite as much sin against fraternity on the side of the poor Christians who are servants and illiterate, as on the side of the rich who are masters or cultured. But the principle that Christian brotherhood is to reach across the wall of class distinctions is as binding to-day as it was on these two good people, Philemon the master and Onesimus the slave.

That brotherhood is not to be confined to acts and times of Christian communion, but it is to be shown and to shape conduct in common life. "Both in the flesh and in the Lord" may be put into plain English thus: A rich man and a poor one belong to the same church; they unite in the same worship, they are "partakers of the one bread," and therefore, Paul thinks, "are one bread." They go outside the church door. Do they ever dream of speaking to one another outside? "A brother beloved in the Lord"—on Sundays, and during worship and in Church matters—is often a stranger "in the flesh" on Mondays, in the street and in common life. Some good people seem to keep their brotherly love in the same wardrobe with their Sunday clothes. Philemon was bid, and all are bid, to wear it all the week, at market as well as church.

II. In the next verse, the essential purpose for which the whole letter was written is put at last in an articulate request, based upon a very tender motive. "If then thou countest me as a partner, receive him as myself." Paul now at last completes the sentence which he began in verse 12, and from which he was hurried away by the other thoughts that came crowding in upon him. This plea for the kindly welcome to be accorded to Onesimus has been knocking at the door of his lips for utterance from the beginning of the letter; but only now, so near the end, after so much conciliation, he ventures to put it into plain words; and even now he does not dwell on it, but goes quickly on to another point. He puts his requests on a modest and yet a strong ground, appealing to Philemon's sense of comradeship—"if thou countest me a partner"—a comrade or a sharer in Christian blessings. He sinks all reference to apostolic authority, and only points to their common possession of faith, hope, and joy in Christ. "Receive him as myself." That request was sufficiently illustrated in a preceding chapter, so that I need only refer to what was then said on this instance of interceding love identifying itself with its object, and on the enunciation in it of great Christian truth.

III. The course of thought next shows—Love taking the slave's debt on itself.

"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee aught." Paul makes an "if" of what he knew well enough to be the fact; for no doubt Onesimus had told him all his faults, and the whole context shows that there was no uncertainty in Paul's mind, but that he puts the wrong hypothetically for the same reason for which he chooses to say, "was parted," instead of "ran away," namely, to keep some thin veil over the crimes of a penitent, and not to rasp him with rough words. For the same reason, too, he falls back upon the gentler expressions, "wronged" and "oweth," instead of blurting out the ugly word "stolen." And then, with a half-playful assumption of lawyer-like phraseology, he bids Philemon put that to his account. Here is my autograph—"I Paul write it with mine own hand"—I make this letter into a bond. Witness my hand; "I will repay it." The formal tone of the promise, rendered more formal by the insertion of the name—and perhaps by that sentence only being in his own handwriting—seems to warrant the explanation that it is half playful; for he could never have supposed that Philemon would exact the fulfilment of the bond, and we have no reason to suppose that, if he had, Paul could really have paid the amount. But beneath the playfulness there lies the implied exhortation to forgive the money wrong as well as the others which Onesimus had done him.

The verb used here for "put to the account of" is, according to the commentators, a very rare word; and perhaps the singular phrase may be chosen to let another great Christian truth shine through. Was Paul's love the only one that we knew of which took the slave's debts on itself? Did anybody else ever say, "Put that on mine account"? We have been taught to ask for the forgiveness of our sins as "debts," and we have been taught that there is One on whom God has made to meet the iniquities of us all. Christ takes on Himself all Paul's debt, all Philemon's, all ours. He has paid the ransom for all, and He so identifies Himself with men that He takes all their sins upon Him, and so identifies men with himself that they are "received as Himself." It is His great example that Paul is trying to copy here. Forgiven all that great debt, he dare not rise from his knees to take his brother by the throat, but goes forth to show to his fellow the mercy which he has found, and to model his life after the pattern of that miracle of love in which is his trust. It is Christ's own voice which echoes in "put that on mine account."

IV. Finally, these verses pass to a gentle reminder of a greater debt: "That I say not unto thee how that thou owest to me even thine own self besides."

As his child in the Gospel, Philemon owed to Paul much more than the trifle of money of which Onesimus had robbed him; namely his spiritual life, which he had received through the Apostle's ministry. But he will not insist on that. True love never presses its claims, nor recounts its services. Claims which need to be urged are not worth urging. A true, generous heart will never say, "You ought to do so much for me, because I have done so much for you." To come down to that low level of chaffering and barter is a dreadful descent from the heights where the love which delights in giving should ever dwell.

Does not Christ speak to us in the same language? We owe ourselves to Him, as Lazarus did, for He raises us from the death of sin to a share in His own new, undying life. As a sick man owes his life to the doctor who has cured him, as a drowning man owes his to his rescuer, who dragged him from the water and breathed into his lungs till they began to work of themselves, as a child owes its life to its parent—so we owe ourselves to Christ. But He does not insist upon the debt; He gently reminds us of it, as making His commandment sweeter and easier to obey. Every heart that is really touched with gratitude will feel, that the less the giver insists upon his gifts, the more do they impel to affectionate service. To be perpetually reminded of them weakens their force as motives to obedience, for it then appears as if they had not been gifts of love at all, but bribes given by self-interest; and the frequent reference to them sounds like complaint. But Christ does not insist on His claims, and therefore the remembrance of them ought to underlie all our lives and to lead to constant glad devotion.

One more thought may be drawn from the words. The great debt which can never be discharged does not prevent the debtor from receiving reward for the obedience of love. "I will repay it," even though thou owest me thyself. Christ has bought us for His servants by giving Himself and ourselves to us. No work, no devotion, no love can ever pay our debt to Him. From His love alone comes the desire to serve Him; from His grace comes the power. The best works are stained and incomplete, and could only be acceptable to a Love that was glad to welcome even unworthy offerings, and to forgive their imperfections. Nevertheless He treats them as worthy of reward, and crowns His own grace in men with an exuberance of recompense far beyond their deserts. He will suffer no man to work for Him for nothing; but to each He gives even here great reward in keeping His commandments, and hereafter "an exceeding great reward," of which the inward joys and outward blessings that now flow from obedience are but the earnest. His merciful allowance of imperfections treats even our poor deeds as rewardable; and though eternal life must ever be the gift of God, and no claim of merit can be sustained before His judgment seat, yet the measure of that life which is possessed here or hereafter is accurately proportioned to and is, in a very real sense, the consequence of obedience and service. "If any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward," and Christ's own tender voice speaks the promise, "I will repay, albeit I say not unto thee how thou owest to Me even thine own self besides."

Men do not really possess themselves unless they yield themselves to Jesus Christ. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth himself, in glad surrender of himself to his Saviour, he and only he is truly lord and owner of his own soul. And to such an one shall be given rewards beyond hope and beyond measure—and, as the crown of all, the blessed possession of Christ, and in it the full, true, eternal possession of himself, glorified and changed into the image of the Lord who loved him and gave Himself for him.

CHAPTER VI.

Philemon 20-25 (R. V.).

We have already had occasion to point out that Paul's pleading with Philemon, and the motives which he adduces, are expressions, on a lower level, of the greatest principles of Christian ethics. If the closing salutations be left out of sight for the moment, there are here three verses, each containing a thought which needs only to be cast into its most general form to show itself as a large Christian truth.

I. Verse 20 gives the final moving form of the Apostle's request. Onesimus disappears, and the final plea is based altogether on the fact that compliance will pleasure and help Paul. There is but the faintest gleam of a possible allusion to the former in the use of the verb from which the name Onesimus is derived—"Let me have help of thee"; as if he had said, "Be you an Onesimus, a helpful one to me, as I trust he is going to be to you." "Refresh my heart" points back to verse 7, "The hearts of the saints have been refreshed by thee," and lightly suggests that Philemon should do for Paul what he had done for many others. But the Apostle does not merely ask help and refreshing; he desires that they should be of a right Christian sort. "In Christ" is very significant. If Philemon receives his slave for Christ's sake and in the strength of that communion with Christ which fits for all virtue, and so for this good deed—a deed which is of too high and rare a strain of goodness for his unaided nature,—then "in Christ" he will be helpful to the Apostle. In that case the phrase expresses the element or sphere in which the act is done. But it may apply rather, or even also, to Paul, and then it expresses the element or sphere in which he is helped and refreshed. In communion with Jesus, taught and inspired by Him, the Apostle is brought to such true and tender sympathy with the runaway that his heart is refreshed, as by a cup of cold water, by kindness shown to him. Such keen sympathy is as much beyond the reach of nature as Philemon's kindness would be. Both are "in Christ." Union with Him refines selfishness, and makes men quick to feel another's sorrows and joys as theirs, after the Pattern of Him who makes the case of God's fugitives His own. It makes them easy to be entreated and ready to forgive. So to be in Him is to be sympathetic like Paul, and placable as He would have Onesimus. "In Christ" carries in it the secret of all sweet humanities and beneficence, is the spell which calls out fairest charity, and is the only victorious antagonist of harshness and selfishness.

The request for the sake of which the whole letter is written is here put as a kindness to

Paul himself, and thus an entirely different motive is appealed to. "Surely you would be glad to give me pleasure. Then do this thing which I ask you." It is permissible to seek to draw to virtuous acts by such a motive, and to reinforce higher reasons by the desire to please dear ones, or to win the approbation of the wise and good. It must be rigidly kept as a subsidiary motive, and distinguished from the mere love of applause. Most men have some one whose opinion of their acts is a kind of embodied conscience, and whose satisfaction is reward. But pleasing the dearest and purest among men can never be more than at most a crutch to help lameness or a spur to stimulate.

If, however, this motive be lifted to the higher level, and these words thought of as Paul's echo of Christ's appeal to those who love Him, they beautifully express the peculiar blessedness of Christian ethics. The strongest motive, the very mainspring and pulsing heart of Christian duty, is to please Christ. His language to His followers is not, "Do this because it is right," but, "Do this because it pleaseth Me." They have a living Person to gratify, not a mere law of duty to obey. The help which is given to weakness by the hope of winning golden opinions from, or giving pleasure to, those whom men love is transferred in the Christian relation to Jesus. So the cold thought of duty is warmed, and the weight of obedience to a stony impersonal law is lightened, and a new power is enlisted on the side of goodness, which sways more mightily than all the abstractions of duty. The Christ Himself makes His appeal to men in the same tender fashion as Paul to Philemon. He will move to holy obedience by the thought —wonderful as it is—that it gladdens Him. Many a weak heart has been braced and made capable of heroisms of endurance and effort, and of angel deeds of mercy, all beyond its own strength, by that great thought, "We labour that, whether present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to Him."

II. Verse 21 exhibits love commanding, in the confidence of love obeying. "Having confidence in thine obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt do even beyond what I say." In verse 8 the Apostle had waived his right to enjoin, because he had rather speak the speech of love, and request. But here, with the slightest possible touch, he just lets the note of authority sound for a single moment, and then passes into the old music of affection and trust. He but names the word "obedience," and that in such a way as to present it as the child of love, and the privilege of his friend. He trusts Philemon's obedience, because he knows his love, and is sure that it is love of such a sort as will not stand on the exact measure, but will delight in giving it "pressed down and running over."

What could he mean by "do more than I say"? Was he hinting at emancipation, which he would rather have to come from Philemon's own sense of what was due to the slave who was now a brother, than be granted, perhaps hesitatingly, in deference to his request? Possibly, but more probably he had no definite thing in his mind, but only desired to express his loving confidence in his friend's willingness to please him. Commands given in such a tone, where authority audibly trusts the subordinate, are far more likely to be obeyed than if they were shouted with the hoarse voice of a drill-sergeant. Men will do much to fulfil generous expectations. Even debased natures will respond to such appeal; and if they see that good is expected from them, that will go far to evoke it. Some masters have always good servants, and part of the secret is that they trust them to obey. "England expects" fulfilled itself. When love enjoins there should be trust in its tones. It will act like a magnet to draw reluctant feet into the path of duty. A will which mere authority could not bend, like iron when cold, may be made flexible when warmed by this gentle heat. If parents oftener let their children feel that they had confidence in their obedience, they would seldomer have to complain of their disobedience.

Christ's commands follow, or rather set, this pattern. He trusts His servants, and speaks to them in a voice softened and confiding. He tells them His wish, and commits Himself and His cause to His disciples' love.

Obedience beyond the strict limits of command will always be given by love. It is a poor, grudging service which weighs obedience as a chemist does some precious medicine, and is careful that not the hundredth part of a grain more than the prescribed amount shall be doled out. A hired workman will fling down his lifted trowel, full of mortar, at the first stroke of the clock, though it would be easier to lay it on the bricks; but where affection moves the hand, it is delight to add something over and above to bare duty. The artist who loves his work will put many a touch on it beyond the minimum which will fulfil his contract. Those who adequately feel the power of Christian motives will not be anxious to find the least that they durst, but the most that they can do. If obvious duty requires them to go a mile, they will rather go two, than be scrupulous to stop as soon as they see the milestone. A child who is always trying to find out how little would satisfy his father cannot have much love. Obedience to Christ is joy, peace, love. The grudging servants are limiting their possession of these by limiting their active surrender of themselves. They seem to be afraid of having too much of these blessings. A heart truly touched by the love of Jesus Christ will not seek to know the lowest limit of duty, but the highest possibility of service.

> "Give all thou canst; high heaven rejects the lore
> Of nicely calculated less or more."

III. Verse 22 may be summed up as the language of love, hoping for reunion. "Withal prepare me a lodging: for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted unto you." We do not know whether the Apostle's expectation was fulfilled. Believing that he was set free from his first imprisonment, and that his second was separated from it by a considerable interval, during which he visited Macedonia and Asia Minor, we have yet nothing to show whether or not he reached Colossæ; but whether fulfilled or not, the expectation of meeting would tend to secure compliance with his request, and would be all the more likely to do so, for the very delicacy with which it is stated, so as not to seem to be mentioned for the sake of adding force to his intercession.

The limits of Paul's expectation as to the power of his brethren's prayers for temporal blessings are worth noting. He does believe that these good people in Colossæ could help him

by prayer for his liberation, but he does not believe that their prayer will certainly be heard. In some circles much is said now about "the prayer of faith"—a phrase which, singularly enough, is in such cases almost confined to prayers for external blessings,—and about its power to bring money for work which the person praying believes to be desirable, or to send away diseases. But surely there can be no "faith" without a definite Divine word to lay hold of. Faith and God's promise are correlative; and unless a man has God's plain promise that A. B. will be cured by his prayer, the belief that he will is not faith, but something deserving a much less noble name. The prayer of faith is not forcing our wills on God, but bending our wills to God's. The prayer which Christ has taught in regard to all outward things is, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," and, "May Thy will become mine." That is the prayer of faith, which is always answered. The Church prayed for Peter, and he was delivered; the Church, no doubt, prayed for Stephen, and he was stoned. Was then the prayer for him refused? Not so, but if it were prayer at all, the inmost meaning of it was "be it as Thou wilt"; and that was accepted and answered. Petitions for outward blessings, whether for the petitioner or for others, are to be presented with submission; and the highest confidence which can be entertained concerning them is that which Paul here expresses: "I hope that through your prayers I shall be set free."

The prospect of meeting enhances the force of the Apostle's wish; nor are Christians without an analogous motive to give weight to their obligations to their Lord. Just as Paul quickened Philemon's loving wish to serve him by the thought that he might have the gladness of seeing him before long, so Christ quickens His servants' diligence by the thought that before very many days He will come, or they will go—at any rate, they will be with Him,—and He will see what they have been doing in His absence. Such a prospect should increase diligence, and should not inspire terror. It is a mark of true Christians that they "love His appearing." Their hearts should glow at the hope of meeting. That hope should make work happier and lighter. When a husband has been away at sea, the prospect of his return makes the wife sing at her work, and take more pains or rather pleasure with it, because his eye is to see it. So should it be with the bride in the prospect of her bridegroom's return. The Church should not be driven to unwelcome duties by the fear of a strict judgment, but drawn to large, cheerful service, by the hope of spreading her work before her returning Lord.

Thus, on the whole, in this letter, the central springs of Christian service are touched, and the motives used to sway Philemon are the echo of the motives which Christ uses to sway men. The keynote of all is love. Love beseeches when it might command. To love we owe our own selves beside. Love will do nothing without the glad consent of him to whom it speaks, and cares for no service which is of necessity. Its finest wine is not made from juice which is pressed out of the grapes, but from that which flows from them for very ripeness. Love identifies itself with those who need its help, and treats kindnesses to them as done to itself. Love finds joy and heart solace in willing, though it be imperfect, service. Love expects more than it asks. Love hopes for reunion, and by the hope makes its wish more weighty. These are the points of Paul's pleading with Philemon. Are they not the elements of Christ's pleading with His friends?

He too prefers the tone of friendship to that of authority. To Him His servants owe themselves, and remain for ever in His debt, after all payment of reverence and thankful self-surrender. He does not count constrained service as service at all, and has only volunteers in His army. He makes Himself one with the needy, and counts kindness to the least as done to Him. He binds Himself to repay and overpay all sacrifices in His service. He finds delight in His people's work. He asks them to prepare an abode for Him in their own hearts, and in souls opened by their agency for His entrance. He has gone to prepare a mansion for them, and He comes to receive account of their obedience and to crown their poor deeds. It is impossible to suppose that Paul's pleading for Philemon failed. How much less powerful is Christ's, even with those who love Him best?

IV. The parting greetings may be very briefly considered, for much that would have naturally been said about them has already presented itself in dealing with the similar salutations in the Epistle to Colossæ. The same people send messages here as there; only Jesus called Justus being omitted, probably for no other reason than because he was not at hand at the moment. Epaphras is naturally mentioned singly, as being a Colossian, and therefore more closely connected with Philemon than were the others. After him come the two Jews and the two Gentiles, as in Colossians.

The parting benediction ends the letter. At the beginning of the epistle Paul invoked grace upon the household "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now he conceives of it as Christ's gift. In him all the stooping, bestowing love of God is gathered, that from Him it may be poured on the world. That grace is not diffused like stellar light, through some nebulous heaven, but concentrated in the Sun of Righteousness, who is the light of men. That fire is piled on a hearth that, from it, warmth may ray out to all that are in the house.

That grace has man's spirit for the field of its highest operation. Thither it can enter, and there it can abide, in union more close and communion more real and blessed than aught else can attain. The spirit which has the grace of Christ with it can never be utterly solitary or desolate.

The grace of Christ is the best bond of family life. Here it is prayed for on behalf of all the group, the husband, wife, child, and the friends in their home-Church. Like grains of sweet incense cast on an altar flame, and making fragrant what was already holy, that grace sprinkled on the household fire will give it an odour of a sweet smell, grateful to men and acceptable to God.

That wish is the purest expression of Christian friendship, of which the whole letter is so exquisite an example. Written as it is about a common, every-day matter, which could have been settled without a single religious reference, it is saturated with Christian thought and feeling. So it becomes an example of how to blend Christian sentiment with ordinary affairs, and to carry a Christian atmosphere everywhere. Friendship

and social intercourse will be all the nobler and happier, if pervaded by such a tone. Such words as these closing ones would be a sad contrast to much of the intercourse of professedly Christian men. But every Christian ought by his life to be, as it were, floating the grace of God to others sinking for want of it to lay hold of, and all his speech should be of a piece with this benediction.

A Christian's life should be "an epistle of Christ" written with His own hand, wherein dim eyes might read the transcript of His own gracious love, and through all his words and deeds should shine the image of his Master, even as it does through the delicate tendernesses and gracious pleadings of this pure pearl of a letter, which the slave, become a brother, bore to the responsive hearts in quiet Colossæ.

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THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.

BY THE REV. JAMES DENNEY, B. D.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS.

1 Thessalonians i. 1 (R. V.).

Thessalonica, now called Saloniki, was in the first century of our era a large and flourishing city. It was situated at the northeastern corner of the Thermaic gulf, on the line of the great Egnatian road, which formed the main connection by land between Italy and the East. It was an important commercial centre, with a mixed population of Greeks, Romans, and Jews. The Jews, who at the present day amount to some twenty thousand, were numerous enough to have a synagogue of their own; and we can infer from the Book of Acts (xvii. 4) that it was frequented by many of the better spirits among the Gentiles also. Unconsciously, and as the event too often proved, unwillingly, the Dispersion was preparing the way of the Lord.

To this city the Apostle Paul came, attended by Silas and Timothy, in the course of his second missionary journey. He had just left Philippi, dearest to his heart of all his churches; for there, more than anywhere else, the sufferings of Christ had abounded in him, and his consolations also had been abundant in Christ. He came to Thessalonica with the marks of the lictors' rods upon his body; but to him they were the marks of Jesus; not warnings to change his path, but tokens that the Lord was taking him into fellowship with Himself, and binding him more strictly to His service. He came with the memory of his converts' kindness warm upon his heart; conscious that, amid whatever disappointments, a welcome awaited the gospel, which admitted its messenger into the joy of his Lord. We need not wonder, then, that the Apostle kept to his custom, and in spite of the malignity of the Jews, made his way, when Sabbath came, to the synagogue of Thessalonica.

His evangelistic ministry is very briefly described by St. Luke. For three Sabbath days he addressed himself to his fellow-countrymen. He took the Scriptures into his hand,—that is, of course, the Old Testament Scriptures,—and opening the mysterious casket, as the picturesque words in Acts describe his method, he brought out and set before his auditors, as its inmost and essential secret, the wonderful idea that the Christ whom they all expected, the Messiah of God, must die and rise again from the dead. That was not what ordinary Jewish readers found in the law, the prophets, or the psalms; but, once persuaded that this interpretation was true, it was not difficult to believe that the Jesus whom Paul preached was the Christ for whom they all hoped. Luke tells us that some were persuaded; but they cannot have been many: his account agrees with the representation of the Epistle (i. 9) that the church at Thessalonica was mainly Gentile. Of the "chief women not a few," who were among the first converts, we know nothing; the exhortations in both Epistles make it plain that what Paul left at Thessalonica was what we should call a working-class congregation. The jealousy of the Jews, who resorted to the device which had already proved successful at Philippi, compelled Paul and his friends to leave the city prematurely. The mission, indeed, had probably lasted longer than most readers infer from Acts xvii. Paul had had time to make his character and conduct impressive to the church, and to deal with each one of them as a father with his own children (ii. 11); he had wrought night and day with his own hands for a livelihood (2 Thess. iii. 8); he had twice received help from the Philippians (Phil. iv. 15, 16). But although this implies a stay of some duration, much remained to be done; and the natural anxiety of the Apostle, as he thought of his inexperienced disciples, was intensified by the reflection that he had left them exposed to the malignity of his and their enemies. What means that malignity employed—what violence and what calumny—the Epistle itself enables us to see; meantime, it is sufficient to say that the pressure of these things upon the Apostle's spirit was the occasion of his writing this letter. He had tried in vain to get back to Thessalonica; he had condemned himself to solitude in a strange city that he might send Timothy to them; he must hear whether they stand fast in their Christian calling. On his return from this mission Timothy joined Paul in Corinth with a report, cheering on the whole, yet not without its graver side, concerning the Thessalonian believers; and the first Epistle is the apostolic message in these circumstances. It is, in all probability, the earliest of the New Testament writings; it is certainly the earliest extant of Paul's; if we except the decree in Acts xv., it is the earliest piece of Christian writing in existence.*

The names mentioned in the address are all well known—Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. The three are united in the greeting, and are sometimes, apparently, included in the "we" or "us" of the Epistle; but they are not joint authors of it. It is the Epistle of Paul, who includes them in the salutation out of courtesy, as in the First to the Corinthians he includes Sosthenes, and in Galatians "all the brethren that are with me"; a courtesy the more binding on this occasion that Silas and Timothy had shared with him his missionary work in Thessalonica. In First and Second Thessalonians only, of all his letters, the Apostle adds nothing to his name to indicate the character in which he writes; he neither calls himself an apostle, nor a servant

* The date cannot be precisely assigned, but it is not later than 54 A. D., and cannot be so early as 52. Most scholars say 54. It was written in Corinth.

of Jesus Christ. The Thessalonians knew him simply for what he was; his apostolic dignity was yet unassailed by false brethren; the simple name was enough. Silas comes before Timothy as an older man, and a fellow-labourer of longer standing. In the Book of Acts he is described as a prophet, and as one of the chief men among the brethren; he had been associated with Paul all through this journey; and though we know very little of him, the fact that he was chosen one of the bearers of the apostolic decree, and that he afterwards attached himself to Paul, justifies the inference that he heartily sympathised with the evangelising of the heathen. Timothy was apparently one of Paul's own converts. Carefully instructed in childhood by a pious mother and grandmother, he had been won to the faith of Christ during the first tour of the Apostle in Asia Minor. He was naturally timid, but kept the faith in spite of the persecutions which then awaited it; and when Paul returned, he found that the steadfastness and other graces of his spiritual son had won an honourable name in the local churches. He determined to take him with him, apparently in the character of an evangelist; but before he was ordained by the presbyters, Paul circumcised him, remembering his Jewish descent on the mother's side, and desirous of facilitating his access to the synagogue, in which the work of gospel preaching usually began. Of all the Apostle's assistants he was the most faithful and affectionate. He had the true pastoral spirit, devoid of selfishness, and caring naturally and unfeignedly for the souls of men (Phil. ii. 20 f.). Such were the three who sent their Christian greetings in this Epistle.

The greetings are addressed "to the church of (the) Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." No such address had ever been written or read before, for the community to which it was directed was a new thing in the world. The word translated "church" was certainly familiar enough to all who knew Greek: it was the name given to the citizens of a Greek town assembled for public business; it is the name given in the Greek Bible either to the children of Israel as the congregation of Jehovah, or to any gathering of them for a special purpose; but here it obtains a new significance. The church of the Thessalonians is a church in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the common relation of its members to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ which constitutes them a church in the sense of the Apostle: in contradistinction from all other associations or societies, they form a Christian community. The Jews who met from Sabbath to Sabbath in the synagogue were a church; they were one in the acknowledgment of the Living God, and in their observance of His law; God, as revealed in the Old Testament and in the polity of Israel, was the element or atmosphere of their spiritual life. The citizens of Thessalonica, who met in the theatre to discuss their political interests, were a "church"; they were one in recognising the same constitution and the same ends of civic life; it was in that constitution, in the pursuit of those ends, that they found the atmosphere in which they lived. Paul in this Epistle greets a community distinct from either of these. It is not civic, but religious; though religious, it is neither pagan nor Jewish; it is an original creation, new in its bond of union, in the law by which it lives, in the objects at which it aims; a church in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This newness and originality of Christianity could not fail to impress those who first received it. The gospel made an immeasurable difference to them, a difference almost equally great whether they had been Jews or heathen before; and they were intensely conscious of the gulf which separated their new life from the old. In another epistle Paul describes the condition of Gentiles not yet evangelised. Once, he says, you were apart from Christ, without God, in the world. The world—the great system of things and interests separated from God—was the sphere and element of their life. The gospel found them there, and translated them. When they received it, they ceased to be in the world; they were no longer apart from Christ, and without God: they were in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could be more revolutionary in those days than to become a Christian: old things passed away; all things became new; all things were determined by the new relation to God and His Son. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian was as unmistakable and as clear to the Christian mind as the difference between the shipwrecked sailor who has reached the shore and him who is still fighting a hopeless fight with wind and waves. In a country which has long been Christian, that difference tends, to sense at least, and to imagination, to disappear. We are not vividly impressed with the distinction between those who claim to be Christians and those who do not; we do not see a radical unlikeness, and we are sometimes disposed to deny it. We may even feel that we are bound to deny it, were it only in justice to God. He has made all men for Himself; He is the Father of all; He is near to all, even when they are blind to Him; the pressure of His hand is felt and in a measure responded to by all, even when they do not recognise it; to say that any one is ἄθεος, or χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, or that he is not in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ, seems really to deny both God and man.

Yet what is at issue here is really a question of fact; and among those who have been in contact with the facts, among those, above all, who have had experience of the critical fact—who once were not Christians and now are—there will not be two opinions about it. The difference between the Christian and the non-Christian, though historical accidents have made it less visible, or rather, less conspicuous than it once was, is still as real and as vast as ever. The higher nature of man, intellectual and spiritual, must always have an element in which it lives, an atmosphere surrounding it, principles to guide it, ends to stimulate its action; and it may find all these in either of two places. It may find them in the world—that is, in that sphere of things from which God, so far as man's will and intent goes, is excluded; or it may find them in God Himself and in His Son. It is no objection to this division to say that God cannot be excluded from His own world, that He is always at work there whether acknowledged or not; for the acknowledgment is the essential point; without it, though God is

near to man, man is still far from God. Nothing could be a more hopeless symptom in character than the benevolent neutrality which evades this truth; it takes away every motive to evangelise the non-Christian, or to work out the originality and distinctiveness of the Christian life itself. Now, as in the apostolic age, there are persons who are Christians and persons who are not; and, however alike their lives may be on the surface, they are radically apart. Their centre is different; the element in which they move is different; the nutriment of thought, the fountain of motives, the standard of purity are different; they are related to each other as life in God, and life without God; life in Christ, and life apart from Christ; and in proportion to their sincerity is their mutual antagonism.

In Thessalonica the Christian life was original enough to have formed a new society. In those days, and in the Roman Empire, there was not much room for the social instincts to expand. Unions of all kinds were suspected by the governments, and discouraged, as probable centres of political disaffection. Local self-government ceased to be interesting when all important interests were withdrawn from its control; and even had it been otherwise, there was no part in it possible for that great mass of population from which the Church was so largely recruited, namely, the slaves. Any power that could bring men together, that could touch them deeply, and give them a common interest that engaged their hearts and bound them to each other, met the greatest want of the time, and was sure of a welcome. Such a power was the gospel preached by Paul. It formed little communities of men and women wherever it was proclaimed; communities in which there was no law but that of love, in which heart opened to heart as nowhere else in all the world, in which there were fervour and hope and freedom and brotherly kindness, and all that makes life good and dear. We feel this very strongly in reading the New Testament, and it is one of the points on which, unhappily, we have drifted away from the primitive model. The Christian congregation is not now, in point of fact, the type of a sociable community. Too often it is oppressed with constraint and formality. Take any particular member of any particular congregation; and his social circle, the company of friends in which he expands most freely and happily, will possibly have no connection with those he sits beside in the church. The power of the faith to bring men into real unity with each other is not lessened; we see this wherever the gospel breaks ground in a heathen country, or wherever the frigidity of the church drives two or three fervent souls to form a secret society of their own; but the temperature of faith itself is lowered; we are not really living, with any intensity of life, in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we were, we would be drawn closer to each other; our hearts would touch and overflow; the place where we meet in the name of Jesus would be the most radiant and sociable place we know.

Nothing could better illustrate the reality of that new character which Christianity confers than the fact that men can be addressed as Christians. Nothing, either, could better illustrate the confusion of mind that exists in this matter, or the insincerity of much profession, than the fact that so many members of churches would hesitate before taking the liberty so to address a brother. We have all written letters, and on all sorts of occasions; we have addressed men as lawyers, or doctors, or men of business; we have sent or accepted invitations to gatherings where nothing would have astonished us more than the unaffected naming of the name of God; did we ever write to anybody because he was a Christian, and because we were Christians? Of all the relations in which we stand to others, is that which is established by "our common Christianity," by our common life in Jesus Christ, the only one which is so crazy and precarious that it can never be really used for anything? Here we see the Apostle look back from Corinth to Thessalonica, and his one interest in the poor people whom he remembers so affectionately is that they are Christians. The one thing in which he wishes to help them is their Christian life. He does not care much whether they are well or ill off in respect of this world's goods; but he is anxious to supply what is lacking in their faith (iii. 10). How real a thing the Christian life was to him! what a substantial interest, whether in himself or in others, engrossing all his thought, absorbing all his love and devotion. To many of us it is the one topic for silence; to him it was the one theme of thought and speech. He wrote about it, as he spoke about it, as though there were no other interest for man; and letters like those of Thomas Erskine show that still, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. The full soul overflows, unaffected, unforced; Christian fellowship, as soon as Christian life is real, is restored to its true place.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy wish the church of the Thessalonians grace and peace. This is the greeting in all the Apostle's letters; it is not varied except by the addition of "mercy" in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. In form it seems to combine the salutations current among the Greeks and the Jews (χαίρειν and שָׁלוֹם), but in import it has all the originality of the Christian faith. In the second Epistle it runs, "Grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is the love of God, spontaneous, beautiful, unearned, at work in Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinful men; peace is the effect and fruit in man of the reception of grace. It is easy to narrow unduly the significance of peace; those expositors do so who suppose in this passage a reference to the persecution which the Thessalonian Christians had to bear, and understand the Apostle to wish them deliverance from it. The Apostle has something far more comprehensive in his mind. The peace, which Christ is; the peace with God which we have when we are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son; the soul-health which comes when grace makes our hearts to their very depths right with God, and frightens away care and fear; this "perfect soundness" spiritually is all summed up in the word. It carries in it the fulness of the blessing of Christ. The order of the words is significant; there is no peace without grace; and there is no grace apart from fellowship with God in Christ. The history of the Church has been written by some who practically put Paul in

Christ's place; and by others who imagine that the doctrine of the person of Christ only attained by slow degrees, and in the post-apostolic age, its traditional importance; but here, in the oldest extant monument of the Christian faith, and in the very first line of it, the Church is defined as existing in the Lord Jesus Christ; and in that single expression, in which the Son stands side by side with the Father, as the life of all believing souls, we have the final refutation of such perverse thoughts. By the grace of God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Christian is what he is; he lives and moves and has his being there; apart from Christ, he is not. Here, then, is our hope. Conscious of our own sins, and of the shortcomings of the Christian community of which we are members, let us have recourse to Him whose grace is sufficient for us. Let us abide in Christ, and in all things grow up into Him. God alone is good; Christ alone is the Pattern and the Inspiration of the Christian character; only in the Father and the Son can the new life and the new fellowship come to their perfection.

CHAPTER II.

THE THANKSGIVING.

1 Thessalonians i. 2-4 (R. V.).

The salutation in St. Paul's epistles is regularly followed by the thanksgiving. Once only, in the Epistle to the Galatians, is it omitted; the amazement and indignation with which the Apostle has heard that his converts are forsaking his gospel for another which is not a gospel at all, carries him out of himself for a moment. But in his earliest letter it stands in its proper place; before he thinks of congratulating, teaching, exhorting, admonishing, he gives God thanks for the tokens of His grace in the Thessalonians. He would not be writing to these people at all if they were not Christians; they would never have been Christians but for the free goodness of God; and before he says one word directly to them, he acknowledges that goodness with a grateful heart.

In this case the thanksgiving is particularly fervent. It has no drawback. There is no profane person at Thessalonica, like him who defiled the church at Corinth at a later period; we give thanks, says the Apostle, for you all. It is, as far as the nature of the case permits, uninterrupted. As often as Paul prays, he makes mention of them and gives thanks; he remembers without ceasing their newborn graces. We ought not to extenuate the force of such words, as if they were mere exaggerations, idle extravagances of a man who habitually said more than he meant. Paul's life was concentrated and intense, to a degree of which we have probably little conception. He lived for Christ, and for the churches of Christ; it was literal truth, not extravagance, when he said, "This one thing I do": the life of these churches, their interests, their necessities, their dangers, God's goodness to them, his own duty to serve them, all these constituted together the one dear concernment of his life; they were ever with him in God's sight, and therefore in his intercessions and thanksgivings to God. Other men's mind might surge with various interests; new ambitions or affections might displace old ones; fickleness or disappointments might change their whole career; but it was not so with him. His thoughts and affections never changed their object, for the same conditions appealed constantly to the same susceptibility; if he grieved over the unbelief of the Jews, he had unceasing (*ἀδιάλειπτον*) pain in his heart; if he gave thanks for the Thessalonians, he remembered without ceasing (*ἀδιαλείπτως*) the graces with which they had been adorned by God.

Nor were these continual thanksgivings vague or formal; the Apostle recalls, in each particular case, the special manifestations of Christian character which inspire his gratitude. Sometimes, as in 1st Corinthians, they are less spiritual—gifts, rather than graces; utterance and knowledge, without charity; sometimes, as here, they are eminently spiritual—faith, love, and hope. The conjunction of these three in the earliest of Paul's letters is worthy of remark. They occur again in the well-known passage in 1 Cor. xiii., where, though they share in the distinction of being eternal, and not, like knowledge and eloquence, transitory in their nature, love is exalted to an eminence above the other two. They occur a third time in one of the later epistles—that to the Colossians—and in the same order as here. That, says Lightfoot on the passage, is the natural order. "Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future." Whether this distribution of the graces is accurate or not, it suggests the truth that they cover and fill up the whole Christian life. They are the sum and substance of it, whether it looks back, or looks around, or looks forward. The germ of all perfection is implanted in the soul which is the dwelling-place of "these three."

Though none of them can really exist, in its Christian quality, without the others, any of them may preponderate at a given time. It is not quite fanciful to point out that each in its turn seems to have bulked most largely in the experience of the Apostle himself. His earliest epistles—the two to the Thessalonians—are pre-eminently epistles of hope. They look to the future; the doctrinal interest uppermost in them is that of the second coming of the Lord, and the final rest of the Church. The epistles of the next period—Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians—are as distinctly epistles of faith. They deal largely with faith as the power which unites the soul to God in Christ, and brings into it the virtue of the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. Later still, there are the epistles of which Colossians and Ephesians are the type. The great thought in these is that of the unity wrought by love; Christ is the head of the Church; the Church is the body of Christ; the building up of the body in love, by the mutual help of the members, and their common dependence on the Head, preoccupies the apostolic writer. All this may have been more or less accidental, due to circumstances which had nothing to do with the spiritual life of Paul; but it has the look of being natural, too. Hope prevails first—the new world of things unseen and eternal outweighs the old; it is the stage at which religion is least free from the influence of sense and imagination. Then comes the reign of faith; the inward gains upon the outward;

the mystical union of the soul to Christ, in which His spiritual life is appropriated, is more or less sufficient to itself; it is the stage, if it be a stage at all, at which religion becomes independent of imagination and sense. Finally, love reigns. The solidarity of all Christian interests is strongly felt; the life flows out again, in all manner of Christian service, on those by whom it is surrounded; the Christian moves and has his being in the body of which he is a member. All this, I repeat, can be only comparatively true; but the character and sequence of the Apostle's writings speak for its truth so far.

But it is not simply faith, love, and hope that are in question here: "we remember," says the Apostle, "your work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." We call faith, love, and hope the Christian graces; and we are apt to forget that the associations of heathen mythology thus introduced, are disturbing rather than enlightening. The three Graces of the Greeks are ideally beautiful figures; but their beauty is æsthetic, not spiritual. They are lovely as a group of statuary is lovely; but though "by (their) gift come unto men all pleasant things and sweet, and the wisdom of a man and his beauty, and the splendour of his fame," their nature is utterly unlike that of the three powers of the Christian character; no one would dream of ascribing to them work, and labour, and patience. Yet the mere fact that "Graces" has been used as a common name for both has diffused the idea that the Christian graces also are to be viewed mainly as the adornments of character, its unsought, unstudied beauties, set on it by God to subdue and charm the world. That is quite wrong; the Greek Graces are essentially beauties; they confer on men all that wins admiration—personal comeliness, victory in the games, a happy mood; but the Christian graces are essentially powers; they are new virtues and forces which God has implanted in the soul that it may be able to do His work in the world. The heathen Graces are lovely to look at, and that is all; but the Christian graces are not subjects for æsthetic contemplation; they are here to work, to toil, to endure. If they have a beauty of their own—and surely they have—it is a beauty not in form or colour, not appealing to the eye or the imagination, but only to the spirit which has seen and loved Christ, and loves His likeness in whatever guise.

Let us look at the Apostle's words more closely: he speaks of a work of faith; to take it exactly, of something which faith has done. Faith is a conviction with regard to things unseen, that makes them present and real. Faith in God as revealed in Christ and in His death for sin, makes reconciliation real; it gives the believer peace with God. But it is not shut up in the realm of things inward and unseen. If it were, a man might say what he pleased about it, and there would be no check upon his words. Wherever it exists, it works: he who is interested can see what it has done. Apparently the Apostle has some particular work of faith in his mind in this passage; some thing which the Thessalonians had actually done, because they believed; but what it is we cannot tell. Certainly not faith itself; certainly not love, as some think, referring to Gal. v. 6; if a conjecture may be hazarded, possibly some act of courage or fidelity under persecution, similar to those adduced in Heb. xi. That famous chapter contains a catalogue of the works which faith wrought; and serves as a commentary, therefore, on this expression. Surely we ought to notice that the great Apostle, whose name has been the strength and shield of all who preach justification by faith alone, the very first time he mentions this grace in his epistles, mentions it as a power which leaves its witness in work.

It is so, also, with love: "we remember," he writes, "your labour of love." The difference between ἔργον (work) and κόπος (labour) is that between effect and cause. The Apostle recalls something which the faith of the Thessalonians did; he recalls also the wearisome toil in which their love spent itself. Love is not so capable of abuse in religion, or, at least, it has not been so rankly abused, as faith. Men are much more apt to demand the proof of it. It has an inward side as much as faith; but it is not an emotion which exhausts itself in its own transports. Merely as emotion, indeed, it is apt to be undervalued. In the Church of to-day emotion needs rather to be stimulated than repressed. The passion of the New Testament startles us when we chance to feel it. For one man among us who is using up the powers of his soul in barren ecstasies, there are thousands who have never been moved by Christ's love to a single tear or a single heart-throb. They must learn to love before they can labour. They must be kindled by that fire which burned in Christ's heart, and which He came to cast upon the earth, before they can do anything in His service. But if the love of Christ has really met that answer in love for which it waits, the time for service has come. Love in the Christian will attest itself as it attested itself in Christ. It will prescribe and point out the path of labour. The word employed in this passage is one often used by the Apostle to describe his own laborious life. Love set him, and will set every one in whose heart it truly burns, upon incessant, unwearied efforts for others' good. Paul was ready to spend and be spent at its bidding, however small the result might be. He toiled with his hands, he toiled with his brain, he toiled with his ardent, eager, passionate heart, he toiled in his continual intercessions with God, and all these toils made up his labour of love. "A labour of love," in current language, is a piece of work done so willingly that no payment is expected for it. But a labour of love is not what the Apostle is speaking of; it is laboriousness, as love's characteristic. Let Christian men and women ask themselves whether their love can be so characterised. We have all been tired in our time, one may presume; we have toiled in business, or in some ambitious course, or in the perfecting of some accomplishment, or even in the mastery of some game or the pursuit of some amusement, till we were utterly wearied: how many of us have so toiled in love? How many of us have been wearied and worn with some labour to which we set ourselves for God's sake? This is what the Apostle has in view in this passage; and, strange as it may appear, it is one of the things for which he gives God thanks. But is he not right? Is it not a thing to evoke gratitude and joy, that God counts us worthy to

be fellow-labourers with Him in the manifold works which love imposes?

The church at Thessalonica was not old; its first members could only count their Christian age by months. Yet love is so native to the Christian life, that they found at once a career for it; demands were made upon their sympathy and their strength which were met at once, though never suspected before. "What are we to do," we sometimes ask, "if we would work the works of God?" If we have love enough in our hearts, it will answer all its own questions. It is the fulfilling of the law just because it shows us plainly where service is needed, and put us upon rendering it at any cost of pain or toil. It is not too much to say that the very word chosen by the Apostle to characterise love —this word κόπος—is peculiarly appropriate, because it brings out, not the issue, but only the cost, of work. With the result desired, or without it; with faint hope, or with hope most sure, love labours, toils, spends and is spent over its task: this is the very seal of its genuine Christian character.

The third grace remains: "your patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." The second coming of Christ was an element in apostolic teaching which, whether exceptionally prominent or not, had made an exceptional impression at Thessalonica. It will more naturally be studied at another place; here it is sufficient to say that it was the great object of Christian hope. Christians not only believed Christ would come again; they not only expected Him to come; they were eager for His coming. "How long, O Lord?" they cried in their distress. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," was their prayer.

It is matter of notoriety that hope in this sense does not hold its ancient place in the heart of the Church. It holds a much lower place. Christian men hope for this or that; they hope that threatening symptoms in the Church or in society may pass away, and better things appear; they hope that when the worst comes to the worst, it will not be so bad as the pessimists anticipate. Such impotent and ineffective hope is of no kindred to the hope of the gospel. So far from being a power of God in the soul, a victorious grace, it is a sure token that God is absent. Instead of inspiring, it discourages; it leads to numberless self-deceptions; men hope their lives are right with God, when they ought to search them and see; they hope things will turn out well, when they ought to be taking security of them. All this, where our relations to God are concerned, is a degradation of the very word. The Christian hope is laid up in heaven. The object of it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not precarious, but certain; it is not ineffective, but a great and energetic power. Anything else is not hope at all.

The operation of the true hope is manifold. It is a sanctifying grace, as appears from 1 John iii. 3: "Every one that hath this hope set on Him, purifieth himself, even as He is pure." But here the Apostle characterises it by its patience. The two virtues are so inseparable that Paul sometimes uses them as equivalent; twice in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, he says faith, love, and patience, instead of faith, love, and hope. But what is patience? The word is one of the great words of the New Testament. The corresponding verb is usually rendered endurance, as in Christ's saying, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." Patience is more than resignation or meek submission; it is hope in the shade, but hope nevertheless; the brave steadfastness which bears up under all burdens because the Lord is at hand. The Thessalonians had much affliction in their early days as Christians; they were tried, too, as we all are, by inward discouragements—that persistence and vitality of sin that break the spirit and beget despair; but they saw close at hand the glory of the Lord; and in the patience of hope they held out, and fought the good fight to the last. It is truly significant that in the Pastoral Epistles patience has taken the place of hope in the trinity of graces. It is as if Paul had discovered, by prolonged experience, that it was in the form of patience that hope was to be mainly effective in the Christian life. The Thessalonians, some of them, were abusing the great hope; it was working mischief in their lives, because it was misapplied; in this single word Paul hints at the truth which abundant experience had taught him, that all the energy of hope must be transformed into brave patience if we would stand in our place at the last. Remembering their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, in the presence of our God and Father, the Apostle gives thanks to God always for them all. Happy is the man whose joys are such that he can gratefully dwell on them in that presence: happy are those also who give others cause to thank God on their behalf.

The ground of the thanksgiving is finally comprehended in one short and striking phrase: "Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election." The doctrine of election has often been taught as if the one thing that could never be known about anybody was whether he was or was not elect. The assumed impossibility does not square with New Testament ways of speaking. Paul knew the elect, he says here; at least he knew the Thessalonians were elect. In the same way he writes to the Ephesians: "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world; . . . in love He foreordained us to adoption as sons." Chose whom before the foundation of the world? Foreordained whom? Himself, and those whom he addressed. If the Church has learned the doctrine of election from anybody, it has been from Paul; but to him it had a basis in experience, and apparently he felt differently about it from many theologians. He knew when the people he spoke to were elect; how, he tells in what follows.

CHAPTER III.

THE SIGNS OF ELECTION.

1 Thessalonians i. 5-8 (R. V.).

The Revised Version renders the ὅτι, with which ver. 5 begins, "how that," the Authorised Version, "for." In the first case, the Apostle is made to explain in what election consists; in the other, he explains how it is that he knows the Thessalonians to be among the elect. There is hardly room to doubt that it is this last which he intends to do. Election does not consist in the things which he proceeds to enlarge upon,

though these may be in some sense its effects or tokens; and there is something like unanimity among scholars in favour of the rendering "for," or "because." What, then, are the grounds of the statement, that Paul knows the election of the Thessalonians? They are twofold; lying partly in his own experience, and that of his fellow-labourers, while they preached the gospel in Thessalonica; and partly in the reception which the Thessalonians gave to their message.

I. The tokens in the preacher that his hearers are elect: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." That was the consciousness of the preachers themselves, but they could appeal to those who had heard them: "even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake."

The self-consciousness of the preacher, we see from these words, is a legitimate though a perilous study. Every one has been told that there is no relation whatever between his own consciousness when preaching, and the effect of what is preached; but has anybody ever quite believed this? If there were no relation whatever between the preacher's consciousness and his conscience; if he did not know that many a time neglect of prayer or duty had separated him from God, and made him useless as an evangelist, it would be easier to believe it; but as our life is, the preacher may know quite well that it is no proof of God's good will to men that he is sent to preach to them; or, on the other hand, he may have a humble but sure trust that when he stands up to speak, God is with him for good to his hearers. Thus it was with Paul at Thessalonica.

The heartiness with which he speaks here justifies the inference that he had had experiences of an opposite and disappointing kind. Twice in Asia (Acts xvi. 6 f.) he had been forbidden by the Spirit to preach at all; he could not argue that the people so passed by were specially favoured of God. Often, especially in his intercourse with the Jews, he must have spoken, like Isaiah, with the depressing consciousness that it was all in vain; that the sole issue would be to blind their eyes and harden their hearts and seal them up in impenitence. In Corinth, just before writing this letter, he had come forward with unusual trepidation—in weakness and fear and much trembling; and though there also the Holy Spirit and a divine power brought home the gospel to men's hearts, he seems to have been so far from that inward assurance which he enjoyed at Thessalonica, that the Lord appeared to him in a vision by night to reveal the existence of an election of grace even in Corinth. "Fear not: I have much people in this city." In Thessalonica he had no such sinking of heart. He came thither, as he hoped to go to Rome, in the fulness of the blessing of Christ (Rom. xv. 29). He knew in himself that God had given it to him to be a true minister of His grace; he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord. That is why he says so confidently, "Knowing your election."

The Apostle explains himself more precisely when he writes, "not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." The gospel must come in word at least; but what a profanation it is to preach it only in word. Not preachers only, but all Christians, have to be on their guard, lest familiarity rob the great words of the gospel of their reality, and they themselves sink into that worst atheism which is for ever handling holy things without feeling them. How easy is it to speak of God, Christ, redemption, atonement, sanctification, heaven, hell, and to be less impressed and less impressive than if we were speaking of the merest trivialities of every-day life. It is hard to believe that an apostle could have seen such a possibility even from afar; yet the contrast of "word" and "power" leaves no room to doubt that such is his meaning. Words alone are worthless. No matter how brilliant, how eloquent, how imposing they may be, they cannot do the work of an evangelist. The call to this requires "power."

No definition of power is given; we can only see that it is that which achieves spiritual results, and that the preacher is conscious of possessing it. It is not his own, certainly: it works through the very consciousness of his own want of power; "when I am weak, then am I strong." But it gives him hope and confidence in his work. Paul knew that it needed a stupendous force to make bad men good; the forces to be overcome were so enormous. All the sin of the world was arrayed against the gospel; all the dead weight of men's indifference, all their pride, all their shame, all their self-satisfaction, all their cherished wisdom. But he came to Thessalonica strong in the Lord, confident that his message would subdue those who listened to it; and therefore, he argued, the Thessalonians were the objects of God's electing grace.

Power stands side by side with the "Holy Ghost." In a sense, the Holy Ghost is the source of all spiritual virtues, and therefore of the very power of which we have been speaking; but the words are probably used here with some narrower meaning. The predominant use of the name in the New Testament bids us think of that divine fervour which the spirit kindles in the soul—that ardour of the new life which Christ Himself speaks of as fire. Paul came to Thessalonica aglow with Christian passion. He took that as a good omen in his work, a sign that God meant well to the Thessalonians. By nature men do not care passionately for each other as he cared for those to whom he preached in that city. They are not on fire with love, seeking each other's good in spiritual things; consumed with fervent longing that the bad should cease from their badness, and come to enjoy the pardon, the purity, and the company of Christ. Even in the heart of apostles—for though they were apostles they were men—the fire may sometimes have burned low, and a mission have been, by comparison, languid and spiritless; but at least on this occasion the evangelists were all on fire; and it assured them that God had a people waiting for them in the unknown city.

If "power" and the "Holy Ghost" are in some degree to be judged only by their effects, there can be no question that "much assurance," on the other hand, is an inner experience, belonging strictly to the self-consciousness of the preacher. It means a full and strong conviction of the truth of the gospel. We can only understand this by contrast with its opposite; "much assurance" is the counterpart of misgiving or doubt. We can hardly

imagine an apostle in doubt about the gospel—not quite certain that Christ had risen from the dead; wondering whether, after all, His death had abolished sin. Yet these truths, which are the sum and substance of the gospel, seem, at times, too great for belief; they do not coalesce with the other contents of our mind; they do not weave easily into one piece with the warp and woof of our common thoughts; there is no common measure for them and the rest of our experience, and the shadow of unreality falls upon them. They are so great that it needs a certain greatness to answer to them, a certain boldness of faith to which even a true Christian may feel momentarily unequal; and while he is unequal, he cannot do the work of an evangelist. Doubt paralyses; God cannot work through a man in whose soul there are misgivings about the truth. At least, His working will be limited to the sphere of what is certain for him through whom He works; and if we would be effective ministers of the word, we must speak only what we are sure of, and seek the full assurance of the whole truth. No doubt such assurance has conditions. Unfaithfulness of one kind or another is, as our Lord teaches (John vii. 17), the scource of uncertainty as to the truth of His word; and prayer, repentance, and obedience due, the way to certainty again. But Paul had never been more confident of the truth and power of his gospel than when he came to Thessalonica. He had seen it proved in Philippi, in conversions so dissimilar as those of Lydia and the jailor. He had felt it in his own heart, in the songs which God had given him in the night while he suffered for Christ's sake. He came among those whom he addresses confident that it **was** God's instrument to save all who believed. This is his last personal reason for believing the Thessalonians to be elect.

Strictly speaking, all this refers rather to the delivery of the message than to the messengers, to the preaching than to the preachers; but the Apostle applies it to the latter also. "Ye know," he writes, "what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sakes." I venture to think * that the word rendered "we showed ourselves" has really the passive sense —"what God enabled us to be"; it is God's good will to the Thessalonians which is in view, and the Apostle infers that good will from the character which God enabled him and his friends to sustain for their sakes. Who could deny that God had chosen them, when He had sent them Paul and Silas and Timothy; not mere talkers, cold and spiritless, and dubious of their message; but men strong in spiritual force, in holy fervour, and in their grasp of the gospel? If that did not go to show that the Thessalonians were elect, what could?

II. The self-consciousness of the preachers, however, significant as it was, was no conclusive evidence. It only became such when their inspiration was caught by those who listened to them; and this was the case at Thessalonica. "Ye became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." This peculiar expression implies that the signs of God's election were to be seen in the evangelists, and eminently in the Lord. Paul shrinks from making himself and his companions types of the elect, without more ado; they are such only because they are like Him, of whom it is written, "Behold my servant whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." He speaks here in the same strain as in 1 Cor. xi. 1: "Brethren, be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." They who have become like the Lord are marked out as the chosen of God.

But the Apostle does not rest in this generality. The imitation in question consisted in this—that the Thessalonians received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. It is, of course, in the last part of the sentence that the point of comparison is found. In a sense it is true that the Lord Himself received the word which He spoke to men. "I do nothing of Myself," He says; "but as the Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John viii. 28). But such a reference is irrelevant here. The significant point is that the acceptance of the gospel by the Thessalonians brought them into fellowship with the Lord, and with those who continued His work, in that which is the distinction and criterion of the new Christian life—much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. That is a summary of the life of Christ, the Apostle of the Father (John xvii. 18). It is more obviously a summary of the life of Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ. The acceptance of the gospel meant much affliction for him: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." It meant also a new and supernatural joy, a joy arising from, and sustained by, the Holy Spirit, a joy triumphant in and over all sufferings. This combination of affliction and spiritual joy, this original, paradoxical experience, is the token of election. Where the children of God live, as Christ and His apostles lived, in the midst of a world at war with God and His cause, they will suffer; but suffering will not break their spirit, or embitter them, or lead them to desert God; it will be accompanied with spiritual exaltation, keeping them sweet, and humble, and joyful, through it all. Paul knew the Thessalonians were elect, because he saw that new power in them, to rejoice in tribulations, which can only be seen in those who have the spirit of God.

This test, obviously, can only be applied when the gospel is a suffering cause. But if the profession of the Christian faith, and the leading of a Christian life entail no affliction, what shall we say? If we read the New Testament aright, we shall say that there is a mistake somewhere. There is always a cross; there is always something to bear or to overcome for righteousness' sake; and the spirit in which it is met tells whether God is with us or not. Not every age is, like the apostolic, an age of open persecution, of spoiling of goods, of bonds, and scourging, and death; but the imitation of Christ in His truth and faithfulness will surely be resented somehow; and it is the seal of election when men rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Only the true children of God can do that. Their joy is in some sense a present recompense for their sufferings; but for suffering they could not know it. "I never knew," said Rutherford, "by my nine years' preaching, so much of Christ's love as He hath taught me in Aberdeen, by six months' imprisonment." It is a joy that never fails those who face affliction that they may be

* With Godet and P. Schmidt; against Ellicott.

true to Christ. Think of the Christian boys in Uganda, in 1885, who were bound alive to a scaffolding and slowly burned to death. "The spirit of the martyrs at once entered into these lads, and together they raised their voices and praised Jesus in the fire, singing till their shrivelled tongues refused to form the sound:—

"'Daily, daily, sing to Jesus,
Sing, my soul, His praises due;
All He does deserves our praises,
And our deep devotion too.

"'For in deep humiliation,
He for us did live below;
Died on Calvary's cross of torture,
Rose to save our souls from woe.'" *

Who can doubt that these three are among the chosen of God? And who can think of such scenes, and such a spirit, and recall without misgiving the querulous, fretful, aggrieved tone of his own life, when things have not gone with him exactly as he could have wished?

The Thessalonians were so conspicuously Christian, so unmistakably exhibited the new Divine type of character, that they became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Their conversion called the attention of all men to the gospel, like a clear and far-resounding trumpet blast. Thessalonica was a place of much coming and going on all sides; and the success of the evangelists there, being carried abroad in various ways, advertised their work, and so far prepared for their coming. Paul would naturally have spoken of it when he went to a new city, but found it unnecessary; the news had preceded him; in every place their faith to God-ward had gone forth. So far as we learn, it was the most impressive incident which had yet occurred in the progress of the gospel. A work of grace so characteristic, so thorough, and so unmistakable, was a token of God's goodness, not only to those who were immediately the subjects of it, but to all who heard, and by hearing had their interest awakened in the evangelists and their message.

This whole subject has a side for preachers, and a side for hearers of the gospel. The preacher's peril is the peril of coming to men in word only; saying things which he does not feel, and which others, therefore, will not feel; uttering truths, it may be, but truths which have never done anything for him—enlightened, quickened, or sanctified him—and which he cannot hope, as they come from his lips, will do anything for others; or worse still, uttering things of which he cannot even be confident that they are true. Nothing could be less a sign of God's grace to men than to abandon them to such a preacher, instead of sending them one full of power, and of the Holy Ghost, and of assurance. But whatever the preacher may be, there is something left to the hearer. There were people with whom even Paul, full of power and of the Holy Ghost, could not prevail. There were people who hardened their hearts against Christ; and let the preacher be ever so unworthy of the gospel, the virtue is in it, and not in him. He may not do anything to commend it to men; but does it need his commendation? Can we make bad preaching an excuse for refusing to become imitators of the Lord? It may condemn the preacher, but it can never excuse us. Look steadily at the seal which God sets upon His own—the union of affliction with spiritual joy—and follow Christ in the life which is marked by this character as not human only, but Divine. That is the way prescribed to us here to make our election sure.

* "Life of Bishop Hannington."

CHAPTER IV.

CONVERSION.

1 THESSALONIANS i. 9, 10 (R. V.).

THESE verses show what an impression had been made in other places by the success of the gospel at Thessalonica. Wherever Paul went, he heard it spoken about. In every place men were familiar with all its circumstances; they had heard of the power and assurance of the missionaries, and of the conversion of their hearers from heathenism to Christianity. It is this conversion which is the subject before us. It has two parts or stages. There is first, the conversion from idols to the one living and true God; and then the distinctively Christian stage of waiting for the Son of God from heaven. Let us look at these in order.

The Apostle, so far as we can make out, judged the religions of heathenism with great severity. He knew that God never left Himself without a witness in the world, but God's testimony to Himself had been perverted or ignored. Ever since the creation of the world, His everlasting power and divinity might be seen by the things He had made; His law was written on conscience; rain from heaven and fruitful seasons proved His good and faithful providence; yet men were practically ignorant of Him. They were not willing, in fact, to retain Him in their knowledge; they were not obedient; they were not thankful; when they professed religion at all, they made gods after their own image, and worshipped them. They bowed before idols; and an idol, says Paul, is nothing in the world. In the whole system of pagan religion the Apostle saw nothing but ignorance and sin; it was the outcome, in part, of man's enmity to God; in part, of God's judicial abandonment of men; in part, of the activity of evil spirits; it was a path on which no progress could be made; instead of pursuing it farther, those who wished really to make spiritual advance must abandon it altogether.

It is possible to state a better case than this for the religion of the ancient world; but the Apostle was in close and continuous contact with the facts, and it will take a great deal of theorising to reverse the verdict of a conscience like his on the whole question. Those who wish to put the best face upon the matter, and to rate the spiritual worth of paganism as high as may be, lay stress on the ideal character of the so-called idols, and ask whether the mere conception of Zeus, or Apollo, or Athene, is not a spiritual achievement of a high order. Let it be ever so high, and still, from the Apostle's ground, Zeus, Apollo, and Athene are dead idols. They have no life but that which is conferred upon them by their worshippers. They can never assert themselves in action, bestowing life or salvation on those who honour them. They can never be what the Living God was to every man of Jewish birth—Creator, Judge, King, and Saviour; a personal and moral power to whom

men are accountable at every moment, for every free act.

"Ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God." We cannot overestimate the greatness of this change. Until we understand the unity of God, we can have no true idea of His character, and therefore no true idea of our own relation to Him. It was the plurality of deities, as much as anything, which made heathenism morally worthless. Where there is a multitude of gods, the real power in the world, the final reality, is not found in any of them; but in a fate of some sort which lies behind them all. There can be no moral relation of man to this blank necessity; nor, while it exists, any stable relation of man to his so-called gods. No Greek or Roman could take in the idea of "serving" a God. The attendants or priests in a temple were in an official sense the deity's ministers; but the thought which is expressed in this passage, of serving a living and true God by a life of obedience to His will, a thought which is so natural and inevitable to either a Jew or a Christian, that without it we could not so much as conceive religion—that thought was quite beyond a pagan's comprehension. There was no room for it in his religion; his conception of the gods did not admit of it. If life was to be a moral service rendered to God, it must be to a God quite different from any to whom he was introduced by his ancestral worship. That is the final condemnation of heathenism; the final proof of its falsehood as a religion.

There is something as deep and strong as it is simple in the words, to serve the living and true God. Philosophers have defined God as the *ens realissimum*, the most real of beings, the absolute reality; and it is this, with the added idea of personality, that is conveyed by the description "living and true." But does God sustain this character in the minds even of those who habitually worship Him? Is it not the case that the things which are nearest to our hand seem to be possessed of most life and reality, while God is by comparison very unreal, a remote inference from something which is immediately certain? If that is so, it will be very difficult for us to serve Him. The law of our life will not be found in His will, but in our own desires, or in the customs of our society; our motive will not be His praise, but some end which is fully attained apart from Him. "My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"; and He could say so because God who sent Him was to Him the living and true God, the first and last and sole reality, whose will embraced and covered all His life. Do we think of God so? Are the existence of God and the claim of God upon our obedience the permanent element in our minds, the unchanging background of all our thoughts and purposes? This is the fundamental thing in a truly religious life.

But the Apostle goes on from what is merely theistic to what is distinctively Christian. "Ye turned to God from idols . . . to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead."

This is a very summary description of the issue of Christian conversion. Judging by the analogy of other places, especially in St. Paul, we should have expected some mention of faith. In Acts xx., *e. g.*, where he characterises his preaching, he names as its main elements, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But here faith has been displaced by hope; the Thessalonians are represented not as trusting in Christ, but as waiting for Him. Of course, such hope implies faith. They only waited for Him because they believed He had redeemed them, and would save them at the great day. If faith and hope differ in that the one seems to look mainly to the past and the other to the future, they agree in that both are concerned with the revelation of the unseen.

Everything in this revelation goes back to the resurrection and rests upon it. It is mentioned here, in the first instance, exactly as in Rom. i. 4, as the *argumentum palmarium* for the Divine Sonship of Jesus. There are many proofs of that essential doctrine, but not all can be brought forward in all circumstances. Perhaps the most convincing at the present time is that which is drawn from the solitary perfection of Christ's character; the more truly and fully we get the impression of that character, as it is reflected in the Gospels, the surer we are that it is not a fancy picture, but drawn from life; and that He whose likeness it is stands alone among the sons of men. But this kind of argument it takes years, not perhaps of study, but of obedience and devotion, to appreciate; and when the apostles went forth to preach the gospel they needed a more summary process of conviction. This they found in Christ's resurrection; that was an event standing alone in the world's history. There had been nothing like it before; there has been nothing like it since. But the men who were assured of it by many infallible proofs, did not presume to disbelieve it because of its singularity; amazing as it was, they could not but feel that it became one so unique in goodness and greatness as Jesus; it was not possible, they saw after the event, that He should be holden by the power of death; the resurrection only exhibited Him in His true dignity; it declared Him the Son of God, and set Him on His throne. Accordingly in all their preaching they put the resurrection in the forefront. It was a revelation of life. It extended the horizon of man's existence. It brought into view realms of being that had hitherto been hidden in darkness. It magnified to infinity the significance of everything in our short life in this world, because it connected everything immediately with an endless life beyond. And as this life in the unseen had been revealed in Christ, all the apostles had to tell about it centred in Him. The risen Christ was King, Judge, and Saviour; the Christian's present duty was to love, trust, obey, and wait for Him.

This waiting includes everything. "Ye come behind in no gift," Paul says to the Corinthians, "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." That attitude of expectation is the bloom, as it were, of the Christian character. Without it, there is something lacking; the Christian who does not look upward and onward wants one mark of perfection. This is, in all probability, the point on which we should find ourselves most from home, in the atmosphere of the primitive Church. Not unbelievers only, but disciples as well, have practically ceased to think of the Second Advent. The society which devotes itself to reviving interest in the truth uses Scripture in a fashion which makes it impossible to take much interest in its proceed-

ings; yet a truth so clearly a part of Scripture teaching cannot be neglected without loss. The door of the unseen world closed behind Christ as He ascended from Olivet, but not for ever. It will open again; and this same Jesus shall so come in like manner as the apostles beheld Him go. He has gone to prepare a place for those who love Him and keep His word; but "if I go," He says, "and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and take you to Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That is the final hope of the Christian faith. It is for the fulfilment of this promise that the Church waits. The Second Coming of Christ and His Resurrection stand and fall together; and it will not long be possible for those who look askance at His return to receive in all its fulness the revelation of life which He made when He rose again from the dead. This world is too much with us; and it needs not languor, but strenuous effort on the part of faith and hope, to make the unseen world as real. Let us see that we come not behind in a grace so essential to the very being of Christianity.

The last words of the verse describe the character in which the Son of God is expected by Christians to appear—Jesus, our deliverer* from the wrath to come. There is, then, according to apostolic teaching, a coming wrath—a wrath impending over the world, and actually on its way towards it. It is called the wrath to come, in distinction from anything of the same nature of which we have experience here. We all know the penal consequences which sin brings in its train even in this world. Remorse, unavailing sorrow, shame, fear, the sight of injury which we have done to those we love and which we cannot undo, incapacity for service,—all these are part and parcel of the fruit which sin bears. But they are not the wrath to come. They do not exhaust the judgment of God upon evil. Instead of discrediting it, they bear witness to it; they are, so to speak, its forerunners; the lurid clouds that appear here and there in the sky, but are finally lost in the dense mass of the thunder-storm. When the Apostle preached the gospel, he preached the wrath to come; without it, there would have been a missing link in the circle of Christian ideas. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," he says. Why? Because in it the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness which is God's gift and acceptable in God's sight. But why is such a revelation of righteousness necessary? Because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The gospel is a revelation made to the world in view of a given situation, and the most prominent and threatening element in that situation is the impending wrath of God. The apostles do not prove it; they declare it. The proof of it is left to conscience, and to the Spirit of God reinforcing and quickening conscience; if anything can be added to this, it is the gospel itself; for if there were no such thing as the wrath of God, the gospel would be gratuitous. We may, if we please, evade the truth; we may pick and choose for ourselves among the elements of New Testament teaching, and reject all that is distasteful; we may take our stand upon pride, and decline to be threatened even by God; but we cannot be honest, and at the same time deny that Christ and His apostles warn us of wrath to come.

Of course we must not misconceive the character of this wrath. We must not import into our thoughts of it all that we can borrow from our experience of man's anger—hastiness, unreason, intemperate rage. The wrath of God is no arbitrary, passionate outburst; it is not, as wrath so often is with us, a fury of selfish resentment. "Evil shall not dwell with Thee," says the Psalmist; and in that simple word we have the root of the matter. The wrath of God is, as it were, the instinct of self-preservation in the Divine nature; it is the eternal repulsion, by the Holy One, of all evil. Evil shall not dwell with Him. That may be doubted or denied while the day of grace lasts, and God's forbearance is giving space to the sinful for repentance; but a day is coming when it will no more be possible to doubt it—the day which the Apostle calls the day of wrath. It will then be plain to all the world that God's wrath is no empty name, but the most terrible of all powers—a consuming fire in which everything opposed to His holiness is burnt up. And while we take care not to think of this wrath after the pattern of our own sinful passions, let us take care, on the other hand, not to make it an unreal thing, without analogy in human life. If we go upon the ground of Scripture and of our own experience, it has the same degree and the same kind of reality as the love of God, or His compassion, or His forbearance. In whatever way we lawfully think of one side of the Divine nature, we must at the same time think of the other. If there is a passion of Divine love, there is a passion of Divine wrath as well. Nothing is meant in either case unworthy of the Divine nature; what is conveyed by the word passion is the truth that God's repulsion of evil is as intense as the ardour with which He delights in good. To deny that is to deny that He is good.

The Apostolic preacher, who had announced the wrath to come, and awakened guilty consciences to see their danger, preached Jesus as the deliverer from it. This is the real meaning of the words in the text; and neither "Jesus which delivered," as in the Authorised Version, nor, in any rigorous sense, "Jesus which delivereth," as in the Revised. It is the character of Jesus that is in view, and neither the past nor the present of His action. Every one who reads the words must feel, How brief! how much remains to be explained! how much Paul must have had to say about how the deliverance is effected! As the passage stands, it recalls vividly the end of the second Psalm: "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." To have the Son a friend, to be identified with Jesus—so much we see at once—secures deliverance in the day of wrath. Other Scriptures supply the missing links. The atonement for sin made by Christ's death; faith which unites the soul to the Saviour, and brings into it the virtue of His cross and resurrection; the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers, sanctifying them, and making them fit to dwell with God in the light,—all these come into view elsewhere, and in spite of the brevity of this notice had their place, beyond doubt, in Paul's teaching at Thessalonica. Not that all could be explained at once: that was unnecessary. But from im-

*The present participle here is simply equivalent to a substantive.

minent danger there must be an instantaneous escape; and it is sufficient to say that it is found in Jesus Christ. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." The risen Son is enthroned in power; He is Judge of all; He died for all; He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. To commit everything definitely to Him; to leave Him to undertake for us; to put on Him the responsibility of our past and our future, as He invites us to do; to put ourselves for good and all at His side,—this is to find deliverance from the wrath to come. It leaves much unexplained that we may come to understand afterwards, and much, perhaps, that we shall never understand; but it guarantees itself, adventure though it be; Christ never disappoints any who thus put their trust in Him.

This description in outline of conversion from paganism to the gospel should revive the elementary Christian virtues in our hearts. Have we seen how high a thing it is to serve a living and true God? Or is it not so, that even among Christians, a godly man—one who lives in the presence of God, and is conscious of his responsibility to Him—is the rarest of all types? Are we waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead? Or are there not many who hardly so much as form the idea of His return, and to whom the attitude of waiting for Him would seem strained and unnatural? In plain words, what the New Testament calls Hope is in many Christians dead: the world to come and all that is involved in it—the searching judgment, the impending wrath, the glory of Christ—have slipped from our grasp. Yet it was this hope which more than anything gave its peculiar colour to the primitive Christianity, its unworldliness, its moral intensity, its command of the future even in this life. If there were nothing else to establish it, would not its spiritual fruits be sufficient?

CHAPTER V.

APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA.

1 Thessalonians ii. 1-12 (R. V.).

Our first impression, as we read these verses, is that they contain little that is new. They simply expand the statement of chap. i., ver. 5: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake." But if their substance is the same, their tone is very different. It is obvious at a glance that the Apostle has a definite purpose in view in appealing so pointedly as he does here to facts with which his readers were familiar. The truth is, he is standing upon his defence. Unless it were so, he would not think of writing, as he does in ver. 5, that he had never had recourse to flattery, nor sought to make gain out of his apostleship; nor as he does in ver. 10, that God knows the entire purity of his life among them. Although he does not name them, it is quite plain that he was already suffering from those enemies who never ceased to vex him while he lived. As we learn afterwards, these enemies were the Jews. When they had opportunity, they used open violence; they roused the Gentile mob against him; they had him scourged and stoned. When his body was out of their reach, they assailed him through his character and affections. They crept into the churches which his love and zeal had gathered here and there, and scattered injurious suspicions against him among his disciples. He was not, they hinted, all that he seemed to be. They could tell stories about his early days, and advised those who did not know him so well to be on their guard. Evangelising paid him quite as well as harder work, and his paltry ambition was gratified by lording it over his ignorant converts. Such messengers of Satan had apparently made their appearance in Thessalonica since Paul left, and this chapter is his reply to their insinuations.

There is something exquisitely painful in the situation thus created. It would have been like a sword piercing the Apostle's heart, had his enemies succeeded in their attempt to breed distrust in the Thessalonians toward him. He could not have borne to think that those whom he loved so utterly should entertain the faintest suspicion of the integrity of his love. But happily he is spared that pain. He writes, indeed, as one who has felt the indignity of the charges brought against him, but with the frankness and heartiness of a man who is confident that his defence will be well received. From baseless insinuations he can appeal to facts which are well known to all. From the false character in which he has been dressed by his adversaries he can appeal to the true, in which he lived and moved familiarly among them.

The first point in his favour is found in the circumstances under which he had preached the gospel in Thessalonica. Had he been an insincere man, with by-ends of his own to serve, he would never have faced the career of an apostle. He had been scourged and put in the stocks at Philippi; and when he left that city for Thessalonica, he brought his troubles with him. Here also he had much conflict; he was beset on every hand with difficulties; it was only in the strength of God that he had courage to preach at all. You yourselves, he says, know that; and how, in spite of that, our coming to you was not vain, but full of power; surely it needs no more to prove the disinterestedness of our mission.

From this point onward, the apology falls into two parts, a negative and a positive: the Apostle tells us what his gospel and the proclamation of it are not; and then he tells us what, at Thessalonica, it had been.

In the first place, it is not of error. It does not rest on mistakes, or imaginations, or cunningly devised fables; in the fullest sense it is the truth. It would have taken the heart out of the Apostle, and made him incapable of braving anything for its sake, had he been in doubt of this. If the gospel were a device of man, then men might take liberties with it, handle it deceitfully, make their own account out of it; but resting as it does on facts and truth, it demands honest dealing in all its ministers. Paul claims here a character in agreement with the dispensation which he serves: can a minister of the truth, he asks, be other than a true man?

In the next place, it is not of uncleanness; that is, it is not prompted by any impure motive. The force of the word here must be determined by the context; and we see that the

impure motives specially laid to the charge of Paul were avarice and ambition; or, to use the words of the Apostle himself, covetousness, and the seeking of honour from men. The first of these is so manifestly inconsistent with any degree of spirituality that Paul writes instinctively "a cloke of covetousness"; he did not make his apostolic labour a veil, under cover of which he could gratify his love of gain. It is impossible to exaggerate the subtle and clinging character of this vice. It owes its strength to the fact that it can be so easily cloked. We seek money, so we tell ourselves, not because we are covetous, but because it is a power for all good purposes. Piety, charity, humanity, refinement, art, science—it can minister to them all; but when we obtain it, it is too easily hoarded, or spent in indulgence, display, and conformity to the world. The pursuit of wealth, except in an utterly materialised society, is always cloked by some ideal end to which it is to minister; but how few there are in whose hands wealth is merely an instrument for the furtherance of such ends. In many men the desire for it is naked selfishness, an idolatry as undisguised as that of Israel at Sinai. Yet all men feel how bad and mean it is to have the heart set on money. All men see how base and incongruous it is to make godliness a source of gain. All men see the peculiar ugliness of a character which associates piety and avarice—of a Balaam, for instance, a Gehazi, or an Ananias. It is not ministers of the gospel only, but all to whom the credit of the gospel is entrusted, who have to be on their guard here. Our enemies are entitled to question our sincerity when we can be shown to be lovers of money. At Thessalonica, as elsewhere, Paul had been at pains to make such calumny impossible. Although entitled to claim support from the Church in accordance with the law of Christ that they who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, he had wrought night and day with his own hands that he might not burden any of them. As a precaution, this self-denial was vain; there can be no security against malice; but it gave him a triumphant vindication when the charge of covetousness was actually made.

The other impure motive contemplated is ambition. Some modern students of Paul's character—devil's advocates, no doubt—hint at this as his most obvious fault. It was necessary for him, we are told, to be first; to be the leader of a party; to have a following of his own. But he disclaims ambition as explicitly as avarice. He never sought glory from men, at Thessalonica or elsewhere. He used none of the arts which obtain it. As apostles of Christ—he includes his friends—they had, indeed, a rank of their own; the greatness of the Prince whom they represented was reflected on them as His ambassadors; they might have "stood upon their dignity" had they chosen to do so. Their very self-denial in the matter of money formed a new temptation for them here. They might well feel that their disinterested service of the Thessalonians entitled them to a spiritual pre-eminence; and indeed there is no pride like that which bases on ascetic austerities the claim to direct with authority the life and conduct of others. Paul escaped this snare. He did not compensate himself for renouncing gain, with any lordship over souls. In all things he was the servant of those to whom he preached.

And as his motives were pure, so were the means he used. His exhortation was not in guile. He did not manipulate his message; he was never found using words of flattery. The gospel was not his own to do what he pleased with: it was God's; God had approved him so far as to entrust it to him; yet every moment, in the discharge of his trust, that same God was proving his heart still, so that false dealing was impossible. He did not make his message other than it was; he did not hide any part of the counsel of God; he did not inveigle the Thessalonians by any false pretences into responsibilities which would not have been accepted could they have been foreseen.

All these denials—not of error, not of uncleanness, not of guile; not pleasing men, not using words of flattery, not cloaking over covetousness—all these denials presuppose the contrary affirmations. Paul does not indulge in boasting but on compulsion; he would never have sought to justify himself, unless he had first been accused. And now, over against this picture, drawn by his enemies, let us look at the true likeness which is held up before God and man.

Instead of selfishness there is love, and nothing but love. We are all familiar with the great passage in the epistle to the Philippians where the Apostle depicts the mind which was in Christ Jesus. The contrast in that passage between the disposition which grasps at eminence and that which makes itself of no reputation, between *ἁρπαγμὸς* and *κένωσις*, is reproduced here. Paul had learned of Christ; and instead of seeking in his apostolic work opportunities for self-exaltation, he shrank from no service imposed by love. "We were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children." "Her own" is to be emphasised. The tenderness of the Apostle was that of a mother warming her babe at her breast. Most of the ancient authorities, the R. V. tells us in the margin, read "We were babes in the midst of you." If this were correct, the thought would be that Paul stooped to the level of these infant disciples, speaking to them, as it were, in the language of childhood, and accommodating himself to their immaturity. But though this is appropriate enough, the word *νήπιοι* is not proper to express it. Gentleness is really what is meant. But his love went further than this in its yearning over the Thessalonians. He had been accused of seeking gain and glory when he came among them; but his sole desire had been not to get but to give. As his stay was prolonged, the disciples became very dear to their teachers; "we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls." That is the true standard of pastoral care. The Apostle lived up to it always. "Now we live," he writes in the next chapter, "if ye stand fast in the Lord." "Ye are in our hearts," he cries to the Corinthians, "to live together and to die together." He not only kept back from them nothing of the whole purpose of God; he kept back no part of himself. His daily toil, his toil by night, his prayers, his preaching, his spiritual ardour, his very soul, were theirs. They knew his labour and travail; they were witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblamably he had behaved toward them.

As the Apostle recalls these recent memories,

he dwells for a moment on another aspect of his love. It had not only the tender fondness of a mother's, but the educative wisdom of a father's. One by one he dealt with the disciples—which is not the way to gain glory—exhorting, encouraging, bearing solemn testimony to the truth of God. And his end in all this, as they knew, was ideal and spiritual, an end as remote as possible from any worldly interest of his own; that they might walk worthily of God who was calling them into His own kingdom and glory. How far from the rewards and distinctions of the present must that man's mind be who sees, as Paul saw steadily, the things that are invisible. If he who is blind to the golden crown above his head grasps the muck rake tightly and clutches eagerly all it brings within his reach, surely he whose eye is set upon the crown must be superior alike to the gain and the glory of the world. That, at least, is the claim which the Apostle makes here. Nothing could be more incongruous than that a man to whom the visible world was transitory and unreal, and the visible kingdom of God real and eternal, should be eager for money and applause and forget the high calling with which he himself was calling men in Christ. So far the apology of the Apostle.

The practical application of this passage is different, according as we look at it in detail, or as a whole. It exhibits to us, in the charges brought against Paul, those vices which even bad men can see to be rankly inconsistent with the Christian character. Covetousness is the foremost. No matter how we cloak it—and we always cloak it somehow—it is incurably unchristian. Christ had no money. He never wished to have any. The one perfect life that has been lived in this world is the life of Him who owned nothing, and who left nothing but the clothes he wore. Whoever names the name of Christ, and professes to follow Him, must learn of Him indifference to gain. The mere suspicion of avarice will discredit, and ought to discredit, the most pious pretensions. The second vice I have spoken of as ambition. It is the desire to use others for one's own exaltation, to make them the stepping stones on which we rise to eminence, the ministers of our vanity, the sphere for the display of our own abilities as leaders, masters, organisers, preachers. To put ourselves in that relation to others is to do an essentially unchristian thing. A minister whose congregation is the theatre on which he displays his talents or his eloquence is not a Christian. A clever man, to whom the men and women with whom he meets in society are merely specimens of human nature on whom he can make shrewd observations, sharpening his wits on them as on a grindstone, is not a Christian. A man of business, who looks at the labourers whom he employs as only so many instruments for rearing the fabric of his prosperity, is not a Christian. Everybody in the world knows that; and such men, if they profess Christianity, give a handle to slander, and bring disgrace on the religion which they wear merely as a blind. True Christianity is love, and the nature of love is not to take but to give. There is no limit to the Christian's beneficence; he counts nothing his own; he gives his very soul with every separate gift. He is as tender as the mother to her infant; as wise, as manly, as earnest as the father with his growing boy.

Looked at as a whole this passage warns us against slander. It must needs be that slander is spoken and believed; but woe to the man or woman by whom it is either believed or spoken! None are good enough to escape it. Christ was slandered; they called Him a glutton and a drunkard, and said He was in league with the devil. Paul was slandered; they said he was a very smart man, who looked well to his own interest, and made dupes of simple people The deliberate wickedness of such falsehoods is diabolical, but it is not so very rare. Numbers of people who would not invent such stories are glad to hear them. They are not very particular whether they are true or false; it pleases them to think that an evangelist, eminent in profession, gets a royalty on hymn-books; or that a priest, famous for devotion, was really no better than he should have been; or that a preacher, whose words regenerated a whole church, sometimes despised his audience, and talked nonsense impromptu. To sympathise with detraction is to have the spirit of the devil, not of Christ. Be on your guard against such sympathy; you are human, and therefore need to. Never give utterance to a suspicious thought. Never repeat what would discredit a man, if you have only heard it and are not sure it is true; even if you are sure of its truth, be afraid of yourself if it gives you any pleasure to think of it. Love thinketh no evil; love rejoiceth not in iniquity.

CHAPTER VI.

IMPEACHMENT OF THE JEWS.

1 Thessalonians ii. 13-16 (R. V.).

These verses complete the treatment of the subject with which this chapter opens. The Apostle has drawn a moving picture of his life and labours in Thessalonica; he has pointed to it as his sufficient vindication from all the charges laid against him. Before carrying the war into the enemies' camp, and depicting the traditions and the spirit of his traducers, he lingers again for a moment on the happy results of his work. In spite of persecution and calumny, he has cause to thank God without ceasing when he remembers the reception of the gospel by the Thessalonians.

When the message was brought to them, they accepted it, he says, not as the word of men, but as what it was in truth, the word of God. It is in this character that the gospel always presents itself. A word of men cannot address men with authority; it must submit itself to criticism; it must vindicate itself on grounds which man's understanding approves. Now, the gospel is not irrational; it is its own demand that the Christian shall be ready to answer every one who demands a rational account of the hope that is in him. But neither does it, on the other hand, come to us soliciting our approval; submitting itself, as a system of ideas, to our scrutiny, and courting approbation. It speaks with authority. It commands repentance; it preaches forgiveness on the ground of Christ's death—a supreme gift of God which may be accepted or rejected, but is not proposed for discussion; it exhibits the law of Christ's life as the law which is binding upon every human being, and calls upon all men to follow him.

Its decisive appeal is made to the conscience and the will; and to respond to it is to give up will and conscience to God. When the Apostle says, "Ye received it as, what it is in truth, the word of God," he betrays, if one may use the word, the consciousness of his own inspiration. Nothing is commoner now than to speak of the theology of Paul as if it were a private possession of the Apostle, a scheme of thought that he had framed for himself, to explain his own experience. Such a scheme of thought, we are told, has no right whatever to impose itself on us; it has only a historical and biographical interest; it has no necessary connection with truth. The first result of this line of thought, in almost every case, is the rejection of the very heart of the apostolic gospel; the doctrine of the atonement is no longer the greatest truth of revelation, but a rickety bridge on which Paul imagined he had crossed from Pharisaism to Christianity. Certainly this modern analysis of the epistles does not reflect the Apostle's own way of looking at what he called "My gospel." To him it was no device of man, but unequivocally Divine; in very truth, the word of God. His theology certainly came to him in the way of his experience; his mind had been engaged with it, and was engaged with it continually; but he was conscious that, with all this freedom, it rested at bottom on the truth of God; and when he preached it—for his theology was the sum of the Divine truth he held, and he did preach it—he did not submit it to men as a theme for discussion. He put it above discussion. He pronounced a solemn and reiterated anathema on either man or angel who should put anything else in its stead. He published it, not for criticism, as though it had been his own device; but, as the word of God, for the obedience of faith. The tone of this passage recalls the word of our Lord, "Whoso shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." There are difficulties enough connected with the gospel, but they are not of a kind that disappear while we stand and look at them, or even stand and think about them; unquestioning surrender solves many, and introduces us to experiences which enable us to bear the rest with patience.

The word of God, in other words the gospel, proved its Divine character in the Thessalonians after it was received. "It also worketh," says Paul, "in you that believe." The last words are not superfluous. The word preached, we read of an earlier generation, did not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that heard. Faith conditions its efficacy. Gospel truth is an active force when it is within the heart; but it can do nothing for us while doubt, pride, or unacknowledged reserve, keep it outside. If we have really welcomed the Divine message, it will not be inoperative; it will work within us all that is characteristic of New Testament life—love, joy, peace, hope, patience. These are the proofs of its truth. Here, then, is the source of all graces: if the word of Christ dwell in us richly; if the truth of the gospel, deep, manifold, inexhaustible, yet ever the same, possess our hearts,—the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The particular gospel grace which the Apostle has here in view is patience. He proves that the word of God is at work in the Thessalonians by pointing to the fact that they have suffered for His sake. "Had you been still of the world, the world would have loved its own; but as it is, you have become imitators of the Christian churches in Judea, and have suffered the same things at the hands of your countrymen as they from theirs." Of all places in the world Judea was that in which the gospel and its adherents had suffered most severely. Jerusalem itself was the focus of hostility. No one knew better than Paul, the zealous persecutor of heresy, what it had cost from the very beginning to be true to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Scourging, imprisonment, exile, death by the sword or by stoning, had rewarded such fidelity. We do not know to what extremity the enemies of the gospel had gone in Thessalonica; but the distress of the Christians must have been great when the Apostle could make this comparison even in passing. He had already told them (chap. i. 6) that much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, is the very badge of God's elect; and here he combines the same stern necessity with the operation of the Divine word in their hearts. Do not let us overlook this. The work of God's word (or if you prefer it, the effect of receiving the gospel), is in the first instance to produce a new character, a character not only distinct from that of the unconverted, but antagonistic to it, and more directly and inevitably antagonistic, the more thoroughly it is wrought out; so that in proportion as God's word is operative in us, we come into collision with the world which rejects it. To suffer, therefore, is to the Apostle the seal of faith; it warrants the genuineness of a Christian profession. It is not a sign that God has forgotten His people, but a sign that He is with them; and that they are being brought by Him into fellowship with primitive churches, with apostles and prophets, with the Incarnate Son Himself. And hence the whole situation of the Thessalonians, suffering included, comes under that heartfelt expression of thanks to God with which the passage opens. It is not a subject for condolence, but for gratitude, that they have been counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name.

And now the Apostle turns from the persecuted to the persecutors. There is nothing in his epistles elsewhere that can be compared with this passionate outburst. Paul was proud with no common pride of his Jewish descent; it was better in his eyes than any patent of nobility. His heart swelled as he thought of the nation to which the adoption pertained, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Apostle of the Gentiles though he was, he had great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart, when he remembered the antagonism of the Jews to the gospel; he could have wished himself anathema from Christ for their sakes. He was confident, too, that in some glorious future they would yet submit to the Messiah, so that all Israel should be saved. The turning of the heathen to God would provoke them to jealousy; and the Divine calling with which the nation had been called in Abraham would reach its predestined goal. Such is the tone, and such the anticipation, with which, not very long afterwards, Paul writes in the epistle to the Romans. Here he looks at his countrymen with other

eyes. They are indentified, in his experience, with a fierce resistance to the gospel, and with cruel persecutions of the Church of Christ. Only in the character of bitter enemies has he been in contact with them in recent years. They have hunted him from city to city in Asia and in Europe; they have raised the populace against his converts; they have sought to poison the minds of his disciples against him. He knows that this policy is that with which his countrymen as a whole have identified themselves; and as he looks steadily at it, he sees that in doing so they have only acted in consistency with all their past history. The messengers whom God sends to demand the fruit of His vineyard have always been treated with violence and despite. The crowning sin of the race is put in the forefront; they slew the Lord Jesus; but before the Lord came, they had slain His prophets; and after He had gone, they expelled His apostles. God had put them in a position of privilege, but only for a time; they were the depositaries, or trustees, of the knowledge of God as the Saviour of men; and now, when the time had come for that knowledge to be diffused throughout all the world, they clung proudly and stubbornly to the old position. They pleased not God and were contrary to all men, in forbidding the apostles to preach salvation to the heathen. There is an echo, all through this passage, of the words of Stephen: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." There are sentences in heathen authors, who repaid the contempt and hatred of the Jews with haughty disdain, that have been compared with this terrible impeachment by the Apostle; but in reality, they are quite unlike. What we have here is not a burst of temper, though there is undoubtedly strong feeling in it; it is the vehement condemnation, by a man in thorough sympathy with the mind and spirit of God, of the principles on which the Jews as a nation had acted at every period of their history.

What is the relation of God to such a situation as is here described? The Jews, Paul says, did all this "to fill up their sins at all times." He does not mean that that was their intention; neither does he speak ironically; but speaking as he often does from that Divine standpoint at which all results are intended and purposed results, not outside of, but within, the counsel of God, he signifies that this Divine end was being secured by their wickedness. The cup of their iniquity was filling all the time. Every generation did something to raise the level within. The men who bade Amos begone, and eat his bread at home, raised it a little; the men who sought Hosea's life in the sanctuary raised it further; so did those who put Jeremiah in the dungeon, and those who murdered Zechariah between the temple and the altar. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, the cup was full to the brim. When those whom He left behind to be His witnesses, and to preach repentance and remission of sins to all men, beginning at Jerusalem, were expelled or put to death, it ran over. God could bear no more. Side by side with the cup of iniquity the cup of judgment had been filling also; and they overflowed together. Even when Paul wrote he could say, "The wrath is come upon them to the very end."

It is not easy to explain the precise force of these words. They seem to point definitely to some event, or some act of God, in which His wrath had been unmistakably made manifest. To suppose that the fall of Jerusalem is meant is to deny that Paul wrote the words. All that is certain is that the Apostle saw in the signs of the times some infallible token that the nation's day of grace had come to an end. Perhaps some excess of a Roman procurator, now forgotten; perhaps one of those famines that desolated Judea in that unhappy age; perhaps the recent edict of Claudius, expelling all Jews from Rome, and betraying the temper of the supreme power; perhaps the coming shadow of an awful doom, obscure in outline, but none the less inevitable, gave shape to the expression. The Jews had failed, in their day, to recognise the things that belonged to their peace; and now they were hid from their eyes. They had disregarded every presage of the coming storm; and at length the clouds that could not be charmed away had accumulated over their heads, and the fire of God was ready to leap out.

This striking passage embodies certain truths to which we do well to give heed. It shows us that there is such a thing as a national character. In the providential government of God a nation is not an aggregate of individuals, each one of whom stands apart from the rest; it is a corporation with a unity, life, and spirit of its own. Within that unity there may be a conflict of forces, a struggle of good with evil, of higher with lower tendencies, just as there is in the individual soul; but there will be a preponderance on one side or the other; and that side to which the balance leans will prevail more and more. In the vast spirit of the nation, as in the spirit of each man or woman, through the slow succession of generations as in the swift succession of years, character gradually assumes more fixed and definite form. There is a process of development, interrupted perhaps and retarded by such conflicts as I have referred to, but bringing out all the more decisively and irreversibly the inmost spirit of the whole. There is nothing which the proud and the weak more dread than inconsistency; there is nothing, therefore, which is so fatally certain to happen as what has happened already. The Jews resented from the first the intrusion of God's word into their lives; they had ambitions and ideas of their own, and in its corporate action the nation was uniformly hostile to the prophets. It beat one and killed another and stoned a third; it was of a different spirit from them, and from Him who sent them; and the longer it lived, the more like itself, the more unlike God, it became. It was the climax of its sin, yet only the climax—for it had previously taken every step that led to that eminence in evil—when it slew the Lord Jesus. And when it was ripe for judgment, judgment fell upon it as a whole.

It is not easy to speak impartially about our own country and its character; yet such a character there undoubtedly is, just as there is such a unity as the British nation. Many observers tell us that the character has degenerated into a mere instinct for trade; and that it has begotten a vast unscrupulousness in dealing with the weak. Nobody will deny that there is a protesting conscience in the nation, a voice which pleads in God's name for justice, as the prophets pled in Israel; but the question is not whether such a voice is audible, but whether in the cor-

porate acts of the nation it is obeyed. The state ought to be a Christian state. The nation ought to be conscious of a spiritual vocation, and to be animated with the spirit of Christ. In its dealings with other powers, in its relations to savage or half-civilised peoples, in its care for the weak among its own citizens, it should acknowledge the laws of justice and of mercy. We have reason to thank God that in all these matters Christian sentiment is beginning to tell. The opium trade with China, the liquor trade with the natives of Africa, the labour trade in the South Seas, the dwellings of the poor, the public-house system with its deliberate fostering of drunkenness, all these are matters in regard to which the nation was in danger of settling into permanent hostility to God, and in which there is now hope of better things. The wrath which is the due and inevitable accompaniment of such hostility, when persisted in, has not come on us to the very end; God has given us opportunity to rectify what is amiss, and to deal with all our interests in the spirit of the New Testament. Let no one be backward or indifferent when so great a work is in hand. The heritage of sin accumulates if it is not put away by well doing; and with sin, judgment. It is for us to learn by the word of God and the examples of history that the nation and kingdom that will not serve Him shall perish.

Finally, this passage shows us the last and worst form which sin can assume, in the words "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they should be saved." Nothing is so completely ungodly, so utterly unlike God and opposed to Him, as that spirit which grudges others the good things which it prizes for itself. When the Jewish nation set itself relentlessly to prohibit the extension of the gospel to the Gentiles—when the word was passed round the synagogues from headquarters that this renegade Paul, who was summoning the pagans to become the people of God, was to be thwarted by fraud or violence—God's patience was exhausted. Such selfish pride was the very negation of His love; the *ne plus ultra* of evil. Yet nothing is more easy and natural than for men who have occupied a position of privilege to indulge this temper. An imperial nation, which boasts of its freedom, grudges such freedom to others; it seems to lose the very consciousness of being free, unless there is a subject people over which it can tyrannise. In many relations of minor consequence, political and social, we have cause to make this reflection. Do not think that what is good for you is anything else than good for your neighbour. If you are a better man because you have a comfortable home, leisure, education, interest in public affairs, a place in the church, so would he be. Above all, if the gospel of Christ is to you the pearl above all price, take care how you grudge that to any human soul. This is not an unnecessary caution. The criticism of missionary methods, which may be legitimate enough, is interrupted too often by the suggestion that such and such a race is not fit for the gospel. Nobody who knows what the gospel is will ever make such a suggestion; but we have all heard it made, and we see from this passage what it means. It is the mark of a heart which is deeply estranged from God, and ignorant of the Golden Rule which embodies both gospel and law. Let us rather be imitators of the great man who first entered into the spirit of Christ, and discovered the open secret of His life and death,—the mystery of redemption,—that the heathen should be heirs with God's ancient people, and of the same body, and partakers of the same promises. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

CHAPTER VII.

ABSENCE AND LONGING.

1 Thessalonians ii. 17-iii. 5 (R. V.).

The Apostle has said all that he means to say of the opposition of the Jews to the gospel, and in the verses before us turns to his own relations to the Thessalonians. He had been compelled to leave their city against his will; they themselves had escorted him by night to Berœa. He cannot find words strong enough to describe the pain of separation. It was a bereavement, although he hoped it would only last for a short time. His heart was with them as truly as if he were still bodily present in Thessalonica. His strongest desire was to look upon their faces once more.

Here we ought to notice again the power of the gospel to create new relations and the corresponding affections. A few months before Paul had not known a single soul in Thessalonica; if he had been only a travelling tent-maker he might have stayed there as long as he did, and then moved on with as little emotion as troubles a modern gipsy when he shifts his camp; but coming as a Christian evangelist, he finds or rather makes brothers, and feels his enforced parting from them like a bereavement. Months after, his heart is sore for those whom he has left behind. This is one of the ways in which the gospel enriches life; hearts that would otherwise be empty and isolated are brought by it into living contact with a great circle whose nature and needs are like their own; and capacities, that would otherwise have been unsuspected, have free course for development. No one knows what is in him; and, in particular, no one knows of what love, of what expansion of heart he is capable, till Christ has made real to him those relations to others by which his duties are determined, and all his powers of thought and feeling called forth. Only the Christian man can ever tell what it is to love with all his heart and soul and strength and mind.

Such an experience as shines through the words of the Apostle in this passage furnishes the key to one of the best known but least understood words of our Saviour. "Verily I say unto you," said Jesus to the twelve, "there is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." These words might almost stand for a description of Paul. He had given up everything for Christ's sake. He had no home, no wife, no child; as far as we can see, no brother or friend among all his old acquaintances. Yet we may be sure that not one of those who were most richly blessed with all these natural rela-

tions and natural affections knew better than he what love is. No father ever loved his children more tenderly, fervently, austerely, and unchangeably than Paul loved those whom he had begotten in the gospel. No father was ever rewarded with affection more genuine, obedience more loyal, than many of his converts rendered to him. Even in the trials of love, which search it, and strain it, and bring out its virtues to perfection—in misunderstandings, ingratitude, wilfulness, suspicion—he had an experience with blessings of its own in which he surpassed them all. If love is the true wealth and blessedness of our life, surely none was richer or more blessed than this man, who h d given up for Christ's sake all those relations and connections through which love naturally comes. Christ had fulfilled to him the promise just quoted; He had given him a hundredfold in this life, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children. It would have been nothing but loss to cling to the natural affections and decline the lonely apostolic career.

There is something wonderfuly vivid in the idea which Paul gives of his love for the Thessalonians. His mind is full of them; he imagines all the circumstances of trial and danger in which they may be placed; if he could only be with them at need! He seems to follow them as a woman follows with her thoughts the son who has gone alone to a distant town; she remembers him when he goes out in the morning, pities him if there are any circumstances of hardship in his work, pictures him busy in shop or office or street, looks at the clock when he ought to be home for the day; wonders where he is, and with what companions, in the evening; and counts the days till she will see him again. The Christian love of the Apostle, which had no basis at all in nature, was as real as this; and it is a pattern for all those who try to serve others in the gospel. The power of the truth, as far as its ministers are concerned, depends on its being spoken in love; unless the heart of the preacher or teacher is really pledged to those to whom he speaks, he cannot expect but to labour in vain.

Paul is anxious that the Thessalonians should understand the strength of his feeling. It was no passing fancy. On two separate occasions he had determined to revisit them, and had felt, apparently, some peculiar malignity in the circumstances which foiled him. "Satan," he says, "hindered us."

This is one of the expressions which strike us as remote from our present modes of thought. Yet it is not false or unnatural. It belongs to that profound biblical view of life, according to which all the opposing forces in our experience have at bottom a personal character. We speak of the conflict of good and evil, as if good and evil were powers with an existence of their own; but the moment we think of it we see that the only good force in the world is the force of a good will, and the only bad force the force of a bad will; in orther words, we see that the conflict of good and evil is essentially a conflict of persons. Good persons are in conflict with bad persons; and so far as the antagonism comes to a head, Christ, the New Testament teaches, is in conflict with Satan. These persons are the centres of force on one side and on the other; and the Apostle discerns, in incidents of his life which have now been lost to us, the presence and working now of this and now of that. An instructive illustration is really furnished by a passage in Acts which seems at the first glance of a very different purport. It is in the 16th chap., vv. 6-10, in which the historian describes the route of the Apostle from the East to Europe. "They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia" . . . . "they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" . . . . Paul saw a vision, after which they "sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel unto them." Here, we might almost say, the three Divine Persons are referred to as the source of intimations directing and controlling the course of the gospel; yet it is evident, from the last mentioned, that such intimations might come in the shape of any event providentially ordered, and that the interpretation of them depended on those to whom they came. The obstacles which checked Paul's impulse to preach in Asia and in Bithynia he recognised to be of Divine appointment; those which prevented him from returning to Thessalonica were of Satanic origin. We do not know what they were; perhaps a plot against his life, which made the journey dangerous; perhaps some sin or scandal that detained him in Corinth. At all events it was the doing of the enemy, who in this world, of which Paul does not hesitate to call him the god, has means enough at his disposal to foil, though he cannot overcome, the saints.

It is a delicate operation, in many cases, to interpret outward events, and say what is the source and what the purpose of this or that. Moral indifference may blind us; but those who are in the thick of the moral conflict have a swift and sure instinct for what is against them or on their side; they can tell at once what is Satanic and what is Divine. As a rule, the two forces will show in their strength at the same time; "a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries:" each is a foil to the other. What we ought to remark in this connection is the fundamental character of all moral action. It is not a figure of speech to say that the world is the scene of incessant spiritual conflict; it is the literal truth. And spiritual conflict is not simply an interaction of forces; it is the deliberate antagonism of persons to each other. When we do what is right, we take Christ's side in a real struggle; when we do what is wrong, we side with Satan. It is a question of personal relations; to whose will do I add my own? to whose will do I oppose my own? And the struggle approaches its close for each of us as our will is more thoroughly assimilated to that of one or other of the two leaders. Do not let us dwell in generalities which disguise from us the seriousness of the issue. There is a place in one of his epistles in which Paul uses just such abstract terms as we do in speaking of this matter. "What fellowship," he asks, "have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?" But he clinches the truth by bringing out the personal relations involved, when he goes on, "And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" These are the real quantities concerned—all persons: Christ and Belial, believers and unbelievers; all that happens is at bottom Christian or Satanic; all that

we do is on the side of Christ or on the side of the great enemy of our Lord.

The recollection of the Satanic hindrances to his visit does not detain the Apostle more than a moment; his heart overflows them to those whom he describes as his hope and joy and crown of glorying in the day of the Lord Jesus. The form of words implies that these titles are not the property of the Thessalonians only; yet at the same time, that if they belong to anybody, they belong to them.

It is almost a pity to analyse words which are spoken out of the abundance of the heart; yet we pass over the surface, and lose the sense of their truth, unless we do so. What then does Paul mean when he calls the Thessalonians his hope? Every one looks at least a certain distance into the future, and projects something into it to give it reality and interest to himself. That is his hope. It may be the returns he expects from investments of money; it may be the expansion of some scheme he has set on foot for the common good; it may be his children, on whose love and reverence, or on whose advancement in life, he counts for the happiness of his declining years. Paul, we know, had none of these hopes; when he looked down into the future he saw no fortune growing secretly, no peaceful retirement in which the love of sons and daughters would surround him and call him blessed. Yet his future was not dreary or desolate; it was bright with a great light; he had a hope that made life abundantly worth living, and that hope was the Thessalonians. He saw them in his mind's eye grow daily out of the lingering taint of heathenism into the purity and love of Christ. He saw them, as the discipline of God's providence had its perfect work in them, escape from the immaturity of babes in Christ, and grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour to the measure of the stature of perfect men. He saw them presented faultless in the presence of the Lord's glory in the great day. That was something to live for. To witness that spiritual transformation which he had inaugurated carried on to completion gave the future a greatness and a worth which made the Apostle's heart leap for joy. He is glad when he thinks of his children walking in the truth. They are "a chaplet of victory of which he may justly make his boast"; he is prouder of them than a king of his crown, or a champion in the games of his wreath.

Such words might well be charged with extravagance if we omitted to look at the connection in which they stand. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at His coming." "Before our Lord Jesus at His coming:" this is the presence, this the occasion, with which Paul confronts, in imagination, his hope and joy and triumph. They are such as give him confidence and exultation even as he thinks of the great event which will try all common hopes and put them to shame.

None of us, it may be presumed, is without hope when he looks into the future; but how far does our future extend? For what situation is provision made by the hope that we actually cherish? The one certain event of the future is that we shall stand before our Lord Jesus, at His coming; can we acknowledge there with joy and boasting the hope on which our heart is at present set? Can we carry into that presence the expectation which at this moment gives us courage to look down the years to come? Not every one can. There are multitudes of human hopes which terminate on material things, and expire with Christ's coming; it is not these that can give us joy at last. The only hope whose light is not dimmed by the brightness of Christ's appearing is the disinterested spiritual hope of one who has made himself the servant of others for Jesus' sake, and has lived to see and aid their growth in the Lord. The fire which tries every man's work of what sort it is, brings out the imperishable worth of this. The Old Testament as well as the New tells us that souls saved and sanctified are the one hope and glory of men in the great day. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." It is a favourite thought of the Apostle himself: "appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ." Even the Lord Himself, as he looks at the men whom He has gathered out of the world, can say, "I am glorified in them." It is His glory, as the Father's servant, that He has sought and found and sanctified His Church.

We ought not to pass by such fervent utterances as if they must mean less than they say. We ought not, because our own hold on the circle of Christian facts is weak, to glide over the qualification, "before our Lord Jesus at His coming," as if it were without any solid meaning. The Bible is verbally inspired at least in the sense that nothing in it is otiose; every word is meant. And we miss the main lesson of this passage, if we do not ask ourselves whether we have any hope which is valid on the grand occasion in question. Your future may be secured as far as this world is concerned. Your investments may be as safe as the National debt; the loyalty and virtue of your children all that heart could wish; you are not afraid of poverty, loneliness, age. But what of our Lord Jesus, and His coming? Will your hope be worth anything before Him, at that day? You do not know how near it is. For some it may be very near. There are people in every congregation who know they cannot live ten years. No one knows that he will live so long. And all are summoned to take that great event into their view of the future, and to make ready for it. Is it not a fine thing to think that, if we do so, we can look forward to the coming of our Lord Jesus with hope and joy and triumph?

The intensity of Paul's love for the Thessalonians made his longing to see them intolerable; and after being twice baffled in his attempts to revisit them he sent Timothy in his stead. Rather than be without news of them he was content to be left in Athens alone. He mentions this as if it had been a great sacrifice, and probably it was so for him. He seems to have been in many ways dependent on the sympathy and assistance of others; and, of all places he ever visited, Athens was the most trying to his ardent temperament. It was covered with idols and exceedingly religious; yet it seemed to him more hopelessly away from God than any city in the world. Never had he been left alone in a place so unsympathetic; never had he felt so great a gulf fixed between others' minds and

his own; and Timothy had no sooner gone than he made his way to Corinth, where his messenger found him on his return.

The object of this mission is sufficiently plain from what has been already said. The Apostle knew the troubles that had beset the Thessalonians; and it was Timothy's function to establish them and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. The word translated "moved" occurs only this once in the New Testament, and the meaning is not quite certain. It may be quite as general as our version represents it; but it may also have a more definite sense, viz., that of allowing oneself to be befooled, or flattered out of one's faith, in the midst of tribulations. Besides the vehement enemies who pursued Paul with open violence, there may have been others who spoke of him to the Thessalonians as a mere enthusiast, the victim in his own person of delusions about a resurrection and a life to come, which he sought to impose upon others; and who, when affliction came on the Church, tried by appeals of this sort to wheedle the Thessalonians out of their faith. Such a situation would answer very exactly to the peculiar word here used. But however this may be, the general situation was plain. The Church was suffering; suffering is a trial which not every one can bear; and Paul was anxious to have some one with them who had learned the elementary Christian lesson, that it is inevitable. The disciples had not, indeed, been taken by surprise. The Apostle had told them before that to this lot Christians were appointed; we are destined, he says, to suffer affliction. Nevertheless, it is one thing to know this by being told, and another to know it, as the Thessalonians now did, by experience. The two things are as different as reading a book about a trade and serving an apprenticeship to it.

The suffering of the good because they are good is mysterious, in part because it has the two aspects here made so manifest. On the one hand, it comes by Divine appointment; it is the law under which the Son of God Himself and all His followers live. But on the other hand, it is capable of a double issue. It may perfect those who endure it as ordained by God; it may bring out the solidity of their character, and redound to the glory of their Saviour; or it may give an opening to the tempter to seduce them from a path so full of pain. The one thing of which Paul is certain is, that the salvation of Christ is cheaply purchased at any price of affliction. Christ's life here and hereafter is the supreme good; the one thing needful, for which all else may be counted loss.

This possible double issue of suffering—in higher goodness, or in the abandonment of the narrow way—explains the difference of tone with which Scripture speaks of it in different places. With the happy issue in view, it bids us count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations; blessed, it exclaims, is the man who endures; for when he is found proof, he shall receive the crown of life. But with human weakness in view, and the terrible consequences of failure, it bids us pray, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. The true Christian will seek, in all the afflictions of life, to combine the courage and hope of the one view with the humility and fear of the other.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE AND PRAYERS.

1 Thessalonians iii. 6-13 (R. V.).

These verses present no peculiar difficulty to the expositor. They illustrate the remark of Bengel that the First Epistle to the Thessalonians is characterised by a kind of unmixed sweetness,—a quality which is insipid to those who are indifferent to the relations in which it is displayed, but which can never lose its charm for simple, kindly, Christian hearts.

It is worth observing that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the moment Timothy returned.* Such promptitude has not only a business value, but a moral and Christian worth as well. It not only prevents arrears from accumulating; it gives those to whom we write the first and freshest feelings of the heart. Of course one may write hastily, as well as speak hastily; a living critic has had the audacity to say that if Paul had kept the Epistle to the Galatians long enough to read it over, he would have thrown it into the fire; but most of our faults as correspondents arise, not from precipitation, but from undue delay. Where our hearts prompt us to speak or to write, let us dread procrastination as a sin. The letter of congratulation or condolence is natural and in place, and it will be inspired by true feeling, if it is written when the sad or joyful news has touched the heart with genuine sympathy; but if it is put off till a more convenient season, it will never be done as it ought to be. How fervent and hearty is the language in which Paul here expresses himself. The news that Timothy has brought from Thessalonica is a veritable gospel to him. It has comforted him in all his necessities and distresses; it has brought him new life; it has been an indescribable joy. If he had not written for a fortnight, we should have missed this rebound of gladness; and what is more serious, the Thessalonians would have missed it. Cold-hearted people may think they would have survived the loss; but it is a loss which the cold-hearted cannot estimate. Who can doubt that, when this letter was read in the little congregation at Thessalonica, the hearts of the disciples warmed again to the great teacher who had been among them, and to the message of love which he had preached? The gospel is wonderfully commended by the manifestation of its own spirit in its ministers, and the love of Paul to the Thessalonians no doubt made it easier for them to believe in the love of God, and to love one another. For good, as well as for evil, a little spark can kindle a great fire; and it would only be natural if the burning words of this letter kindled the flame of love anew in hearts in which it was beginning to die.

There were two causes for Paul's joy,—one larger and more public; the other, proper to himself. The first was the faith and love of the Thessalonians, or, as he calls it further on, their standing fast in the Lord; the other was their affectionate and faithful remembrance of him, their desire, earnestly reciprocated on his part, to see his face once more.

The visitation of a Christian congregation by a deputy from Synod or Assembly is sometimes embarrassing: no one knows exactly what is

*Ἄρτι is naturally taken with ἐλθόντος: as by Ellicott.

wanted; a schedule of queries, filled up by the minister or the office-bearers, is a painfully formal affair, which gives little real knowledge of the health and spirit of the Church. But Timothy was one of the founders of the church at Thessalonica; he had an affectionate and natural interest in it; he came at once into close contact with its real condition, and found the disciples full of faith and love. Faith and love are not easily calculated and registered; but where they exist in any power they are easily felt by a Christian man. They determine the temperature of the congregation; and a very short experience enables a true disciple to tell whether it is high or low. To the great joy of Timothy, he found the Thessalonians unmistakably Christian. They were standing fast in the Lord. Christ was the basis, the centre, the soul of their life. Their faith is mentioned twice, because that is the most comprehensive word to describe the new life in its root; they still kept their hold of the Word of God in the gospel; no one could live among them and not feel that unseen things were real to their souls; God and Christ, the resurrection and the coming judgment, the atonement and the final salvation, were the great forces which ruled their thoughts and lives. Faith in these distinguished them from their Pagan neighbours. It made them a Christian congregation, in which an Evangelist like Timothy at once found himself at home. The common faith had its most signal exhibition in love; if it separated the brethren from the rest of the world, it united them more closely to each other. Every one knows what love is in a family, and how different the spiritual atmosphere is, according as love reigns or is disregarded in the relations of the household. In some homes love does reign: parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, bear themselves beautifully to each other; it is a delight to visit them; there are openness and simplicity, sweetness of temper, a willingness to deny self, a readiness to be interested in others, no suspicion, reserve, or gloom; there is one mind and one heart in old and young, and a brightness like the sunshine. In others, again, we see the very opposite: friction, self-will, captiousness, mutual distrust, readiness to suspect or to sneer, a painful separation of hearts that should be one. And the same holds good of churches, which are in reality large families, united not by natural but by spiritual bonds. We ought all to be friends. There ought to be a spirit of love shed abroad in our hearts, drawing us to each other in spite of natural differences, giving us an unaffected interest in each other, making us frank, sincere, cordial, self-denying, eager to help where help is needed and it is in our power to render it, ready to resign our own liking, and our own judgment even, to the common mind and purpose of the Church. These two graces of faith and love are the very soul of the Christian life. It is good news to a good man to hear that they exist in any church. It is good news to Christ.

But besides this more public cause for joy, which Paul shared to some extent with all Christian men, there was another more private to himself,—their good remembrance of him, and their earnest desire to see him. Paul wrought for nothing but love. He did not care for money or for fame; but a place in the hearts of his disciples was dear to him above everything else in the world. He did not always get it. Sometimes those who had just heard the gospel from his lips, and welcomed its glad tidings, were prejudiced against him; they deserted him for more attractive preachers; they forgot, amid the multitude of their Christian instructors, the father who had begotten them in the gospel. Such occurrences, of which we read in the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, were a deep grief to Paul; and though he says to one of these thankless churches, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved," he says also, "Brethren, receive us; make room for us in your hearts; our heart has been opened wide to you." He hungered and thirsted for an answer of love to all the love which he lavished on his converts; and his heart leaped up when Timothy returned from Thessalonica, and told him that the disciples there had good remembrance of him, that is, spoke of him with love, and longed to see him once more. Nobody is fit to be a servant of Christ in any degree, as parent, or teacher, or elder, or pastor, who does not know what this craving for love is. It is not selfishness: it is itself one side of love. Not to care for a place in the hearts of others; not to wish for love, not to need it, not to miss it if it is wanting, does not signify that we are free from selfishness or vanity: it is the mark of a cold and narrow heart, shut up in itself, and disqualified for any service the very essence of which is love. The thanklessness or indifference of others is not a reason why we should cease to serve them; yet it is apt to make the attempt at service heartless; and if you would encourage any who have ever helped you in your spiritual life, do not forget them, but esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake.

When Timothy returned from Thessalonica, he found Paul sorely in need of good news. He was beset by distress and affliction; not inward or spiritual troubles, but persecutions and sufferings, which befell him from the enemies of the gospel. So extreme was his distress that he even speaks of it by implication as death. But the glad tidings of Thessalonian faith and love swept it at once away. They brought comfort, joy, thanksgiving, life from the dead. How intensely, we are compelled to say, did this man live his apostolic life! What depths and heights are in it; what depression, not stopping short of despair; what hope, not falling short of triumph. There are Christian workers in multitudes whose experience, it is to be feared, gives them no key to what we read here. There is less passion in their life in a year than there was in Paul's in a day; they know nothing of these transitions from distress and affliction to unspeakable joy and praise. Of course all men are not alike; all natures are not equally impressible; but surely all who are engaged in work which asks the heart or nothing should suspect themselves if they go on from week to week and year to year with heart unmoved. It is a great thing to have part in a work which deals with men for their spiritual interests—which has in view life and death, God and Christ, salvation and judgment. Who can think of failures and discouragements without pain and fear? who can hear the glad tidings of victory without heartfelt joy? Is it not those only who have neither part nor lot in the matter?

The Apostle in the fulness of his joy turns with devout gratitude toward God. It is He who has kept the Thessalonians from falling, and the only return the Apostle can make is to express his thankfulness. He feels how unworthy words are of God's kindness; how unequal even to his own feelings; but they are the first recompense to be made, and he does not withhold them. There is no surer mark of a truly pious spirit than this grateful mood. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above; most directly and immediately are all gifts like love and faith to be referred to God as their source, and to call forth the thanks and praise of those who are interested in them. If God does little for us, giving us few signs of His presence and help, may it not be because we have refused to acknowledge His kindness when He has interposed on our behalf? "Whoso offereth praise," He says, "glorifieth Me." "In everything give thanks."

Paul's love for the Thessalonians did not blind him to their imperfections. It was their faith which comforted him in all his distress, yet he speaks of the deficiencies of their faith as something he sought to remedy. In one sense faith is a very simple thing, the setting of the heart right with God in Christ Jesus. In another, it is very comprehensive. It has to lay hold on the whole revelation which God has made in His Son, and it has to pass into action through love in every department of life. It is related on the one side to knowledge, and on the other to conduct. Now Timothy saw that while the Thessalonians had the root of the matter in them, and had set themselves right with God, they were far from perfect. They were ignorant of much which it concerned Christians to know; they had false ideas on many points in regard to which God had given light. They had much to do before they could be said to have escaped from the prejudices, the instincts, and the habits of heathenism, and to have entered completely into the mind of Christ. In later chapters we shall find the Apostle rectifying what was amiss in their notions both of truth and duty; and, in doing so, opening up to us the lines on which defective faith needs to be corrected and supplemented.

But we should not pass by this notice of the deficiencies of faith without asking ourselves whether our own faith is alive and progressive. It may be quite true and sound in itself; but what if it never gets any further on? It is in its nature an engrafting into Christ, a setting of the soul into a vital connection with Him; and if it is what it should be, there will be a transfusion, by means of it, of Christ into us. We shall get a larger and surer possession of the mind of Christ, which is the standard both of spiritual truth and of spiritual life. His thoughts will be our thoughts; His judgment, our judgment; His estimates of life and the various elements in it, our estimates; His disposition and conduct, the pattern and the inspiration of ours. Faith is a little thing in itself, the smallest of small beginnings; in its earliest stage it is compatible with a high degree of ignorance, of foolishness, of insensibility in the conscience; and hence the believer must not forget that he is a disciple; and that though he has entered the school of Christ, he has only entered it, and has many classes to pass through, and much to learn and unlearn, before he can become a credit to his Teacher. An Apostle coming among us would in all likelihood be struck with manifest deficiencies in our faith. This aspect of the truth, he would say, is overlooked; this vital doctrine is not really a vital piece of your minds; in your estimate of such and such a thing you are betrayed by worldly prejudices that have survived your conversion; in your conduct in such and such a situation you are utterly at variance with Christ. He would have much to teach us, no doubt, of truth, of right and wrong, and of our Christian calling; and if we wish to remedy the defects of our faith, we must give heed to the words of Christ and His Apostles, so that we may not only be engrafted into Him, but grow up into Him in all things, and become perfect men in Christ Jesus.

In view of their deficiencies, Paul prayed exceedingly that he might see the Thessalonians again; and conscious of his own inability to overcome the hindrances raised in his path by Satan, he refers the whole matter to God. "May our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." Certainly in that prayer the person directly addressed is our God and Father Himself; our Lord Jesus Christ is introduced in subordination to Him; yet what a dignity is implied in this juxtaposition of God and Christ! Surely the name of a merely human creature, even if such could be exalted to share the throne of God, could not possibly appear in this connection. It is not to be overlooked that both in this and in the similar passage in 2 Thess. ii. 16 f., where God and Christ are named side by side, the verb is in the singular number. It is an involuntary assent of the Apostle to the word of the Lord, "I and My Father are one." We can understand why He added in this place "our Lord Jesus Christ" to "our God and Father." It was not only that all power was given to the Son in heaven and on earth; but that as Paul well knew from that day on which the Lord arrested him by Damascus, the Saviour's heart beat in sympathy with His suffering Church, and would surely respond to any prayer on its behalf. Nevertheless, he leaves the result to God; and even if he is not permitted to come to them, he can still pray for them, as he does in the closing verses of the chapter: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we also do toward you; to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints."

Here it is distinctly Christ who is addressed in prayer; and what the Apostle asks is that He may make the Thessalonians increase and abound in love. Love, he seems to say, is the one grace in which all others are comprehended; we can never have too much of it; we can never have enough. The strong words of the prayer really ask that the Thessalonians may be loving in a superlative degree, overflowing with love. And notice the aspect in which love is here presented to us: it is a power and an exercise of our own souls certainly, yet we are not the fountain of it; it is the Lord who is to make us rich in love. The best commentary on this prayer is the word of the Apostle in another letter: "The love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto

us." "We love, because He first loved us." In whatever degree love exists in us, God is its source; it is like a faint pulse, every separate beat of which tells of the throbbing of the heart; and it is only as God imparts His Spirit to us more fully that our capacity for loving deepens and expands. When that Spirit springs up within us, an inexhaustible fountain, then rivers of living water, streams of love, will overflow on all around. For God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.

Paul seeks love for his converts as the means by which their hearts may be established unblamable in holiness. That is a notable direction for those in search of holiness. A selfish, loveless heart can never succeed in this quest. A cold heart is not unblamable, and never will be; it is either pharisaical or foul, or both. But love sanctifies. Often we only escape from our sins by escaping from ourselves; by a hearty, self-denying, self-forgetting interest in others. It is quite possible to think so much about holiness as to put holiness out of our reach: it does not come with concentrating thought upon ourselves at all; it is the child of love, which kindles a fire in the heart in which faults are burnt up. Love is the fulfilling of the law; the sum of the ten commandments; the end of all perfection. Do not let us imagine that there is any other holiness than that which is thus created. There is an ugly kind of faultlessness which is always raising its head anew in the Church; a holiness which knows nothing of love, but consists in a sort of spiritual isolation, in censoriousness, in holding up one's head and shaking off the dust of one's feet against brethren, in conceit, in condescension, in sanctimonious separateness from the freedom of common life, as though one were too good for the company which God has given him: all this is as common in the Church as it is plainly condemned in the New Testament. It is an abomination in God's sight. Except your righteousness, says Christ, exceed this, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Love exceeds it infinitely, and opens the door which is closed to every other claim.

The kingdom of heaven comes before the Apostle's mind as he writes. The Thessalonians are to be blameless in holiness, not in the judgment of any human tribunal, but before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. At the end of each of these three chapters this great event has risen into view. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is a scene of judgment for some; of joy and glory for others; of imposing splendour for all. Many think that the last words here, "with all His saints," refer to the angels, and Zech. xiv. 5,—"The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee,"—in which angels are undoubtedly meant, has been quoted in support of this view; but such a use of "saints" would be unexampled in the New Testament.* The Apostle means the dead in Christ, who, as he explains in a later chapter, will swell the Lord's train at His coming. The instinctiveness with which Paul recurs to this great event shows how large a place it filled in his creed and in his heart. His hope was a hope of Christ's second coming; his joy was a joy which would not pale in that awful presence; his holiness was a holiness to stand the test of those searching eyes. Where has this supreme motive gone in the modern Church? Is not this one point in which the apostolic word bids us perfect that which is lacking in our faith?

* Yet see Jude 14, quoting from Enoch.

CHAPTER IX.

PERSONAL PURITY.

1 Thessalonians iv. 1-8 (R. V.).

The "finally" with which this chapter opens is the beginning of the end of the Epistle. The personal matter which has hitherto occupied us was the immediate cause of the Apostle's writing; he wished to open his heart to the Thessalonians, and to vindicate his conduct against the insidious accusations of his enemies; and having done so, his main purpose is fulfilled. For what remains—this is the meaning of "finally"—he has a few words to say suggested by Timothy's report upon their state.

The previous chapter closed with a prayer for their growth in love, with a view to their establishment in holiness. The prayer of a good man avails much in its working; but his prayer of intercession cannot secure the result it seeks without the co-operation of those for whom it is made. Paul, who has besought the Lord on their behalf, now beseeches the Thessalonians themselves, and exhorts them in the Lord Jesus, to walk as they had been taught by him. The gospel, we see from this passage, contains a new law; the preacher must not only do the work of an evangelist, proclaiming the glad tidings of reconciliation to God, but the work of a catechist also, enforcing on those who receive the glad tidings the new law of Christ. This is in accordance with the final charge of the Saviour: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The Apostle had followed this Divine order; he had made disciples in Thessalonica, and then he had taught them how to walk and to please God. We who have been born in a Christian country, and bred on the New Testament, are apt to think that we know all these things; our conscience seems to us a sufficient light. We ought to know that, though conscience is universal in the human race, and everywhere distinguishes between a right and a wrong, there is not one of our faculties which is more in need of enlightenment. No one doubts that men who have been converted from heathenism, like the Thessalonians, or the fruits of modern missions in Nyassaland or Madagascar, need to be taught what kind of life pleases God; but in some measure we all need such teaching. We have not been true to conscience; it is set in our human nature like the unprotected compass in the early iron ships: it is exposed to influences from other parts of our nature which bias and deflect it without our knowledge. It needs to be adjusted to the holy will of God, the unchangeable standard of right, and protected against disturbing forces. In Thessalonica Paul had laid down the new law, he says, through the Lord Jesus. If it had not been for Him, we should have been without the knowledge of it altogether; we should have had

no adequate conception of the life with which God is well pleased. But such a life is exhibited to us in the Gospels; its spirit and requirements can be deduced from Christ's example, and are explicitly set forth in His words. He left us an example, that we should follow in His steps. "Follow Me," is the sum of His commandments; the one all-embracing law of the Christian life.

One of the subjects of which we should gladly know more is the use of the Gospels in the early Church; and this passage gives us one of the earliest glimpses of it. The peculiar mention of the Lord Jesus in the second verse shows that the Apostle used the words and example of the Master as the basis of his moral teaching; the mind of Christ is the norm for the Christian conscience. And if it be true that we still need enlightenment as to the claims of God and the law of life, it is here we must seek it. The words of Jesus have still their old authority. They still search our hearts, and show us all things that ever we did, and their moral worth or worthlessness. They still reveal to us unsuspected ranges of life and action in which God is not yet acknowledged. They still open to us gates of righteousness, and call on us to enter in, and subdue new territories to God. The man who is most advanced in the life which pleases God, and whose conscience is most nearly identical with the mind of Christ, will be the first to confess his constant need of, and his constant dependence upon, the word and example of the Lord Jesus.

In addressing the Thessalonians, Paul is careful to recognise their actual obedience. Ye do walk, he writes, according to this rule. In spite of sins and imperfections, the church, as a whole, had a Christian character; it was exhibiting human life in Thessalonica on the new model; and while he hints that there is room for indefinite progress, he does not fail to notice their present attainments. That is a rule of wisdom, not only for those who have to censure or to teach, but for all who wish to judge soberly the state and prospects of the Church. We know the necessity there is for abounding more and more in Christian obedience; we can see in how many directions, doctrinal and practical, that which is lacking in faith requires to be perfected; but we need not therefore be blind to the fact that it is in the Church that the Christian standard is held up, and that continuous, and not quite unsuccessful efforts, are made to reach it. The best men in a community, those whose lives come nearest to pleasing God, are to be found among those who are identified with the gospel; and if the worst men in the community are also found in the Church at times, that is because the corruption of the best is worst. If God has not cast off His Church altogether, He is teaching her to do His will.

"For this," the Apostle proceeds, "is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is assumed here that the will of God is the law, and ought to be the inspiration, of the Christian. God has taken him out of the world that he may be His, and live in Him and for Him. He is not his own any longer; even his will is not his own; it is to be caught up and made one with the will of God; and that is sanctification. No human will works apart from God to this end of holiness. The other influences which reach it, and bend it into accord with them, are from beneath, not from above; as long as it does not recognise the will of God as its rule and support, it is a carnal, worldly, sinful will. But the will of God, to which it is called to submit, is the saving of the human will from this degradation. For the will of God is not only a law to which we are required to conform, it is the one great and effective moral power in the universe, and it summons us to enter into alliance and co-operation with itself. It is not a dead thing; it is God Himself working in us in furtherance of His good pleasure. To tell us what the will of God is, is not to tell us what is against us, but what is on our side; not the force which we have to encounter, but that on which we can depend. If we set out on an unchristian life, on a career of falsehood, sensuality, worldliness, God is against us; if we go to perdition, we go breaking violently through the safeguards with which He has surrounded us, overpowering the forces by which He seeks to keep us in check; but if we set ourselves to the work of sanctification, He is on our side. He works in us and with us, because our sanctification is His will. Paul does not mention it here to dishearten the Thessalonians, but to stimulate them. Sanctification is the one task which we can face confident that we are not left to our own resources. God is not the taskmaster we have to satisfy out of our own poor efforts, but the holy and loving Father who inspires and sustains us from first to last. To fall in with His will is to enlist all the spiritual forces of the world in our aid; it is to pull with, instead of against, the spiritual tide.

In the passage before us the Apostle contrasts our sanctification with the cardinal vice of heathenism, impurity. Above all other sins, this was characteristic of the Gentiles who knew not God. There is something striking in that description of the pagan world in this connection: ignorance of God was at once the cause and the effect of their vileness; had they retained God in their knowledge, they could never have sunk to such depths of shame; had they shrunk from pollution with instinctive horror, they would never have been abandoned to such ignorance of God. No one who is not familiar with ancient literature can have the faintest idea of the depth and breadth of the corruption. Not only in writers avowedly immoral, but in the most magnificent works of a genius as lofty and pure as Plato, there are pages that would stun with horror the most hardened profligate in Christendom. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that on the whole matter in question the heathen world was without conscience: it had sinned away its sense of the difference between right and wrong; to use the words of the Apostle in another passage, being past feeling men had given themselves up to work all manner of uncleanness. They gloried in their shame. Frequently, in his epistles, Paul combines this vice with covetousness,—the two together representing the great interests of life to the ungodly, the flesh and the world. Those who do not know God and live for Him, live, as he saw with fearful plainness, to indulge the flesh and to heap up gain. Some think that in the passage before us this combination is made, and that ver. 6—"that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter"—is a prohibition of dishonesty in business; but that is almost certainly a mistake. As the Revised Version

shows, the Apostle is speaking of the matter in hand; in the Church especially, among brethren in Christ, in the Christian home, the uncleanness of heathenism can have no place. Marriage is to be sanctified. Every Christian, marrying in the Lord, is to exhibit in his home-life the Christian law of sanctification and noble self-respect.

The Apostle adds to his warning against sensuality the terrible sanction, "The Lord is an avenger in all these things." The want of conscience in the heathen world generated a vast indifference on this point. If impurity was a sin, it was certainly not a crime. The laws did not interfere with it; public opinion was at best neutral; the unclean person might presume upon impunity. To a certain extent this is the case still. The laws are silent, and treat the deepest guilt as a civil offence. Public opinion is indeed stronger and more hostile than it once was, for the leaven of Christ's kingdom is actively at work in society; but public opinion can only touch open and notorious offenders, those who have been guilty of scandal as well as of sin; and secrecy is still tempted to count upon impunity. But here we are solemnly warned that the Divine law of purity has sanctions of its own above any cognisance taken of offences by man. "The Lord is an avenger in all these things." "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience." Is it not true? They are avenged on the bodies of the sinful. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The holy law of God, wrought into the very constitution of our bodies, takes care that we do not violate it without paying the penalty. If it is not at the moment, it is in the future, and with interest,—in premature old age; in the torpor which succeeds all spendthrift feats, excesses of man's prime; in the sudden breakdown under any strain put on either physical or moral courage. They are avenged in the soul. Sensual indulgence extinguishes the capacity for feeling: the profligate man would love, but cannot; all that is inspiring, elevating, redeeming in the passions is lost to him; all that remains is the dull sense of that incalculable loss. Were there ever sadder lines written than those in which Burns, with his life ruined by this very thing, writes to a young friend and warns him against it?

> "I waive the quantum o' the sin,
> The hazard o' concealing;
> But Och! it hardens a' within,
> And petrifies the feeling."

This inward deadening is one of the most terrible consequences of immorality; it is so unexpected, so unlike the anticipations of youthful passion, so stealthy in its approach, so inevitable, so irreparable. All these sins are avenged also in the will and in the spiritual nature. Most men repent of their early excesses; some never cease to repent. Repentance, at least, is what it is habitually called; but that is not really repentance which does not separate the soul from sin. That access of weakness which comes upon the back of indulgence, that breakdown of the soul in impotent self-pity, is no saving grace. It is a counterfeit of repentance unto life, which deludes those whom sin has blinded, and which, when often enough repeated, exhausts the soul and leaves it in despair. Is there any vengeance more terrible than that? When Christian was about to leave the Interpreter's house, "Stay," said the Interpreter, "till I have showed thee a little more, and after that thou shalt go on thy way." What was the sight without which Christian was not allowed to start upon his journey? It was the Man of Despair, sitting in the iron cage,—the man who, when Christian asked him, "How camest thou in this condition?" made answer: "I left off to watch and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the light of the word and the goodness of God; I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to anger, and He has left me; I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent." This is no fancy picture: it is drawn to the life; it is drawn from the life; it is the very voice and tone in which many a man has spoken who has lived an unclean life under the cloak of a Christian profession. They who do such things do not escape the avenging holiness of God. Even death, the refuge to which despair so often drives, holds out no hope to them. There remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

The Apostle dwells upon God's interest in purity. He is the avenger of all offences against it; but vengeance is His strange work. He has called us with a calling utterly alien to it,—not based on uncleanness or contemplating it, like some of the religions in Corinth, where Paul wrote this letter; but having sanctification, purity in body and in spirit, for its very element. The idea of "calling" is one which has been much degraded and impoverished in modern times. By a man's calling we usually understand his trade, profession, or business, whatever it may be; but our calling in Scripture is something quite different from this. It is our life considered, not as filling a certain place in the economy of society, but as satisfying a certain purpose in the mind and will of God. It is a calling in Christ Jesus; apart from Him it could not have existed. The Incarnation of the Son of God; His holy life upon the earth; His victory over all our temptations; His consecration of our weak flesh to God; His sanctification, by His own sinless experience, of our childhood, youth, and manhood, with all their unconsciousness, their bold anticipations, their sense of power, their bent to lawlessness and pride; His agony and His death upon the Cross; His glorious resurrection and ascension,—all these were necessary before we could be called with a Christian calling. Can any one imagine that the vices of heathenism, lust or covetousness, are compatible with a calling like this? Are they not excluded by the very idea of it? It would repay us, I think, to lift that noble word "calling" from the base uses to which it has descended; and to give it in our minds the place it has in the New Testament. It is God who has called us, and He has called us in Christ Jesus, and therefore called us to be saints. Flee, therefore, all that is unholy and unclean.

In the last verse of the paragraph the Apostle urges both his appeals once more: he recalls the severity and the goodness of God.

"Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God." "Rejecteth" is a contemptuous word; in the margin of the Authorised

Version it is rendered, as in some other places in Scripture, "despiseth." There are such things as sins of ignorance; there are cases in which the conscience is bewildered; even in a Christian community the vitality of conscience may be low, and sins, therefore, be prevalent, without being so deadly to the individual soul; but that is never true of the sin before us. To commit this sin is to sin against the light. It is to do what every one in contact with the Church knows, and from the beginning has known, to be wrong. It is to be guilty of deliberate, wilful, high-handed contempt of God. It is little to be warned by an apostle or a preacher; it is little to despise him: but behind all human warnings is the voice of God: behind all human sanctions of the law is God's inevitable vengeance; and it is that which is braved by the impure. "He that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God."

But God, we are reminded again in the last words, is not against us, but on our side. He is the Holy One, and an avenger in all these things; but He is also the God of Salvation, our deliverer from them all, who gives His Holy Spirit unto us. The words put in the strongest light God's interest in us and in our sanctification. It is our sanctification He desires; to this He calls us; for this He works in us. Instead of shrinking from us, because we are so unlike Him, He puts His Holy Spirit into our impure hearts, He puts His own strength within our reach that we may lay hold upon it, He offers us His hand to grasp. It is this searching, condescending, patient, omnipotent love, which is rejected by those who are immoral. They grieve the Holy Spirit of God, that Spirit which Christ won for us by His atoning death, and which is able to make us clean. There is no power which can sanctify us but this; nor is there any sin which is too deep or too black for the Holy Spirit to overcome. Hearken to the words of the Apostle in another place: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

CHAPTER X.

CHARITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

1 Thessalonians iv. 9-12 (R. V.).

When the gospel first came abroad in the world, two characteristics of its adherents attracted general attention, namely, personal purity and brotherly love. Amid the gross sensuality of heathenism, the Christian stood out untainted by indulgence of the flesh; amid the utter heartlessness of pagan society, which made no provision for the poor, the sick, or the aged, the Church was conspicuous for the close union of its members and their brotherly kindness to each other. Personal purity and brotherly love were the notes of the Christian and of the Christian community in the early days; they were the new and regenerating virtues which the Spirit of Christ had called into existence in the heart of a dying world. The opening verses of this chapter enforce the first; those at present before us treat of the second.

"Concerning love of the brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." The principle, that is, of brotherly love is of the very essence of Christianity; it is not a remote consequence of it which might easily be overlooked unless it were pointed out. Every believer is taught of God to love the brother who shares his faith; such love is the best and only guarantee of his own salvation; as the Apostle John writes, "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." It is perhaps not unnecessary to remark that, in the New Testament, brethren means fellow-Christians, and not fellow-men. We have duties to all men, which the Bible does not fail to recognise and enforce; we are one with them in the nature God has given us, and the great alternatives life sets before us; and that natural unity is the basis of duties which all owe to each other. Honour all men. But the Church of Christ creates new relations between its members, and with these new relations mutual obligations still more strong and binding. God Himself is the Saviour of all, specially of them that believe; and Christians in like manner are bound, as they have opportunity, to do good unto all men, but specially to those who are of the household of faith. This is not sufficiently considered by most Christian people; who, if they looked into the matter, might find that few of their strongest affections were determined by the common faith. Is not love a strong and peculiar word to describe the feeling you cherish toward some members of the Church, brethren to you in Christ Jesus? yet love to the brethren is the very token of our right to a place in the Church for ourselves. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

These words of John give us the key to the expression "taught of God to love one another." It is not likely that they refer to anything so external as the words of Scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Even in the Old Testament, to be taught of God was something more spiritual than this; it was the same thing as to have the law written on the heart. That is what the Apostle has in view here. The Christian has been born again, born of God; he has a new nature, with new instincts, a new law, a new spontaneity; it is now native to him to love. Until the Spirit of God enters into men's hearts and recreates them, life is a war of all against all; man is a wolf to man; but in the Church that internecine strife has ended, for its members are the children of God, and "every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him." The selfishness of man's nature is veiled, and to some extent repressed, in other societies; but it is not, as a principle, exterminated except in the Church and by the Spirit of Christ. A family ought to be an unselfish place, ruled only by love, and fostering the spirit of love; yet if Christ be not there, what selfish passions assert themselves in spite of all restraint. Any association working for the common good—a town council even—ought to be an unselfish

body; yet how often, in such places, is rivalry conspicuous, and self-seeking, and envy, and detraction, and all that is unlike Christ. In the Church which has been taught of God, or, in other words, which has learned of Christ, we find at least some manifestations of a better spirit. It does contain people who love one another because they are Christians; who are unselfish, giving way to each other, esteeming each other, helping each other; if it contained none such, it would not be a Church at all.

The brotherly love of the early Church was not only visible to the world; it was its great recommendation in the world's eyes. It had brought a new thing into being, a thing for which the world was pining, namely, vital society. The poor people in the cities of Asia and Europe saw with wonder, joy, and hope, men and women united to one another in a spiritual union, which gave scope to all their gifts for society, and satisfied all their desires for it. The early Christian churches were little companies of people where love was at a high temperature, where outward pressure very often tightened the inward bonds, and where mutual confidence diffused continual joy. Men were drawn to them irresistibly by the desire to share this life of love. It is the very same force which at this moment draws those who are outcasts from society into the Salvation Army. Whatever the failings of that organisation may be, its members are as brothers; the sense of union, of mutual obligation, of mutual confidence, in one word, of brotherly love, is very strong; and souls that pine for that atmosphere are drawn to it with overpowering force. It is not good for man to be alone; it is vain for him to seek the satisfaction of his social instincts in any of the casual, selfish, or sinful associations by which he is often betrayed: even the natural affection of the family, pure and strong as it may be, does not answer to the width of his spiritual nature; his heart cries out for that society founded on brotherly love which only the Church of Christ provides. If there is one thing more than another which explains the Church's failure in missionary work, it is the absence of this spirit of love among her members. If men were compelled to cry still, as in the early days of the gospel, "Behold these Christians, how they love one another," they would not be able to remain outside. Their hearts would kindle at the glow, and all that hindered their incorporation would be burned up.

The Apostle acknowledges the progress of the Thessalonians. They show this brotherly love to all the brethren that are in all Macedonia; but he beseeches them to abound more and more. Nothing is more inconsistent with the gospel than narrowness of mind or heart, however often Christians may belie their profession by such vices. Perhaps of all churches in the world, the church of our own country is as much in need of this admonition as any, and more than most. Would it not be higher praise than some of us deserve, to say that we loved with brotherly cordiality all the Christian churches in Britain, and wished them God-speed in their Christian work? And as for churches outside our native land, who knows anything about them? There was a time when all the Protestant churches in Europe were one, and lived on terms of brotherly intimacy; we sent ministers and professors to congregations and colleges in France, Germany, and Holland, and took ministers and professors from the Continent ourselves; the heart of the Church was enlarged towards brethren whom it has now completely forgotten. This change has been to the loss of all concerned; and if we would follow the Apostle's advice, and abound more and more in this supreme grace, we must wake up to take an interest in brethren beyond the British Isles. The Kingdom of Heaven has no boundaries that could be laid down on a map, and the brotherly love of the Christian is wider than all patriotism. But this truth has a special side connected with the situation of the Apostle. Paul wrote these words from Corinth, where he was busily engaged in planting a new church, and they virtually bespeak the interest of the Thessalonians in that enterprise. Christian brotherly love is the love which God Himself implants in the heart; and the love of God has no limitations. It goes out into all the earth, even to the end of the world. It is an ever advancing, ever victorious force; the territory in which it reigns becomes continually wider and wider. If that love abounds in us more and more, we shall follow with live and growing interest the work of Christian missions. Few of us have any idea of the dimensions of that work, and of the nature of its successes. Few of us have any enthusiasm for it. Few of us do anything worth mentioning to help it on. Not very long ago the whole nation was shocked by the disclosures about the Stanley expedition; and the newspapers were filled with the doings of a few profligate ruffians, who, whatever they failed to do, succeeded in covering themselves, and the country they belong to, with infamy. One would fain hope that this exhibition of inhumanity would turn men's thoughts by contrast to those who are doing the work of Christ in Africa. The national execration of fiendish wickedness is nothing unless it passes into deep and strong sympathy with those who are working among the Africans in brotherly love. What is the merit of Stanley or his associates, that their story should excite the interest of those who know nothing of Comber and Hannington and Mackay, and all the other brave men who loved not their lives to the death for Christ's sake and Africa's? Is it not a shame to some of us that we know the horrible story so much better than the gracious one? Let brotherly love abound more and more; let Christian sympathy go out with our brethren and sisters in Christ who go out themselves to dark places; let us keep ourselves instructed in the progress of their work; let us support it with prayer and liberality at home; and our minds and hearts alike will grow in the greatness of our Lord and Saviour.

Brotherly love in the early Church, within the limits of a small congregation, often took the special form of charity. Those who were able helped the poor. A special care was taken, as we see from the Book of Acts, of widows, and no doubt of orphans. In a later epistle Paul mentions with praise a family which devoted itself to ministering to the saints. To do good and to communicate, that is, to impart of one's goods to those who had need, is the sacrifice of praise which all Christians are charged not to forget. To see a brother or a sister destitute,

and to shut up the heart against them, is taken as proof positive that we have not the love of God dwelling in us. It would be difficult, one might think, to exaggerate the emphasis which the New Testament lays on the duty and the merit of charity. "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor," Christ said to the rich young man, "and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." "Give alms," He cried to the Pharisees, "of such things as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you." Charity sanctifies. Nor have these strong sayings been without their due effect. Charity, both organised and private, is characteristic of Christendom, and of Christendom only. The pagan world made no provision for the destitute, the sick, the aged. It had no almshouses, no infirmaries, no orphanages, no convalescent homes. The mighty impulse of the love of Christ has created all these, and to this hour it sustains them all. Acknowledged or unacknowledged, it is the force which lies behind every effort made by man for the good of his fellows; wherever this disinterested love burns in a human bosom, it is the fire which Christ cast upon the earth, and He rejoices at its kindling. As a recent example, look at the great scheme of General Booth: it is the love of Christ which has inspired it; it is the love of Christ that must provide all the subordinate agents by whom it is to be administered, if it is ever carried into effect; it is on the public conviction that he is animated by the love of Christ, and has no by-ends of his own to secure, that General Booth depends for his funds. It is only this Christ-enkindled love which gives charity its real worth, and furnishes any sort of guarantee that it will confer a double blessing, material and spiritual, on those who receive it.

For charity is not without its dangers, and the first and greatest of these is that men learn to depend upon it. When Paul preached the gospel in Thessalonica, he spoke a great deal about the Second Advent. It was an exciting subject, and some at least of those who received his message were troubled by "ill-defined or mistaken expectations," which led to moral disorder in their lives. They were so anxious to be ready for the Lord when He came, that they neglected their ordinary duties, and became dependent upon the brethren. They ceased working themselves, and so became a burden upon those who continued to work. Here we have, in a nutshell, the argument against a monastic life of idleness, against the life of the begging friar. All men must live by labour, their own or some other's; and he who chooses a life without labour, as the more holy, really condemns some brother to a double share of that labouring life to which, as he fancies, the highest holiness is denied. That is rank selfishness; only a man without brotherly love could be guilty of it for an hour.

Now in opposition to this selfishness,—unconscious at first, let us hope,—and in opposition to the unsettled, flighty, restless expectations of these early disciples, the Apostle propounds a very sober and humble plan of life. Make it your ambition, he says, to be quiet, and to busy yourselves with your own affairs, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. There is a grave irony in the first words—make it your ambition to be quiet; set your honour in that. The ordinary ambition seeks to make a noise in the world, to make itself visible and audible; and ambition of that type is not unknown even in the Church. But it is out of place there. No Christian ought to be ambitious of anything but to fill as unobtrusively as possible the place in life which God has given him. The less notorious we are, the better for us. The necessities of our situation, necessities imposed by God, require most of us to spend so many hours a day in making our daily bread. The bulk of most men's strength, by an ordinance of God that we cannot interfere with, is given to that humble but inevitable task. If we cannot be holy at our work, it is not worth taking any trouble to be holy at other times. If we cannot be Christians and please God in those common activities which must always absorb so much of our time and strength, the balance of life is not worth thinking about. Perhaps some of us crave leisure, that we may be more free for spiritual work; and think that if we had more time at our disposal, we should be able to render many services to Christ and His cause which are out of our power at present. But that is extremely doubtful. If experience proves anything, it proves that nothing is worse for most people than to have nothing to do but be religious. Religion is not controlled in their life by any contact with realities; in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they do not know how to be quiet, but are vain, meddlesome, impracticable, and senseless. The man who has his trade or his profession to work at, and the woman who has her household and social duties to attend to, are not to be condoled with; they are in the very place in which religion is at once necessary and possible; they can study to be quiet, and to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands, and in all this to serve and please God. But those who get up in the morning with nothing to do but to be pious, or to engage in Christian works, are in a position of enormous difficulty, which very few can fill. The daily life of toil, at the bench or the desk, in the shop, the study, or the street, does not rob us of the Christian life; it really puts it within our reach. If we keep our eyes open, it is easy to see that this is so.

There are two reasons assigned by the Apostle for this life of quiet industry, both of which are noticeable. First, "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." Honestly is too colourless a word in modern English; the corresponding adjective in different places is translated honourable and comely.* What the Apostle signifies is, that the Church has a great character to sustain in the world, and that the individual Christian has that character, to some extent, in his charge. Idleness, fussiness, excitability, want of common sense, these are discreditable qualities inconsistent with the dignity of Christianity, and to be guarded against by the believer. The Church is really a spectacle to the world; those who are without have their eye upon it; and the Apostle would have it a worthy and impressive spectacle. But what is there so undignified as an idle busybody, a man or woman neglecting duty on the pretence of piety, so excited by an uncertain future as to disregard the most crying necessities of the present? Perhaps there

* See 1 Cor. xii. 24; vii. 35; Acts xiii. 50; xvii. 12.

is none of us who does anything so bad as this; but there are some in every church who are not careful of Christian dignity. Remember that there is something great in true Christianity, something which should command the veneration of those who are without; and do nothing inconsistent with that. As the sun breaks through the darkest cloud, so honour peereth in the meanest habit; and the lowliest occupation, discharged with diligence, earnestness, and fidelity, gives scope enough for the exhibition of true Christian dignity. The man who does his common duties as they ought to be done will never lose his self-respect, and will never discredit the Church of Christ.

The second reason for the life of quiet industry is, "That ye may have lack of nothing." Probably the truer interpretation would be, That ye may have lack of no one. In other words, independence is a Christian duty. This is not inconsistent with what has been said of charity, but is its necessary supplement. Christ commands us to be charitable; He tells us plainly that the need for charity will not disappear; but He tells us as plainly that to count upon charity, except in the case of necessity, is both sinful and shameful. This contains, of course, a warning to the charitable. Those of us who wish to help the poor, and who try to do so, must take care to do it in such a way as not to teach them to depend on help; that is to do them a serious wrong. We are all familiar with the charges brought against charity; it demoralises, it fosters idleness and improvidence, it robs those who receive it of self-respect. These charges have been current from the beginning; they were freely brought against the Church in the days of the Roman Empire. If they could be made good, they would condemn what passes for charity as unchristian. The one-sided enforcement of charity, in the sense of almsgiving, in the Romish Church, has occasionally led to something like a glorification of pauperism; the saint is usually a beggar. One would hope that in our own country, where the independence of the national character has been reinforced by the most pronounced types of Protestant religion, such a deformed conception of Christianity would be impossible; yet even among us the caution of this verse may not be unnecessary. It is a sign of grace to be charitable; but though one would not speak an unkind word of those in need, it is not a sign of grace to require charity. The gospel bids us aim not only at brotherly love, but at independence. Remember the poor, it says; but it s ys also, Work with your hands, that you may preserve a Christian dignity in relation to the world, and have need of no one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18 (R. V.).

The restlessness of the Thessalonians, which caused some of them to neglect their daily work, was the result of strained expectations of Christ's second coming. The Apostle had taught them that the Saviour and Judge of all might appear no one knew when; and they were consumed with a feverish anxiety to be found ready when He came. How terrible it would be to be found unready, and to lose one's place in the heavenly kingdom! The Thessalonians were dominated by such thoughts as these when death visited the church, and gave rise to new perplexities. What of the brethren who had been taken away so soon, and of their part in the glory to be revealed? Had they been robbed, by death, of the Christian hope? Had the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and imperishable, passed for ever beyond their grasp, because they had died before Christ came to take His people to Himself?

This was what some of the survivors feared; and it is to correct their mistaken ideas, and to comfort them in their sorrow, that the Apostle writes the words we are now to study. "We would not have you ignorant," he says, "concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope." The last words refer to those who are away from Christ, and without God in the world. It is a frightful thing to say of any man, and still more of the mass of men, that they have no hope; yet it is not only the Apostle who says it; it is the confession, by a thousand voices, of the heathen world itself. To that world the future was a blank, or a place of unreality and shades. If there were great exceptions, men who, like Plato, could not give up faith in immortality and in the righteousness of God, even in the face of death, these were no more than exceptions; and even for them the future had no substance compared with the present. Life was here, and not there. Wherever we can hear the pagan soul speak of the future, it is in this blank, heartless tone. "Do not," says Achilles in the Odyssey, "make light of death to me. Rather would I on earth be a serf to another, a man of little land and little substance, than be prince over all the dead that have come to nought." "Suns," says Catullus, "may set and rise again. When once our brief light has set, one unbroken night of sleep remains." These are fair specimens of the pagan outlook; are they not fair enough specimens of the non-Christian outlook at the present day? The secular life is quite avowedly a life without hope. It resolutely fixes its attention on the present, and avoids the distraction of the future. But there are few whom death does not compel, at some time or other, to deal seriously with the questions the future involves. If we love the departed, our hearts cannot but go with them to the unseen; and there are few who can assure themselves that death ends all. For those who can, what a sorrow remains! Their loved ones have lost everything. All that makes life is here, and they have gone. How miserable is their lot, to have been deprived, by cruel and untimely death, of all the blessings man can ever enjoy! How hopelessly must those who are left behind lament them!

This is exactly the situation with which the Apostle deals. The Christians in Thessalonica feared that their brethren who had died would be shut out of the Messiah's kingdom; they mourned for them as those mourn who have no hope. The Apostle corrects their error, and comforts them. His words do not mean that the Christian may lawfully sorrow for his dead, provided he does not go to a pagan extreme; they mean that the hopeless pagan

sorrow is not to be indulged by the Christian at all. We give their proper force if we imagine him saying: "Weep for yourselves, if you will; that is natural, and God does not wish us to be insensible to the losses and sorrows which are part of His providential government of our lives; but do not weep for them; the believer who has fallen asleep in Christ is not to be lamented; he has lost nothing; the hope of immortality is as sure for him as for those who may live to welcome the Lord at His coming; he has gone to be with Christ, which is far, far better."

The 14th verse gives the Christian proof of this consoling doctrine. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." * It is quite plain that something is wanting here to complete the argument. Jesus did die and rise again, there is no dispute about that; but how is the Apostle justified in inferring from this that God will bring the Christian dead again to meet the living? What is the missing link in this reasoning? Clearly it is the truth, so characteristic of the New Testament, that there is a union between Christ and those who trust Him so close that their destiny can be read in His. All that He has experienced will be experienced by them. They are united to Him as indissolubly as the members of the body to the head, and being planted together in the likeness of His death, they shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Death, the Apostle would have us understand, does not break the bond between the believing soul and the Saviour. Even human love is stronger than the grave; it goes beyond it with the departed; it follows them with strong yearnings, with wistful hopes, sometimes with earnest prayers. But there is an impotence, at which death mocks, in earthly love; the last enemy does put a great gulf between souls, which cannot be bridged over; and there is no such impotence in the love of Christ. He is never separated from those who love Him. He is one with them in death, and in the life to come, as in this life. Through Him God will bring the departed again to meet their friends. There is something very expressive in the word "bring." "Sweet word," says Bengel: "it is spoken of living persons." The dead for whom we mourn are not dead; they all live to God; and when the great day comes, God will bring those who have gone before, and unite them to those who have been left behind. When we see Christ at His coming, we shall see also those that have fallen asleep in Him.

This argument, drawn from the relation of the Christian to the Saviour, is confirmed by an appeal to the authority of the Saviour Himself. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord:" as if he said, "It is not merely a conclusion of our own; it is supported by the express word of Christ." Many have tried to find in the Gospels the word of the Lord referred to, but, as I think, without success. The passage usually quoted (Matt. xxiv. 31: "He shall send forth His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other"), though it covers generally the subject with which the Apostle is dealing, does not touch upon the essential point, the equality of those who die before the Second Advent with those who live to see it. We must suppose that the word of the Lord referred to was one which failed to find a place in the written Gospels, like that other which the Apostle preserved, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; or that it was a word which Christ spoke to him in one of the many revelations which he received in his apostolic work. In any case, what the Apostle is going to say is not his own word, but the word of Christ, and as such its authority is final for all Christians. What, then, does Christ say on this great concern?

He says that "we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." The natural impression one takes from these words is that Paul expected himself to be alive when Christ came; but whether that impression is justifiable or not,* it is no part of the truth which can claim the authority of the Lord. Christ's word only assures us that those who are alive at that day shall have no precedency over those that have fallen asleep; it does not tell us who shall be in the one class, and who in the other. Paul did not know when the day of the Lord would be; but as it was the duty of all Christians to look for and hasten it, he naturally included himself among those who would live to see it. Later in life, the hope of surviving till the Lord came alternated in his mind with the expectation of death. In one and the same epistle, the Epistle to the Philippians, we find him writing (iv. 5), "The Lord is at hand"; and only a little earlier (i. 23), "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better." Better, certainly, than a life of toil and suffering; but not better than the Lord's coming. Paul could not but shrink with a natural horror from death and its nakedness; he would have preferred to escape that dread necessity, the putting off of the body; not to be unclothed, was his desire, but to be clothed upon, and to have mortality swallowed up of life. When he wrote this letter to the Thessalonians, I do not doubt that this was his hope; and it does not impugn his authority in the least that it was a hope destined not to be fulfilled. With the Lord, a thousand years are as one day; and even those who are partakers in the kingdom seldom partake to an eminent degree in the patience of Jesus Christ. Only in the teaching of the Lord Himself does the New Testament put strongly before us the duration of the Christian era, and the delays of the Second Advent. How many of His parables, *e. g.*, represent the kingdom as subject to the law of growth—the Sower, the Wheat and the Tares which have both to ripen, the Mustard Seed, and the Seed Growing Gradually. All these imply a natural law and goal of progress, not to be interrupted at random. How many, again, like the parable of the Unjust Judge, or the Ten Virgins, imply that the delay will be so great as to beget

* There is a certain difficulty about the connection of the words in the last clause; it would probably be more correct to render them: Even so them also that are fallen asleep will God through Jesus bring with Him.

* It is easy to state the inference too strongly. Paul tells us expressly that he did not know when Christ would come; he could not therefore know that he himself would have died long before the Advent; and it was inevitable, therefore, that he should include himself here in the category of such as might live to see it.

utter disbelief or forgetfulness of His coming. Even the expression, "The times of the Gentiles," suggests epochs which must intervene before men see Him again.* But over against this deep insight and wondrous patience of Christ, we must not be surprised to find something of impatient ardour in the Apostles. The world was so cruel to them, their love to Christ was so fervent, their desire for re-union so strong, that they could not but hope and pray, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." Is it not better to recognise the obvious fact that Paul was mistaken as to the nearness of the Second Advent, than to torture his words to secure his infallibility? Two great commentators—the Roman Catholic Cornelius à Lapide, and the Protestant John Calvin—save Paul's infallibility at a greater cost than violating the rules of grammar. They admit that his words mean that he expected to survive till Christ came again; but, they say, an infallible apostle could not really have had such an expectation; and therefore we must believe that Paul practised a pious fraud in writing as he did, a fraud with the good intention of keeping the Thessalonians on the alert. But I hope, if we had the choice, we would all choose rather to tell the truth, and be mistaken, than to be infallible, and tell lies.

After the general statement, on Christ's authority, that the living shall have no precedency of the departed, Paul goes on to explain the circumstances of the Advent by which it is justified. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." In that emphatic Himself we have the argument of ver. 14 practically repeated: the Lord, it signifies, who knows all that are His. Who can look at Christ as He comes again in glory, and not remember His words in the Gospel, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" "where I am, there shall also My servant be"? It is not another who comes, but He to whom all Christian souls have been united for ever. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." The last two of these expressions are in all probability the explanation of the first; the voice of the archangel, or the trumpet of God, is the signal-shout, or as the hymn expresses it, "the great commanding word," with which the drama of the last things is ushered in. The archangel is the herald of the Messianic King. We cannot tell how much is figure in these expressions, which all rest on Old Testament associations, and on popular beliefs amongst the Jews of the time; neither can we tell what precisely underlies the figure. But this much is clearly meant, that a Divine summons, audible and effective everywhere, goes forth from Christ's presence; that ancient utterance, of hope or of despair, is fulfilled: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee." When the signal is given, the dead in Christ rise first. Paul says nothing here of the resurrection body, spiritual and incorruptible; but when Christ comes, the Christian dead are raised in that body, prepared for eternal blessedness, before anything else is done. That is the meaning of "the dead in Christ shall rise first." It does not contrast the resurrection of the Christian dead with a second resurrection of all men, either immediately afterwards, or after a thousand years; it contrasts it as the first scene in this drama with the second, namely, the rapture of the living. The first thing will be that the dead rise; the next, that those that are alive, that are left, shall at the same time, and in company with them, be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The Apostle does not look beyond this; so, he says, shall we—that is, we all, those that live and those that are fallen asleep—be ever with the Lord.

A thousand questions rise to our lips as we look at this wonderful picture; but the closer we look, the more plainly do we see the parsimony of the revelation, and the strictness with which it is measured out to meet the necessities of the case. There is nothing in it, for instance, about the non-Christian. It tells us the blessed destiny of those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and of those who wait for Christ's appearing. Much of the curiosity about those who die without Christ is not disinterested. People would like to know what their destiny is, because they would like to know whether there is not a tolerable alternative to accepting the gospel. But the Bible does not encourage us to look for such an alternative. "Blessed," it says, "are the dead who die in the Lord"; and blessed also are the living who live in the Lord; if there are those who reject this blessedness, and raise questions about what a life without Christ may lead to, they do it at their peril.

There is nothing, again, about the nature of the life beyond the Advent, except this, that it is a life in which the Christian is in close and unbroken union with Christ—ever with the Lord. Some have been very anxious to answer the question, Where? but the revelation gives us no help. It does not say that those who meet the Lord in the air ascend with Him to heaven, or descend, as some have supposed, to reign with Him on earth. There is absolutely nothing in it for curiosity, though everything that is necessary for comfort. For men who had conceived the terrible thought that the Christian dead had lost the Christian hope, the veil was withdrawn from the future, and living and dead alike revealed united, in eternal life, to Christ. That is all, but surely it is enough. That is the hope which the gospel puts before us, and no accident of time, like death, can rob us of it. Jesus died and rose again; He is Lord both of the dead and the living; and all will, at the great day, be gathered together to Him. Are they to be lamented, who have this future to look forward to? Are we to sorrow over those who pass into the world unseen, as if they had no hope, or as if we had none? No; in the sorrow of death itself we may comfort one another with these words.

Is it not a striking proof of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have, on the express authority of His word, a special revelation, the exclusive aim of which is to comfort? Jesus knew the terrible sorrow of bereavement; He had stood by the bedside of Jairus' daughter, by the young man's bier at Nain, by Lazarus' tomb. He knew how inconsolable it was, how subtle, how passionate; He knew the dead weight at the heart which never passes away, and the sudden rush of feeling which overpowers the strongest. And that all this sorrow might not rest upon His Church unrelieved, He lifted the curtain that we might see with our eyes the strong consolation beyond. I have spoken of it as if it consisted simply in union

*On this subject see Bruce's "Kingdom of God," chap. xii.

to Christ; but it is as much a part of the revelation that Christians whom death has separated are re-united to each other. The Thessalonians feared they would never see their departed friends again; but the word of the Lord says, You will be caught up, in company with them, to meet Me; and you and they shall dwell with Me for ever. What congregation is there in which there is not need of this consolation? Comfort one another, the Apostle says. One needs the comfort to-day, and another to-morrow; in proportion as we bear each other's burdens, we all need it continually. The unseen world is perpetually opening to receive those whom we love; but though they pass out of sight and out of reach, it is not for ever. They are still united to Christ; and when He comes in His glory He will bring them to us again. Is it not strange to balance the greatest sorrow of life against words? Words, we often feel, are vain and worthless; they do not lift the burden from the heart; they make no difference to the pressure of grief. Of our own words that is true; but what we have been considering are not our own words, but the word of the Lord. His words are alive and powerful: heaven and earth may pass away, but they cannot pass; let us comfort one another with that.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY OF THE LORD.

1 Thessalonians v. 1-11 (R. V.).

The last verses of the fourth chapter perfect that which is lacking, on one side, in the faith of the Thessalonians. The Apostle addresses himself to the ignorance of his readers: he instructs them more fully on the circumstances of Christ's second coming; and he bids them comfort one another with the sure hope that they and their departed friends shall meet, never to part, in the kingdom of the Saviour. In the passage before us he perfects what is lacking to their faith on another side. He addresses himself, not to their ignorance, but to their knowledge; and he instructs them how to improve, instead of abusing, both what they knew and what they were ignorant of, in regard to the last Advent. It had led, in some, to curious inquiries; in others, to a moral restlessness which could not bind itself patiently to duty; yet its true fruit, the Apostle tells them, ought to be hope, watchfulness, and sobriety.

"The day of the Lord" is a famous expression in the Old Testament; it runs through all prophecy, and is one of its most characteristic ideas. It means a day which belongs in a peculiar sense to God: a day which He has chosen for the perfect manifestation of Himself, for the thorough working out of His work among men. It is impossible to combine in one picture all the traits which prophets of different ages, from Amos downward, embody in their representations of this great day. It is heralded, as a rule, by terrific phenomena in nature: the sun is turned into darkness and the moon into blood, and the stars withdraw their light; we read of earthquake and tempest, of blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The great day ushers in the deliverance of God's people from all their enemies; and it is accompanied by a terrible sifting process, which separates the sinners and hypocrites among the holy people from those who are truly the Lord's. Wherever it appears, the day of the Lord has the character of finality. It is a supreme manifestation of judgment, in which the wicked perish for ever; it is a supreme manifestation of grace, in which a new and unchangeable life of blessedness is opened to the righteous. Sometimes it seemed near to the prophet, and sometimes far off; but near or far, it bounded his horizon; he saw nothing beyond. It was the end of one era, and the beginning of another which should have no end.

This great conception is carried over by the Apostle from the Old Testament to the New. The day of the Lord is identified with the Return of Christ. All the contents of that old conception are carried over along with it. Christ's return bounds the Apostle's horizon; it is the final revelation of the mercy and judgment of God. There is sudden destruction in it for some, a darkness in which there is no light at all; and for others, eternal salvation, a light in which there is no darkness at all. It is the end of the present order of things, and the beginning of a new and eternal order. All this the Thessalonians knew; they had been carefully taught it by the Apostle. He did not need to write such elementary truths, nor did he need to say anything about the times and seasons which the Father had kept in His own power. They knew perfectly all that had been revealed on this matter, viz., that the day of the Lord comes exactly as a thief in the night. Suddenly, unexpectedly, giving a shock of alarm and terror to those whom it finds unprepared, —in such wise it breaks upon the world. The telling image, so frequent with the Apostles, was derived from the Master Himself; we can imagine the solemnity with which Christ said, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."* The New Testament tells us everywhere that men will be taken at unawares by the final revelation of Christ as Judge and Saviour; and in so doing, it enforces with all possible earnestness the duty of watching. False security is so easy, so natural,—looking to the general attitude, even of Christian men, to this truth, one is tempted to say, so inevitable,—that it may well seem vain to urge the duty of watchfulness more. As it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, as it was when Jerusalem fell, as it is at this moment, so shall it be at the day of the Lord. Men will say, Peace and safety, though every sign of the times says, Judgment. They will eat and drink, plant and build, marry and be given in marriage, with their whole heart concentrated and absorbed in these transient interests, till in a moment suddenly, like the lightning which flashes from east to west, the sign of the Son of Man is seen in heaven. Instead of peace and safety, sudden destruction surprises them; all that they have lived for passes away; they awake, as from deep sleep, to discover that their soul has no part with God. It is too late then to think of preparing for the end: the end has come; and it is with solemn emphasis the Apostle adds, "They shall in no wise escape."

A doom so awful, a life so evil, cannot be the destiny or the duty of any Christian man. "Ye,

* Rev. xvi. 15.

brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." Darkness, in that saying of the Apostle, has a double weight of meaning. The Christian is not in ignorance of what is impending, and forewarned is forearmed. Neither is he any longer in moral darkness, plunged in vice, living a life the first necessity of which is to keep out of God's sight. Once the Thessalonians had been in such darkness; their souls had had their part in a world sunk in sin, on which the day-spring from on high had not risen; but now that time was past. God had shined into their hearts; He who is Himself light had poured the radiance of His own love and truth into them till ignorance, vice, and wickedness had passed away, and they had become light in the Lord. How intimate is the relation between the Christian and God, how complete the regeneration, expressed in the words, "Ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness"! There are shady things in the world, and shady persons, but they are not in Christianity, or among Christians. The true Christian takes his nature, all that characterises and distinguishes him, from light. There is no darkness in him, nothing to hide, no guilty secret, no corner of his being into which the light of God has not penetrated, nothing that makes him dread exposure. His whole nature is full of light, transparently luminous, so that it is impossible to surprise him or take him at a disadvantage. This, at least, is his ideal character; to this he is called, and this he makes his aim. There are those, the Apostle implies, who take their character from night and darkness,—men with souls that hide from God, that love secrecy, that have much to remember they dare not speak of, that turn with instinctive aversion from the light which the gospel brings, and the sincerity and openness which it claims; men, in short, who have come to love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The day of the Lord will certainly be a surprise to them; it will smite them with sudden terror, as the midnight thief, breaking unseen through door or window, terrifies the defenceless householder; it will overwhelm them with despair, because it will come as a great and searching light,—a day on which God will bring every hidden thing to view, and judge the secrets of men's hearts by Christ Jesus. For those who have lived in darkness the surprise will be inevitable; but what surprise can there be for the children of the light? They are partakers of the Divine nature; there is nothing in their souls which they would not have God know; the light that shines from the great white throne will discover nothing in them to which its searching brightness is unwelcome; Christ's coming is so far from disconcerting them that it is really the crowning of their hopes.

The Apostle demands of his disciples conduct answering to this ideal. Walk worthy, he says, of your privileges and of your calling. "Let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober." "Sleep" is certainly a strange word to describe the life of the worldly man. He probably thinks himself very wide awake, and as far as a certain circle of interests is concerned, probably is so. The children of this world, Jesus tells us, are wonderfully wise for their generation. They are more shrewd and more enterprising than the children of light. But what a stupor falls upon them, what a lethargy, what a deep unconscious slumber, when the interests in view are spiritual. The claims of God, the future of the soul, the coming of Christ, our manifestation at His judgment seat, they are not awake to any concern in these. They live on as if these were not realities at all; if they pass through their minds on occasion, as they look at the Bible or listen to a sermon, it is as dreams pass through the mind of one asleep; they go out and shake themselves, and all is over; earth has recovered its solidity, and the airy unrealities have passed away. Philosophers have amused themselves with the difficulty of finding a scientific criterion between the experiences of the sleeping and the waking state, *i. e.*, a means of distinguishing between the kind of reality which belongs to each; it is at least one element of sanity to be able to make the distinction. If we may enlarge the ideas of sleep and waking, as they are enlarged by the Apostle in this passage, it is a distinction which many fail to make. When they have the ideas which make up the staple of revelation presented to them, they feel as if they were in dreamland; there is no substance to them in a page of St. Paul; they cannot grasp the realities that underlie his words, any more than they can grasp the forms which swept before their minds in last night's sleep. But when they go out to their work in the world, to deal in commodities, to handle money, then they are in the sphere of real things, and wide awake enough. Yet the sound mind will reverse their decisions. It is the visible things that are unreal and that ultimately pass away; the spiritual things—God, Christ, the human soul, faith, love, hope—that abide. Let us not face our life in that sleepy mood to which the spiritual is but a dream; on the contrary, as we are of the day, let us be wide awake and sober. The world is full of illusions, of shadows which impose themselves as substances upon the heedless, of gilded trifles which the man whose eyes are heavy with sleep accepts as gold; but the Christian ought not to be thus deceived. Look to the coming of the Lord, Paul says, and do not sleep through your days, like the heathen, making your life one long delusion; taking the transitory for the eternal, and regarding the eternal as a dream; that is the way to be surprised with sudden destruction at the last; watch and be sober; and you will not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

It may not be out of place to insist on the fact that "sober" in this passage means sober as opposed to drunk. No one would wish to be overtaken drunk by any great occasion; yet the day of the Lord is associated in at least three passages of Scripture with a warning against this gross sin. "Take heed to yourselves," the Master says, "lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare." "The night is far spent," says the Apostle, "the day is at hand. . . . Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in revelling and drunkenness." And in this passage: "Let us, since we are of the day, be sober; they that be drunken are drunken in the night." The conscience of men is awakening to the sin of excess, but it has much to do before it comes to the New Testament standard. Does it not help us to see it in its true light when it

is thus confronted with the day of the Lord? What horror could be more awful than to be overtaken in this state? What death is more terrible to contemplate than one which is not so very rare—death in drink?

Wakefulness and sobriety do not exhaust the demands made upon the Christian. He is also to be on his guard. "Put on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation." While waiting for the Lord's coming, the Christian waits in a hostile world. He is exposed to assault from spiritual enemies who aim at nothing less than his life, and he needs to be protected against them. In the very beginning of this letter we came upon the three Christian graces; the Thessalonians were commended for their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. There they were represented as active powers in the Christian life, each manifesting its presence by some appropriate work, or some notable fruit of character; here they constitute a defensive armour by which the Christian is shielded against any mortal assault. We cannot press the figure further than this. If we keep our faith in Jesus Christ, if we love one another, if our hearts are set with confident hope on that salvation which is to be brought to us at Christ's appearing, we need fear no evil; no foe can touch our life. It is remarkable, I think, that both here and in the famous passage in Ephesians, as well as in the original of both in Isaiah lix. 17, salvation, or, to be more precise, the hope of salvation, is made the helmet. The Apostle is very free in his comparisons; faith is now a shield, and now a breastplate; the breastplate in one passage is faith and love, and in another righteousness; but the helmet is always the same. Without hope, he would say to us, no man can hold up his head in the battle; and the Christian hope is always Christ's second coming. If He is not to come again, the very word hope may be blotted out of the New Testament. This assured grasp on the coming salvation—a salvation ready to be revealed in the last times—is what gives the spirit of victory to the Christian even in the darkest hour.

The mention of salvation brings the Apostle back to his principal subject. It is as if he wrote, "for a helmet the hope of salvation; salvation, I say; for God did not appoint us to wrath, but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The day of the Lord is indeed a day of wrath,—a day when men will cry to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath is come. The Apostle cannot remember it for any purpose without getting a glimpse of those terrors; but it is not for these he recalls it at this time. God did not appoint Christians to the wrath of that day, but to its salvation,—a salvation the hope of which is to cover their heads in the day of battle.

The next verse—the tenth—has the peculiar interest of containing the only hint to be found in this early Epistle of Paul's teaching as to the mode of salvation. We obtain it through Jesus Christ, who died for us. It is not who died instead of us, nor even on our behalf (ὑπέρ), but, according to the true reading, who died a death in which we are concerned. It is the most vague expression that could have been used to signify that Christ's death had something to do with our salvation. Of course it does not follow that Paul had said no more to the Thessalonians than he indicates here; judging from the account he gives in 1st Corinthians of his preaching immediately after he left Thessalonica, one would suppose he had been much more explicit; certainly no church ever existed that was not based on the Atonement and the Resurrection. In point of fact, however, what is here made prominent is not the mode of salvation, but one special result of salvation as accomplished by Christ's death, a result contemplated by Christ, and pertinent to the purpose of this letter; He died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should together live with Him. The same conception precisely is found in Rom. xiv. 9: "To this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living." This was His aim in redeeming us by passing through all modes of human existence, seen and unseen. It made Him Lord of all. He filled all things. He claims all modes of existence as His own. Nothing separates from Him. Whether we sleep or wake, whether we live or die, we shall alike live with Him. The strong consolation, to impart which was the Apostle's original motive in approaching this subject, has thus come uppermost again; in the circumstances of the church, it is this which lies nearest to his heart.

He ends, therefore, with the old exhortation: "Comfort one another, and build each other up, as also ye do." The knowledge of the truth is one thing; the Christian use of it is another: if we cannot help one another very much with the first, there is more in our power with regard to the last. We are not ignorant of Christ's second coming; of its awful and consoling circumstances; of its final judgment and final mercy; of its final separations and final unions. Why have these things been revealed to us? What influence are they meant to have in our lives? They ought to be consoling and strengthening. They ought to banish hopeless sorrow. They ought to generate and sustain an earnest, sober, watchful spirit; strong patience; a complete independence of this world. It is left to us as Christian men to assist each other in the appropriation and application of these great truths. Let us fix our minds upon them. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed. Christ is coming. There will be a gathering together of all His people unto Him. The living and the dead shall be for ever with the Lord. Of the times and the seasons we can say no more than could be said at the beginning; the Father has kept them in His own power; it remains with us to watch and be sober; to arm ourselves with faith, love, and hope; to set our mind on the things that are above, where our true country is, whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

RULERS AND RULED.

1 Thessalonians v. 12-15 (R. V.).

At the present moment, one great cause of division among Christian churches is the existence of different forms of Church govern-

ment. Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians are separated from each other much more decidedly by difference of organisation than by difference of creed. By some of them, if not by all, a certain form of Church order is identified with the existence of the Church itself. Thus the English-speaking bishops of the world, who met some time ago in conference at Lambeth, adopted as a basis, on which they could treat for union with other Churches, the acceptance of Holy Scripture, of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds, and of the Historic Episcopate. In other words, diocesan bishops are as essential to the constitution of the Church as the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the Sacraments. That is an opinion which one may say, without offence, has neither history nor reason on its side. Part of the interest of this Epistle to the Thessalonians lies in the glimpses it gives of the early state of the Church, when such questions would simply have been unintelligible. The little community at Thessalonica was not quite without a constitution—no society could exist on that footing—but its constitution, as we see from this passage, was of the most elementary kind; and it certainly contained nothing like a modern bishop.

"We beseech you," says the Apostle, "to know them that labour among you." "To labour"* is the ordinary expression of Paul for such Christian work as he himself did. Perhaps it refers mainly to the work of catechising, to the giving of that regular and connected instruction in Christian truth which followed conversion and baptism. It covers everything that could be of service to the Church or any of its members. It would include even works of charity. There is a passage very like this in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xvi. 15 f.), where the two things are closely connected: "Now I beseech you, brethren (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have set themselves to minister unto the saints), that ye also be in subjection unto such, and to every one that helpeth in the work and laboureth." In both passages there is a certain indefiniteness. Those who labour are not necessarily official persons, elders, or, as they are often called in the New Testament, bishops, and deacons; they may have given themselves to the work without any election or ordination at all. We know that this is often the case still. The best workers in a church are not always or necessarily found among those who have official functions to perform. Especially is it so in churches which provide no recognition for women, yet depend for their efficiency as religious agencies even more on women than on men. What would become of our Sunday Schools, of our Home Missions, of our charities, of our visitation of the sick, the aged, and the poor, but for the labour of Christian women? Now what the Apostle tells us here is, that it is labour which, in the first instance, is entitled to respect. "Know them that labour among you," means "Know them for what they are"; recognise with all due reverence their self-denial, their faithfulness, the services they render to you, their claim upon your regard. The Christian labourer does not labour for praise or flattery; but those who take the burden of the church upon them in any way, as pastors or teachers or visitors, as choir or collectors, as managers of the church property, or however else, are entitled to our acknowledgment, and ought not to be left without it. There is no doubt a great deal of unknown, unheeded, unrequited labour in every church. That is inevitable, and probably good; but it should make us the more anxious to acknowledge what we see, and to esteem the workers very highly in love because of it. How unseemly it is, and how unworthy of the Christian name, when those who do not work busy themselves with criticising those who do,—inventing objections, deriding honest effort, anticipating failure, pouring cold water upon zeal. That is bad for all, but bad especially for those who practise it. The ungenerous soul, which grudges recognition to others, and though it never labours itself has always wisdom to spare for those who do, is in a hopeless state; there is no growth for it in anything noble and good. Let us open our eyes on those who labour among us, men or women, and recognise them as they deserve.

There are two special forms of labour to which the Apostle gives prominence: he mentions as among those that labour "them that are over you in the Lord, and admonish you." The first of the words here employed, the one translated "them that are over" you, is the only hint the Epistle contains of Church government. Wherever there is a society there must be order. There must be those through whom the society acts, those who represent it officially by words or deeds. At Thessalonica there was not a single president, a minister in our sense, possessing to a certain extent an exclusive responsibility; the presidency was in the hands of a plurality of men, what Presbyterians would call a Kirk Session. This body, as far as we can make out from the few surviving indications of their duties, would direct, but not conduct, the public worship, and would manage the financial affairs, and especially the charity, of the church. They would as a rule be elderly men; and were called by the official name, borrowed from the Jews, of elders. They did not, in the earliest times, preach or teach; they were too old to learn that new profession; but what may be called the administration was in their hands; they were the governing committee of the new Christian community. The limits of their authority are indicated by the words "in the Lord." They are over the members of the church in their characters and relations as church members; but they have nothing to do with other departments of life, so far as these relations are unaffected by them.

Side by side with those who preside over the church, Paul mentions those "who admonish you." Admonish is a somewhat severe word; it means to speak to one about his conduct, reminding him of what he seems to have forgotten, and of what is rightly expected from him. It gives us a glimpse of discipline in the early Church, that is, of the care which was taken that those who had named the Christian name should lead a truly Christian life. There

* Those "who toil among you and preside over you and admonish you" are identified by Wright ("Composition of the Four Gospels," p. 12) as "the catechists, the presbyters, and evangelists." The third case is certainly doubtful; and the fact that the article is used only once makes the whole attempt at such a discrimination of officials illegitimate.

is nothing expressly said in this passage about doctrines. Purity of doctrine is certainly essential to the health of the Church, but rightness of life comes before it. There is nothing expressly said about teaching the truth; that work belonged to apostles, prophets, and evangelists, who were ministers of the Church at large, and not fixed to a single congregation; the only exercise of Christian speech proper to the congregation is its use in admonition, *i. e.*, for practical moral purposes. The moral ideal of the gospel must be clearly before the mind of the Church, and all who deviate from it must be admonished of their danger. "It is difficult for us in modern times," says Dr. Hatch, "with the widely different views which we have come to hold as to the relation of Church government to social life, to understand how large a part discipline filled in the communities of primitive times. These communities were what they were mainly by the strictness of their discipline. . . . In the midst of 'a crooked and perverse nation' they could only hold their own by the extreme of circumspection. Moral purity was not so much a virtue at which they were bound to aim as the very condition of their existence. If the salt of the earth should lose its savour, wherewith should it be salted? If the lights of the world were dimmed, who should rekindle their flame? And of this moral purity the officers of each community were the custodians. 'They watched for souls as those that must give account.'" This vivid picture should provoke us to reflection. Our minds are not set sufficiently on the practical duty of keeping up the Christian standard. The moral originality of the gospel drops too easily out of sight. Is it not the case that we are much more expert at vindicating the approach of the Church to the standard of the non-Christian world, than at maintaining the necessary distinction between the two? We are certain to bring a good deal of the world into the Church without knowing it; we are certain to have instincts, habits, dispositions, associates perhaps, and likings, which are hostile to the Christian type of character; and it is this which makes admonition indispensable. Far worse than any aberration in thought is an irregularity in conduct which threatens the Christian ideal. When you are warned of such a thing in your conduct by your minister or elder, or by any Christian, do not resent the warning. Take it seriously and kindly; thank God that He has not allowed you to go on unadmonished; and esteem very highly in love the brother or sister who has been so true to you. Nothing is more unchristian than fault-finding; nothing is more truly Christian than frank and affectionate admonishing of those who are going astray. This may be especially commended to the young. In youth we are apt to be proud and wilful; we are confident that we can keep ourselves safe in what the old and timid consider dangerous situations; we do not fear temptation, nor think that this or that little fall is more than an indiscretion; and, in any case, we have a determined dislike to being interfered with. All this is very natural; but we should remember that, as Christians, we are pledged to a course of life which is not in all ways natural; to a spirit and conduct which are incompatible with pride; to a seriousness of purpose, to a loftiness and purity of aim, which may all be lost through wilfulness; and we should love and honour those who put their experience at our service, and warn us when, in lightness of heart, we are on the way to make shipwreck of our life. They do not admonish us because they like it, but because they love us and would save us from harm; and love is the only recompense for such a service.

How little there is of an official spirit in what the Apostle has been saying, we see clearly from what follows. In one way it is specially the duty of the elders or pastors in the Church to exercise rule and discipline; but it is not so exclusively their duty as to exempt the members of the Church at large from responsibility. The Apostle addresses the whole congregation when he goes on, "Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all." Let us look more closely at these simple exhortations.

"Admonish," he says, "the disorderly." Who are they? The word is a military one, and means properly those who leave their place in the ranks. In the Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 5) Paul rejoices over what he calls the solid front presented by their faith in Christ. The solid front is broken, and great advantage given to the enemy, when there are disorderly persons in a church,—men or women who fall short of the Christian standard, or who violate, by irregularities of any kind, the law of Christ. Such are to be admonished by their brethren. Any Christian who sees the disorder has a right to admonish them; nay, it is laid upon his conscience as a sacred duty tenderly and earnestly to do so. We are too much afraid of giving offence, and too little afraid of allowing sin to run its course. Which is better—to speak to the brother who has been disorderly, whether by neglecting work, neglecting worship, or openly falling into sin: which is better, to speak to such a one as a brother, privately, earnestly, lovingly; or to say nothing at all to him, but talk about what we find to censure in him to everybody else, dealing freely behind his back with things we dare not speak of to his face? Surely admonition is better than gossip; if it is more difficult, it is more Christlike too. It may be that our own conduct shuts our mouth, or at least exposes us to a rude retort; but unaffected humility can overcome even that.

But it is not always admonition that is needed. Sometimes the very opposite is in place; and so Paul writes, "Encourage the fainthearted." Put heart into them. The word rendered "fainthearted" is only used in this single passage; yet every one knows what it means. It includes those for whose benefit the Apostle wrote in chap. iv. the description of Christ's second coming,—those whose hearts sunk within them as they thought they might never see their departed friends again. It includes those who shrink from persecution, from the smiles or the frowns of the unchristian, and who fear they may deny the Lord. It includes those who have fallen before temptation, and are sitting despondent and fearful, not able to lift up so much as their eyes to heaven and pray the publican's prayer. All such timid souls need to be heartened; and those who have learned of Jesus, who would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, will know how to speak a word in season to them. The whole life of the

Lord is an encouragement to the fainthearted; He who welcomed the penitent, who comforted the mourners, who restored Peter after his triple denial, is able to lift up the most timid and to make them stand. Nor is there any work more Christlike than this. The fainthearted get no quarter from the world; bad men delight to trample on the timid; but Christ bids them hope in Him, and strengthen themselves for battle and for victory.

Akin to this exhortation is the one which follows, "Support the weak." That does not mean, Provide for those who are unable to work; but, lay hold of those who are weak in the faith, and keep them up. There are people in every congregation whose connection with Christ and the gospel is very slight; and if some one does not take hold of them, they will drift away altogether. Sometimes such weakness is due to ignorance: the people in question know little about the gospel; it fills no space in their minds; it does not awe their weakness, or fascinate their trust. Sometimes, again, it is due to an unsteadiness of mind or character; they are easily led away by new ideas or by new companions. Sometimes, without any tendency to lapsing, there is a weakness due to a false reverence for the past, and for the traditions and opinions of men, by which the mind and conscience are enslaved. What is to be done with such weak Christians? They are to be supported. Some one is to lay hands upon them, and uphold them till their weakness is outgrown. If they are ignorant, they must be taught. If they are easily carried away by new ideas, they must be shown the incalculable weight of evidence which from every side establishes the unchangeable truth of the gospel. If they are prejudiced and bigoted, or full of irrational scruples, and blind reverence for dead customs, they must be constrained to look the imaginary terrors of liberty in the face, till the truth makes them free. Let us lay this exhortation to heart. Men and women slip away and are lost to the Church and to Christ, because they were weak, and no one supported them. Your word or your influence, spoken or used at the right time, might have saved them. What is the use of strength if not to lay hold of the weak?

It is an apt climax when the Apostle adds, "Be longsuffering toward all." He who tries to keep these commandments—"Admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak"—will have need of patience. If we are absolutely indifferent to each other, it does not matter; we can do without it. But if we seek to be of use to each other, our moral infirmities are very trying. We summon up all our love and all our courage, and venture to hint to a brother that something in his conduct has been amiss; and he flies into a passion, and tells us to mind our own business. Or we undertake some trying task of teaching, and after years of pains and patience some guileless question is asked which shows that our labour has been in vain; or we sacrifice our own leisure and recreation to lay hold on some weak one, and discover that the first approach of temptation has been too strong for him after all. How slow, we are tempted to cry, men are to respond to efforts made for their good! Yet we are men who so cry,—men who have wearied God by their own slowness, and who must constantly appeal to His forbearance. Surely it is not too much for us to be longsuffering toward all.

This little section closes with a warning against revenge, the vice directly opposed to forbearance. "See that none render unto any one evil for evil; but alway follow after that which is good, one toward another, and toward all." Who are addressed in this verse? No doubt, I should say, all the members of the Church; they have a common interest in seeing that it is not disgraced by revenge. If forgiveness is the original and characteristic virtue of Christianity, it is because revenge is the most natural and instinctive of vices. It is a kind of wild justice, as Bacon says, and men will hardly be persuaded that it is not just. It is the vice which can most easily pass itself off as a virtue; but in the Church it is to have no opportunity of doing so. Christian men are to have their eyes about them; and where a wrong has been done, they are to guard against the possibility of revenge by acting as mediators between the severed brethren. Is it not written in the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"? We are not only to refrain from vengeance ourselves, but we are to see to it, as Christian men, that it has no place among us. And here, again, we sometimes have a thankless task, and need to be longsuffering. Angry men are unreasonable; and he who seeks the blessing of the peacemaker sometimes earns only the ill name of a busybody in other men's matters. Nevertheless, wisdom is justified of all her children; and no man who wars against revenge, out of a heart loyal to Christ, can ever be made to look foolish. If that which is good is our constant aim, one toward another, and toward all, we shall gain the confidence even of angry men, and have the joy of seeing evil passions banished from the Church. For revenge is the last stronghold of the natural man; it is the last fort which he holds against the spirit of the gospel; and when it is stormed, Christ reigns indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE GOSPEL.

1 Thessalonians v. 16-18 (R. V.).

The three precepts of these three verses may be called the standing orders of the Christian Church. However various the circumstances in which Christians may find themselves, the duties here prescribed are always binding upon them. We are to rejoice alway, to pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks. We may live in peaceful or in troubled times; we may be encompassed with friends or beset by foes; we may see the path we have chosen for ourselves open easily before us, or find our inclination thwarted at every step; but we must always have the music of the gospel in our hearts in its own proper key. Let us look at these rules in order.

"Rejoice alway." There are circumstances in which it is natural for us to rejoice; whether we are Christians or not, joy fills the heart till it overflows. Youth, health, hope, love, these richest and best possessions, give almost every man and woman at least a term of unmixed

gladness; some months, or years perhaps, of pure light-heartedness, when they feel like singing all the time. But that natural joy can hardly be kept up. It would not be good for us if it could; for it really means that we are for the time absorbed in ourselves, and having found our own satisfaction decline to look beyond. It is quite another situation to which the Apostle addresses himself. He knows that the persons who receive his letter have had to suffer cruelly for their faith in Christ; he knows that some of them have quite lately stood beside the graves of their dead. Must not a man be very sure of himself, very confident of the truth on which he stands, when he ventures to say to people so situated, "Rejoice alway"?

But these people, we must remember, were Christians; they had received the gospel from the Apostle; and, in the gospel, the supreme assurance of the love of God. We need to remind ourselves occasionally that the gospel is good news, glad tidings of great joy. Wherever it comes, it is a joyful sound; it puts a gladness into the heart which no change of circumstances can abate or take away. There is a great deal in the Old Testament which may fairly be described as doubt of God's love. Even the saints sometimes wondered whether God was good to Israel; they became impatient, unbelieving, bitter, foolish; the outpourings of their hearts in some of the psalms show how far they were from being able to rejoice evermore. But there is nothing the least like this in the New Testament. The New Testament is the work of Christian men, of men who had stood quite close to the supreme manifestation of God's love in Jesus Christ. Some of them had been in Christ's company for years. They knew that every word He spoke and every deed He wrought declared His love; they knew that it was revealed, above all, by the death which He died; they knew that it was made almighty, immortal, and ever-present, by His resurrection from the dead. The sublime revelation of Divine love dominated everything else in their experience. It was impossible for them, for a single moment, to forget it or to escape from it. It drew and fixed their hearts as irresistibly as a mountain peak draws and holds the eyes of the traveller. They never lost sight of the love of God in Christ Jesus, that sight so new, so stupendous, so irresistible, so joyful. And because they did not, they were able to rejoice evermore; and the New Testament, which reflects the life of the first believers, does not contain a querulous word from beginning to end. It is the book of infinite joy.

We see, then, that this command, unreasonable as it appears, is not impracticable. If we are truly Christians, if we have seen and received the love of God, if we see and receive it continually, it will enable us, like those who wrote the New Testament, to rejoice evermore. There are places on our coast where a spring of fresh water gushes up through the sand among the salt waves of the sea; and just such a fountain of joy is the love of God in the Christian soul, even when the waters close over it. "As sorrowful," says the Apostle, "yet alway rejoicing."

Most churches and Christians need to lay this exhortation to heart. It contains a plain direction for our common worship. The house of God is the place where we come to make united and adoring confession of His name. If we think only of ourselves, as we enter, we may be despondent and low-spirited enough; but surely we ought to think, in the first instance, of Him. Let God be great in the assembly of His people; let Him be lifted up as He is revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and joy will fill our hearts. If the services of the Church are dull, it is because He has been left outside; because the glad tidings of redemption, holiness, and life everlasting are still waiting for admission to our hearts. Do not let us belie the gospel by dreary, joyless worship: it is not so that it is endeared to ourselves or commended to others.

The Apostle's exhortation contains a hint also for Christian temper. Not only our united worship, but the habitual disposition of each of us, is to be joyful. It would not be easy to measure the loss the cause of Christ has sustained through the neglect of this rule. A conception of Christianity has been set before men, and especially before the young, which could not fail to repel; the typical Christian has been presented, austere and pure perhaps, or lifted high above the world, but rigid, cold, and self-contained. That is not the Christian as the New Testament conceives him. He is cheerful, sunny, joyous; and there is nothing so charming as joy. There is nothing so contagious, because there is nothing in which all men are so willing to partake; and hence there is nothing so powerful in evangelistic work. The joy of the Lord is the strength of the preacher of the gospel. There is an interesting passage in 1 Cor. ix., where Paul enlarges on a certain relation between the evangelist and the evangel. The gospel, he tells us, is God's free gift to the world; and he who would become a fellow-worker with the gospel must enter into the spirit of it, and make his preaching also a free gift. So here, one may say, the gospel is conceived as glad tidings; and whoever would open his lips for Christ must enter into the spirit of his message, and stand up to speak clothed in joy. Our looks and tones must not belie our words. Languor, dulness, dreariness, a melancholy visage, are a libel upon the gospel. If the knowledge of the love of God does not make us glad, what does it do for us? If it does not make a difference to our spirits and our temper, do we really know it? Christ compares its influence to that of new wine; it is nothing if not exhilarating; if it does not make our faces shine, it is because we have not tasted it. I do not overlook, any more than St. Paul did, the causes for sorrow; but the causes for sorrow are transient; they are like the dark clouds which overshadow the sky for a time and then pass away; while the cause of joy—the redeeming love of God in Christ Jesus—is permanent; it is like the unchanging blue behind the clouds, ever-present, ever radiant, overarching and encompassing all our passing woes. Let us remember it, and see it through the darkest clouds, and it will not be impossible for us to rejoice evermore.

It may seem strange that one difficult thing should be made easy when it is combined with another; but this is what is suggested by the second exhortation of the Apostle, "Pray without ceasing." It is not easy to rejoice alway, but our one hope of doing so is to pray constantly. How are we to understand so singular a precept?

Prayer, we know, when we take it in the widest sense, is the primary mark of the Christian. "Behold, he prayeth," the Lord said of Saul, when He wished to convince Ananias that there was no mistake about his conversion. He who does not pray at all—and is it too much to suppose that some come to churches who never do?—is no Christian. Prayer is the converse of the soul with God; it is that exercise in which we hold up our hearts to Him, that they may be filled with His fulness, and changed into His likeness. The more we pray, and the more we are in contact with Him, the greater is our assurance of His love, the firmer our confidence that He is with us to help and save. If we once think of it, we shall see that our very life as Christians depends on our being in perpetual contact and perpetual fellowship with God. If He does not breathe into us the breath of life, we have no life. If He does not hour by hour send our help from above, we face our spiritual foes without resources.

It is with such thoughts present to the mind that some would interpret the command, "Pray without ceasing." "Cherish a spirit of prayer," they would render it, "and make devotion the true business of life. Cultivate the sense of dependence on God; let it be part of the very structure of your thoughts that without Him you can do nothing, but through His strength all things." But this is, in truth, to put the effect where the cause should be. This spirit of devotion is itself the fruit of ceaseless prayers; this strong consciousness of dependence on God becomes an ever-present and abiding thing only when in all our necessities we betake ourselves to Him. Occasions, we must rather say, if we would follow the Apostle's thought, are never wanting, and will never be wanting, which call for the help of God; therefore, pray without ceasing. It is useless to say that the thing cannot be done before the experiment has been made. There are few works that cannot be accompanied with prayer; there are few indeed that cannot be preceded by prayer; there is none at all that would not profit by prayer. Take the very first work to which you must set your mind and your hand, and you know it will be better done if, as you turn to it, you look up to God and ask His help to do it well and faithfully, as a Christian ought to do it for the Master above. It is not in any vague, indefinite fashion, but by taking prayer with us wherever we go, by consciously, deliberately, and persistently lifting our hearts to God as each emergency in life, great or small, makes its new demand upon us, that the apostolic exhortation is to be obeyed. If prayer is thus combined with all our works, we shall find that it wastes no time, though it fills all. Certainly it is not an easy practice to begin, that of praying without ceasing. It is so natural for us not to pray, that we perpetually forget, and undertake this or that without God. But surely we get reminders enough that this omission of prayer is a mistake. Failure, loss of temper, absence of joy, weariness, and discouragement are its fruits; while prayer brings us without fail the joy and strength of God. The Apostle himself knew that to pray without ceasing requires an extraordinary effort: and in the only passages in which he urges it, he combines with it the duties of watchfulness and persistence (Eph. vi. 15; Col. iv. 2; Rom. xii. 12). We must be on our guard that the occasion for prayer does not escape us, and we must take care not to be wearied with this incessant reference of everything to God.

The third of the standing orders of the Church is, from one point of view, a combination of the first and second; for thanksgiving is a kind of joyful prayer. As a duty, it is recognised by every one within limits; the difficulty of it is only seen when it is claimed, as here, without limits: "In everything give thanks." That this is no accidental extravagance is shown by its recurrence in other places. To mention only one: in Phil. iv. 6 the Apostle writes, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Is it really possible to do this thing?

There are times, we all know, at which thanksgiving is natural and easy. When our life has taken the course which we ourselves had purposed, and the result seems to justify our foresight; when those whom we love are prosperous and happy; when we have escaped a great danger, or recovered from a severe illness, we feel, or say we feel, so thankful. Even in such circumstances we are possibly not so thankful as we ought to be. Perhaps, if we were, our lives would be a great deal happier. But at all events we frankly admit that we have cause for thanksgiving; God has been good to us, even in our own estimate of goodness; and we ought to cherish and express our grateful love toward Him. Let us not forget to do so. It has been said that an unblessed sorrow is the saddest thing in life; but perhaps as sad a thing is an unblessed joy. And every joy is unblessed for which we do not give God thanks. "Unhallowed pleasures" is a strong expression, which seems proper only to describe gross wickedness; yet it is the very name which describes any pleasure in our life of which we do not recognise God as the Giver, and for which we do not offer Him our humble and hearty thanks. We would not be so apt to protest against the idea of giving thanks in everything if it had ever been our habit to give thanks in anything. Think of what you call, with thorough conviction, your blessings and your mercies,—your bodily health, your soundness of mind, your calling in this world, the faith which you repose in others and which others repose in you; think of the love of your husband or wife, of all those sweet and tender ties that bind our lives into one; think of the success with which you have wrought out your own purposes, and laboured at your own ideal; and with all this multitude of mercies before your face, ask whether even for these you have given God thanks. Have they been hallowed and made means of grace to you by your grateful acknowledgment that He is the Giver of them all? If not, it is plain that you have lost much joy, and have to begin the duty of thanksgiving in the easiest and lowest place.

But the Apostle rises high above this when he says, "In everything give thanks." He knew, as I have remarked already, that the Thessalonians had been visited by suffering and death: is there a place for thanksgiving there? Yes, he says; for the Christian does not look on sorrow with the eyes of another man. When sickness comes to him or to his home; when there is loss to be borne, or disappointment, or bereavement; when his plans are

frustrated, his hopes deferred, and the whole conduct of his life simply taken out of his hands, he is still called to give thanks to God. For he knows that God is love. He knows that God has a purpose of His own in his life,—a purpose which at the moment he may not discern, but which he is bound to believe wiser and larger than any he could purpose for himself. Every one who has eyes to see must have seen, in the lives of Christian men and women, fruits of sorrow and of suffering which were conspicuously their best possessions, the things for which the whole Church was under obligation to give thanks to God on their behalf. It is not easy at the moment to see what underlies sorrow; it is not possible to grasp by anticipation the beautiful fruits which it yields in the long run to those who accept it without murmuring: but every Christian knows that all things work together for good to them that love God; and in the strength of that knowledge he is able to keep a thankful heart, however mysterious and trying the providence of God may be. That sorrow, even the deepest and most hopeless, has been blessed, no one can deny. It has taught many a deeper thoughtfulness, a truer estimate of the world and its interests, a more simple trust in God. It has opened the eyes of many to the sufferings of others, and changed boisterous rudeness into tender and delicate sympathy. It has given many weak ones the opportunity of demonstrating the nearness and the strength of Christ, as out of weakness they have been made strong. Often the sufferer in a home is the most thankful member of it. Often the bedside is the sunniest spot in the house, though the bedridden one knows that he or she will never be free again. It is not impossible for a Christian in everything to give thanks.

But it is only a Christian who can do it, as the last words of the Apostle intimate: "This is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward." These words may refer to all that has preceded: "Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks"; or they may refer to the last clause only. Whichever be the case, the Apostle tells us that the ideal in question has only been revealed in Christ, and hence is only within reach of those who know Christ. Till Christ came, no man ever dreamt of rejoicing alway, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in everything. There were noble ideals in the world, high, severe, and pure; but nothing so lofty, buoyant, and exhilarating as this. Men did not know God well enough to know what His will for them was; they thought He demanded integrity, probably, and beyond that, silent and passive submission at the most; no one had conceived that God's will for man was that his life should be made up of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. But he who has seen Jesus Christ, and has discovered the meaning of His life, knows that this is the true ideal. For Jesus came into our world, and lived among us, that we might know God; He manifested the name of God that we might put our trust in it; and that name is Love; it is Father. If we know the Father, it is possible for us, in the spirit of children, to aim at this lofty Christian ideal; if we do not, it will seem to us utterly unreal. The will of God in Christ Jesus means the will of the Father; it is only for children that His will exists. Do not put aside the apostolic exhortation as paradox or extravagance; to Christian hearts, to the children of God, he speaks words of truth and soberness when he says, "Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks." Has not Christ Jesus given us peace with God, and made us friends instead of enemies? Is not that a fountain of joy too deep for sorrow to touch? Has He not assured us that He is with us all the days, even to the end of the world? Is not that a ground upon which we can look up in prayer all the day long? Has He not told us that all things work together for good to them that love God? Of course we cannot trace His operation always; but when we remember the seal with which Christ sealed that great truth; when we remember that in order to fulfil the purpose of God in each of us He laid down His life on our behalf, can we hesitate to trust His word? And if we do not hesitate, but welcome it gladly as our hope in the darkest hour, shall we not try even in everything to give thanks?

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPIRIT.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 20-22 (R. V.).

THESE verses are abruptly introduced, but are not unconnected with what precedes. The Apostle has spoken of order and discipline, and of the joyful and devout temper which should characterise the Christian Church; and here he comes to speak of that Spirit in which the Church lives, and moves, and has her being. The presence of the Spirit is, of course, presupposed in all that he has said already: how could men, except by His help, "rejoice alway, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks"? But there are other manifestations of the Spirit's power, of a more precise and definite character, and it is with these we have here to do.

Spiritus ubi est, ardet. When the Holy Spirit descended on the Church at Pentecost, "there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them"; and their lips were open to declare the mighty works of God. A man who has received this great gift is described as fervent, literally, boiling (ζέων), with the Spirit. The new birth in those early days was a new birth; it kindled in the soul thoughts and feelings to which it had hitherto been strange; it brought with it the consciousness of new powers; a new vision of God; a new love of holiness; a new insight into the Holy Scriptures, and into the meaning of man's life; often a new power of ardent, passionate speech. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians Paul describes a primitive Christian congregation. There was not one silent among them. When they came together every one had a psalm, a revelation, a prophecy, an interpretation. The manifestation of the Spirit had been given to each one to profit withal; and on all hands the spiritual fire was ready to flame forth. Conversion to the Christian faith, the acceptance of the apostolic gospel, was not a thing which made little difference to men: it convulsed their whole nature to its depths; they were never the same again; they

were new creatures, with a new life in them, all fervour and flame.

A state so unlike nature, in the ordinary sense of the term, was sure to have its inconveniences. The Christian, even when he had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, was still a man; and as likely as not a man who had to struggle against vanity, folly, ambition, and selfishness of all kinds. His enthusiasm might even seem, in the first instance, to aggravate, instead of removing, his natural faults. It might drive him to speak—for in a primitive church anybody who pleased might speak—when it would have been better for him to be silent. It might lead him to break out in prayer or praise or exhortation, in a style which made the wise sigh. And for those reasons the wise, and such as thought themselves wise, would be apt to discourage the exercise of spiritual gifts altogether. "Contain yourself," they would say to the man whose heart burned within him, and who was restless till the flame could leap out; "contain yourself; exercise a little self-control; it is unworthy of a rational being to be carried away in this fashion."

No doubt situations like this were common in the church at Thessalonica. They are produced inevitably by differences of age and of temperament. The old and the phlegmatic are a natural, and, doubtless, a providential, counterweight to the young and sanguine. But the wisdom which comes of experience and of temperament has its disadvantages as compared with fervour of spirit. It is cold and unenthusiastic; it cannot propagate itself; it cannot set fire to anything and spread. And because it is under this incapacity of kindling the souls of men into enthusiasm, it is forbidden to pour cold water on such enthusiasm when it breaks forth in words of fire. That is the meaning of "Quench not the Spirit." The commandment presupposes that the Spirit can be quenched. Cold looks, contemptuous words, silence, studied disregard, go a long way to quench it. So does unsympathetic criticism.

Every one knows that a fire smokes most when it is newly kindled; but the way to get rid of the smoke is not to pour cold water on the fire, but to let it burn itself clear. If you are wise enough you may even help it to burn itself clear, by rearranging the materials, or securing a better draught; but the wisest thing most people can do when the fire has got hold is to let it alone; and that is also the wise course for most when they meet with a disciple whose zeal burns like fire. Very likely the smoke hurts their eyes; but the smoke will soon pass by; and it may well be tolerated in the meantime for the sake of the heat. For this apostolic precept takes for granted that fervour of spirit, a Christian enthusiasm for what is good, is the best thing in the world. It may be untaught and inexperienced; it may have all its mistakes to make; it may be wonderfully blind to the limitations which the stern necessities of life put upon the generous hopes of man: but it is of God; it is expansive; it is contagious; it is worth more as a spiritual force than all the wisdom in the world.

I have hinted at ways in which the Spirit is quenched; it is sad to reflect that from one point of view the history of the Church is a long series of transgressions of this precept, checked by an equally long series of rebellions of the Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," the Apostle tells us elsewhere, "there is liberty." But liberty in a society has its dangers; it is, to a certain extent, at war with order; and the guardians of order are not apt to be too considerate of it. Hence it came to pass that at a very early period, and in the interests of good order, the freedom of the Spirit was summarily suppressed in the Church. "The gift of ruling," it has been said, "like Aaron's rod, seemed to swallow up the other gifts." The rulers of the Church became a class entirely apart from its ordinary members, and all exercise of spiritual gifts for the building up of the Church was confined to them. Nay, the monstrous idea was originated, and taught as a dogma, that they alone were the depositaries, or, as it is sometimes said, the custodians, of the grace and truth of the gospel; only through them could men come into contact with the Holy Ghost. In plain English, the Spirit was quenched when Christians met for worship. One great extinguisher was placed over the flame that burned in the hearts of the brethren; it was not allowed to show itself; it must not disturb, by its eruption in praise or prayer or fiery exhortation, the decency and order of divine service. I say that was the condition to which Christian worship was reduced at a very early period; and it is unhappily the condition in which, for the most part, it subsists at this moment. Do you think we are gainers by it? I do not believe it. It has always come from time to time to be intolerable. The Montanists of the second century, the heretical hects of the Middle Ages, the Independents and Quakers of the English Commonwealth, the lay preachers of Wesleyanism, the Salvationists, the Plymouthists, and the Evangelistic associations of our own day,—all these are in various degrees the protest of the Spirit, and its right and necessary protest, against the authority which would quench it, and by quenching it impoverish the Church. In many Nonconformist churches there is a movement just now in favour of a liturgy. A liturgy may indeed be a defence against the coldness and incompetence of the one man to whom the whole conduct of public worship is at present left; but our true refuge is not this mechanical one, but the opening of the mouths of all Christian people. A liturgy, however beautiful, is a melancholy witness to the quenching of the Spirit: it may be better or worse than the prayers of one man; but it could never compare for fervour with the spontaneous prayers of a living Church.

Among the gifts of the Spirit, that which the Apostle valued most highly was prophecy. We read in the Book of Acts of prophets, like Agabus, who foretold future events affecting the fortunes of the gospel, and possibly at Thessalonica the minds of those who were spiritually gifted were pre-occupied with thoughts of the Lord's coming, and made it the subject of their discourses in the Church; but there is no necessary limitation of this sort in the idea of prophesying. The prophet was a man whose rational and moral nature had been quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and who possessed in an uncommon degree the power of speaking edification, exhortation, and comfort. In other words, he was a Christian preacher,* endued

*The contrast drawn by Dr. Hatch in his Hibbert Lectures between the early Christian prophet and the modern Christian preacher—the "rhetorical religionist,"

with wisdom, fervour, and tenderness; and his spiritual addresses were among the Lord's best gifts to the Church. Such addresses, or prophesyings, Paul tells us, we are not to despise.

Now despise is a strong word; it is, literally, to set utterly at naught, as Herod set at naught Jesus, when he clothed Him in purple, or as the Pharisees set at naught the publicans, even when they came into the Temple to pray. Of course, prophecy, or, to speak in the language of our own time, the preacher's calling, may be abused: a man may preach without a message, without sincerity, without reverence for God or respect for those to whom he speaks; he may make a mystery, a professional secret, of the truth of God, instead of declaring it even to little children; he may seek, as some who called themselves prophets in early times sought, to make the profession of godliness a source of gain; and under such circumstances no respect is due. But such circumstances are not to be assumed without cause. We are rather to assume that he who stands up in the Church to speak in God's name has had a word of God entrusted to him; it is not wise to despise it before it is heard. It may be because we have been so often disappointed that we pitch our hopes so low; but to expect nothing is to be guilty of a sort of contempt by anticipation. To despise not prophesyings requires us to look for something from the preacher, some word of God that will build us up in godliness, or bring us encouragement or consolation; it requires us to listen as those who have a precious opportunity given them of being strengthened by Divine grace and truth. We ought not to lounge or fidget while the word of God is spoken, or to turn over the leaves of the Bible at random, or to look at the clock; we ought to hearken for that word which God has put into the preacher's mouth for us; and it will be a very exceptional prophesying in which there is not a single thought that it would repay us to consider.

When the Apostle claimed respect for the Christian preacher, he did not claim infallibility. That is plain from what follows, for all the words are connected. Despise not prophesyings, but put all things to the test, that is, all the contents of the prophesying, all the utterances of the Christian man whose spiritual ardour has urged him to speak. We may remark in passing that this injunction prohibits all passive listening to the word. Many people prefer this. They come to church, not to be taught, not to exercise any faculty of discernment or testing at all, but to be impressed. They like to be played upon, and to have their feelings moved by a tender or vehement address; it is an easy way of coming into apparent contact with good. But the Apostle here counsels a different attitude. We are to put to the proof all that the preacher says.

This is a favorite text with Protestants, and especially with Protestants of an extreme type. It has been called "a piece of most rationalistic advice"; it has been said to imply "that every man has a verifying faculty, whereby to judge of facts and doctrines, and to decide between right and wrong, truth and falsehood." But this is a most unconsidered extension to give to the Apostle's words. He does not say a word about every man; he is speaking expressly to the Thessalonians, who were Christian men. He would not have admitted that any man who came in from the street, and constituted himself a judge, was competent to pronounce upon the contents of the prophesyings, and to say which of the burning words were spiritually sound, and which were not. On the contrary, he tells us very plainly that some men have no capacity for this task—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit"; and that even in the Christian Church, where all are to some extent spiritual, some have this faculty of discernment in a much higher degree than others. In 1 Cor. xii. 10, "discernment of spirits," this power of distinguishing in spiritual discourse between the gold and that which merely glitters, is itself represented as a distinct spiritual gift; and in a later chapter he says (xiv. 29), "Let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others" (that is, in all probability, the other prophets) "discern." I do not say this to deprecate the judgment of the wise, but to deprecate rash and hasty judgment. A heathen man is no judge of Christian truth; neither is a man with a bad conscience, and an unrepented sin in his heart; neither is a flippant man, who has never been awed by the majestic holiness and love of Jesus Christ,—all these are simply out of court. But the Christian preacher who stands up in the presence of his brethren knows, and rejoices, that he is in the presence of those who can put what he says to the proof. They are his brethren; they are in the same communion of all the saints with Christ Jesus; the same Christian tradition has formed, and the same Christian spirit animates, their conscience; their power to prove his words is a safeguard both to them and to him.

And it is necessary that they should prove them. No man is perfect, not the most devout and enthusiastic of Christians. In his most spiritual utterances something of himself will very naturally mingle; there will be chaff among the wheat; wood, hay, and stubble in the material he brings to build up the Church, as well as gold, silver, and precious stones. That is not a reason for refusing to listen; it is a reason for listening earnestly, conscientiously, and with much forbearance. There is a responsibility laid upon each of us, a responsibility laid upon the Christian conscience of every congregation and of the Church at large, to put prophesyings to the proof. Words that are spiritually unsound, that are out of tune with the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, ought to be discovered when they are spoken in the Church. No man with any idea of modesty, to say nothing of humility, could wish it otherwise. And here, again, we have to regret the quenching of the Spirit. We have all heard the sermon criticised when the preacher could not get the benefit; but have we often heard it spiritually judged, so that he, as well as those who listened to him, is edified, comforted, and encouraged? The preacher has as much need of the word as his hearers; if there is a service which God enables him to do for them, in enlightening their minds or fortifying their wills, there is a

as he calls him—is, like every other contrast in that notable book, strained till it becomes utterly false. It would not be true to say that there was no difference between the prophet and the preacher; but it would be far truer than to say that there was no likeness. The prophet was one who spoke, as Paul tells us, edification, exhortation, and comfort; and as that, we may hope, is what most preachers try to do. the ideal of the callings is identical. And it is only by their ideals that they ought to be compared or criticised.

corresponding service which they can do for him. An open meeting, a liberty of prophesying, a gathering in which any one could speak as the Spirit gave him utterance, is one of the crying needs of the modern Church.

Let us notice, however, the purpose of this testing of prophecy. Despise not such utterances, the Apostle says, but prove all; hold fast that which is good, and hold off from every evil kind. There is a curious circumstance connected with these short verses. Many of the fathers of the Church connect them with what they consider a saying of Jesus, one of the few which is reasonably attested, though it has failed to find a place in the written gospels. The saying is, "Show yourselves approved money-changers." The fathers believed, and on such a point they were likely to be better judges than we, that in the verses before us the Apostle uses a metaphor from coinage. To prove is really to assay, to put to the test as a banker tests a piece of money; the word rendered "good" is often the equivalent of our sterling; "evil," of our base or forged; and the word which in our old Bibles is rendered "appearance"—"Abstain from all appearance of evil"—and in the Revised Version "form"—"Abstain from every form of evil"—has, at least in some connections, the signification of mint or die. If we bring out this faded metaphor in its original freshness, it will run something like this: Show yourselves skilful money-changers; do not accept in blind trust all the spiritual currency which you find in circulation; put it all to the test; rub it on the touchstone; keep hold of what is genuine and of sterling value, but every spurious coin decline. Whether the metaphor is in the text or not,—and in spite of a great preponderance of learned names against it, I feel almost certain it is,—it will help to fix the Apostle's exhortation in our memories. There is no scarcity, at this moment, of spiritual currency. We are deluged with books and spoken words about Christ and the gospel. It is idle and unprofitable, nay, it is positively pernicious, to open our minds promiscuously to them, to give equal and impartial lodging to them all. There is a distinction to be made between the true and the false, between the sterling and the spurious; and till we put ourselves to the trouble to make that distinction, we are not likely to advance very far. How would a man get on in business who could not tell good money from bad? And how is any one to grow in the Christian life whose mind and conscience are not earnestly put to it to distinguish between what is in reality Christian and what is not, and to hold to the one and reject the other? A critic of sermons is apt to forget the practical purpose of the discernment here spoken of. He is apt to think it his function to pick holes. "Oh," he says, "such and such a statement is utterly misleading: the preacher was simply in the air; he did not know what he was talking about." Very possibly; and if you have found out such an unsound idea in the sermon, be brotherly, and let the preacher know. But do not forget the first and main purpose of spiritual judgment—hold fast that which is good. God forbid that you should have no gain out of the sermon except to discover the preacher going astray. Who would think to make his fortune only by detecting base coin?

In conclusion, let us recall to our minds the touchstone which the Apostle himself supplies for this spiritual assaying. "No one," he writes to the Corinthians, "can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Ghost." In other words, whatever is spoken in the Holy Ghost, and is therefore spiritual and true, has this characteristic, this purpose and result, that it exalts Jesus. The Christian Church, that community which embodies spiritual life, has this watchword on its banner, "Jesus is Lord." That presupposes, in the New Testament sense of it, the Resurrection and the Ascension; it signifies the sovereignty of the Son of Man. Everything is genuine in the Church which bears on it the stamp of Christ's exaltation; everything is spurious and to be rejected which calls that in question. It is the practical recognition of that sovereignty—the surrender of thought, heart, will, and life to Jesus—which constitutes the spiritual man, and gives competence to judge of spiritual things. He in whom Christ reigns judges in all spiritual things, and is judged by no man; but he who is a rebel to Christ, who does not wear His yoke, who has not learned of Him by obedience, who assumes the attitude of equality, and thinks himself at liberty to negotiate and treat with Christ, he has no competence, and no right to judge at all. "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood; . . . to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 23-28 (R. V.).

THESE verses open with a contrast to what precedes, which is more strongly brought out in the original than in the translation. The Apostle has drawn the likeness of a Christian church, as a Christian church ought to be, waiting for the coming of the Lord; he has appealed to the Thessalonians to make this picture their standard, and to aim at Christian holiness; and conscious of the futility of such advice, as long as it stands alone and addresses itself to man's unaided efforts, he turns here instinctively to prayer: "The God of peace Himself"—working in independence of your exertions and my exhortations—"sanctify you wholly."

The solemn fulness of this title forbids us to pass it by. Why does Paul describe God in this particular place as the God of peace? Is it not because peace is the only possible basis on which the work of sanctification can proceed? I do not think it is forced to render the words literally, the God of the peace, *i. e.*, the peace with which all believers are familiar, the Christian peace, the primary blessing of the gospel. The God of peace is the God of the gospel, the God who has come preaching peace in Jesus Christ, proclaiming reconciliation to those who are far off and to those who are near. No one can ever be sanctified who does not first accept the message of reconciliation. It is not possible to become holy as God is holy, until, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's way of holiness; and this is why the Apostle presents his prayer for the sanctification of the Thessalonians to the God of peace. We are so

slow to learn this, in spite of the countless ways in which it is forced upon us, that one is tempted to call it a secret; yet no secret, surely, could be more open. Who has not tried to overcome a fault, to work off a vicious temper, to break for good with an evil habit, or in some other direction to sanctify himself, and withal to keep out of God's sight till the work was done? It is of no use. Only the God of Christian peace, the God of the gospel, can sanctify us; or to look at the same thing from our own side, we cannot be sanctified until we are at peace with God. Confess your sins with a humble and penitent heart; accept the forgiveness and friendship of God in Christ Jesus; and then He will work in you both will and deed to further His good pleasure.

Notice the comprehensiveness of the Apostle's prayer in this place. It is conveyed in three separate words—wholly (ὁλοτελεῖς), entire (ὁλόκληρον), and without blame (ἀμέμπτως). It is intensified by what has, at least, the look of an enumeration of the parts or elements of which man's nature consists—"your spirit and soul and body." It is raised to its highest power when the sanctity for which he prays is set in the searching light of the Last Judgment —in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We all feel how great a thing it is which the Apostle here asks of God: can we bring its details more nearly home to ourselves? Can we tell, in particular, what he means by spirit and soul and body?

The learned and philosophical have found in these three words a magnificent field for the display of philosophy and learning; but unhappily for plain people, it is not very easy to follow them. As the words stand before us in the text, they have a friendly Biblical look; we get a fair impression of the Apostle's intention in using them; but as they come out in treatises on Biblical Psychology, though they are much more imposing, it would be rash to say they are more strictly scientific, and they are certainly much less apprehensible than they are here. To begin with the easiest one, everybody knows what it meant by the body. What the Apostle prays for in this place is that God would make the body in its entirety—every organ and every function of it—holy. God made the body at the beginning; He made it for Himself; and it is His. To begin with, it is neither holy nor unholy; it has no character of its own at all; but it may be profaned or it may be sanctified; it may be made the servant of God or the servant of sin, consecrated or prostituted. Everybody knows whether his body is being sanctified or not. Everybody knows "the inconceivable evil of sensuality." Everybody knows that pampering of the body, excess in eating and drinking, sloth and dirt, are incompatible with bodily sanctification. It is not a survival of Judaism when the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us to draw near to God "in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." But sanctification, even of the body, really comes only by employment in God's service; charity, the service of others for Jesus' sake, is that which makes the body truly His. Holy are the feet which move incessantly on His errands; holy are the hands which, like His, are continually doing good; holy are the lips which plead His cause or speak comfort in His Name. The Apostle himself points the moral of this prayer for the consecration of the body when he says to the Romans, "Present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification."

But let us look, now, at the other two terms —spirit and soul. Sometimes one of these is used in contrast with body, sometimes the other. Thus Paul says that the unmarried Christian woman cares for the things of the Lord, seeking only how she may be holy in body and in spirit, —the two together constituting the whole person. Jesus, again, warns His disciples not to fear man, but to fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell; where the person is made to consist, not of body and spirit, but of body and soul. These passages certainly lead us to think that soul and spirit must be very near akin to each other; and that impression is strengthened when we remember such a passage as is found in Mary's song: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour"; where, according to the laws of Hebrew poetry, soul and spirit must mean practically the same thing. But granting that they do so, when we find two words used for the same thing, the natural inference is that they give us each a different look at it. One of them shows it in one aspect; the other in another. Can we apply that distinction here? I think the use of the words in the Bible enables us to do it quite decidedly; but it is unnecessary to go into the details. The soul means the life which is in man, taken simply as it is, with all its powers; the spirit means that very same life, taken in its relation to God. This relation may be of various kinds: for the life that is in us is derived from God; it is akin to the life of God Himself; it is created with a view to fellowship with God; in the Christian it is actually redeemed and admitted to that fellowship; and in all those aspects it is spiritual life. But we may look at it without thinking of God at all; and then, in Bible language, we are looking, not at man's spirit, but at his soul.

This inward life, in all its aspects, is to be sanctified through and through. All our powers of thought and imagination are to be consecrated; unholy thoughts are to be banished; lawless, roving imaginings, suppressed. All our inventiveness is to be used in God's service. All our affections are to be holy. Our heart's desire is not to settle on anything from which it would shrink in the day of the Lord Jesus. The fire which He came to cast on the earth must be kindled in our souls, and blaze there till it has burned up all that is unworthy of His love. Our consciences must be disciplined by His word and Spirit, till all the aberrations due to pride and passion and the law of the world have been reduced to nothing, and as face answers face in the glass, so our judgment and our will answer His. Paul prays for this when he says, May your whole soul be preserved blameless. But what is the special point of the sanctification of the spirit? It is probably narrowing it a little, but it points us in the right direction, if we say that it has regard to worship and devotion. The spirit of man is his life in its relation to God. Holiness belongs to the very idea of this; but who has not heard of sins in holy things? Which of us ever prays as he ought to pray? Which of us is not weak, distrustful, incoherent, divided in heart, wandering in desire, even when

he approaches God? Which of us does not at times forget God altogether? Which of us has really worthy thoughts of God, worthy conceptions of His holiness and of His love, worthy reverence, a worthy trust? Is there not an element in our devotions even, in the life of our spirits at their best and highest, which is worldly and unhallowed, and for which we need the pardoning and sanctifying love of God? The more we reflect upon it, the more comprehensive will this prayer of the Apostle appear, and the more vast and far-reaching the work of sanctification. He seems himself to have felt, as man's complex nature passes before his mind, with all its elements, all its activities, all its bearings, all its possible and actual profanation, how great a task its complete purification and consecration to God must be. It is a task infinitely beyond man's power to accomplish. Unless he is prompted and supported from above, it is more than he can hope for, more than he can ask or think. When the Apostle adds to his prayer, as if to justify his boldness, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who will also do it," is it not a New Testament echo of David's cry, "Thou, O Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, hast revealed to Thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto Thee"?

Theologians have tried in various ways to find a scientific expression for the Christian conviction implied in such words as these, but with imperfect success. Calvinism is one of these expressions: its doctrines of a Divine decree, and of the perseverance of the saints, really rest upon the truth of this 24th verse,—that salvation is of God to begin with; and that God, who has begun the good work, is in earnest with it, and will not fail nor be discouraged until He has carried it through. Every Christian depends upon these truths, whatever he may think of Calvinistic inferences from them, or of the forms in which theologians have embodied them. When we pray to God to sanctify us wholly; to make us His in body, soul, and spirit; to preserve our whole nature in all its parts and functions blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus, is not our confidence this, that God has called us to this life of entire consecration, that He has opened the door for us to enter upon it by sending His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, that He has actually begun it by inclining our hearts to receive the gospel, and that He may be depended upon to persevere in it till it is thoroughly accomplished? What would all our good resolutions amount to, if they were not backed by the unchanging purpose of God's love? What would be the worth of all our efforts and of all our hopes, if behind them, and behind our despondency and our failures too, there did not stand the unwearying faithfulness of God? This is the rock which is higher than we; our refuge; our stronghold; our stay in the time of trouble. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. We may change, but not He.

What follows is the affectionate desultory close of the letter. Paul has prayed for the Thessalonians; he begs their prayers for himself. This request is made no less than seven times in his Epistles—including the one before us: a fact which shows how priceless to the Apostle was the intercession of others on his behalf. So it is always; there is nothing which so directly and powerfully helps a minister of the gospel as the prayers of his congregation. They are the channels of all possible blessing both for him and those to whom he ministers. But prayer for him is to be combined with love to one another: "Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss."* The kiss was the ordinary greeting among members of a family; brothers and sisters kissed each other when they met, especially after long separation; even among those who were no kin to each other, but only on friendly terms, it was common enough, and answered to our shaking of hands. In the Church the kiss was the pledge of brotherhood; those who exchanged it declared themselves members of one family. When the Apostle says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss," he means, as holy always does in the New Testament, a Christian kiss; a greeting not of natural affection, nor of social courtesy merely, but recognising the unity of all members of the Church in Christ Jesus, and expressing pure Christian love. The history of the kiss of charity is rather curious, and not without its moral. Of course, its only value was as the natural expression of brotherly love; where the natural expression of such love was not kissing, but the grasping of the hand, or the frendly inclination of the head, the Christian kiss ought to have died a natural death. So, on the whole, it did; but with some partial survivals in ritual, which in the Greek and Romish Churches are not yet extinct. It became a custom in the Church to give the kiss of brotherhood to a member newly admitted by baptism; that practice still survives in some quarters, even when children only are baptised. The great celebrations at Easter, when no element of ritual was omitted, retained the kiss of peace long after it had fallen out of the other services. At Solemn Mass in the Church of Rome the kiss is ceremonially exchanged between the celebra t and the assistant ministers. At Low Mass it is omitted, or given with what is called an osculatory or Pax. The priest kisses the altar; then he kisses the osculatory, which is a small metal plate; then he hands this to the server, and the server hands it to the people, who pass it from one to another, kissing it as it goes. This cold survival of the cordial greeting of the Apostolic Church warns us to distinguish spirit from letter. "Greet one another with a holy kiss" means, Show your Christian love one to another, frankly and heartily, in the way which comes natural to you. Do not be afraid to break the ice when you come into the church. There should be no ice there to break. Greet your brother or your sister cordially and like a Christian: assume and create the atmosphere of home.

Perhaps the very strong language which follows may point to some lack of good feeling in the church at Thessalonica: "I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren." Why should he need to adjure them by the Lord? Could there be any doubt that everybody in the church would hear his Epistle? It is not easy to say. Perhaps the elders who received it might have thought it wiser not to tell all that it contained to everybody; we know how instinctive it is for men in office—

*Is it a fair inference from these words that the Epistle was to be delivered to the elders or ruling body in the church? In other places the Apostle writes, "Greet one another."

whether they be ministers of the church or ministers of state—to make a mystery out of their business, and, by keeping something always in reserve, to provide a basis for a despotic and uncontrolled authority. But whether for this or some other purpose, consciously or unconsciously influencing them, Paul seems to have thought the suppression of his letter possible; and gives this strong charge that it be read to all. It is interesting to notice the beginnings of the New Testament. This is its earliest book, and here we see its place in the Church vindicated by the Apostle himself. Of course when he commands it to be read, he does not mean that it is to be read repeatedly; the idea of a New Testament, of a collection of Christian books to stand side by side with the books of the earlier revelation, and to be used like them in public worship, could not enter men's minds as long as the apostles were with them; but a direction like this manifestly gives the Apostle's pen the authority of his voice, and makes the writing for us what his personal presence was in his lifetime. The apostolic word is the primary document of the Christian faith; no Christianity has ever existed in the world but that which has drawn its contents and its quality from this; and nothing which departs from this rule is entitled to be called Christian.

The charge to read the letter to all the brethren is one of the many indications in the New Testament that, though the gospel is a *mysterion*, as it is called in Greek, there is no mystery about it in the modern sense. It is all open and aboveboard. There is not something on the surface, which the simple are to be allowed to believe; and something quite different underneath, into which the wise and prudent are to be initiated. The whole thing has been revealed unto babes. He who makes a mystery out of it, a professional secret which it needs a special education to understand, is not only guilty of a great sin, but proves that he knows nothing about it. Paul knew its length and breadth and depth and height better than any man; and though he had to accommodate himself to human weakness, distinguishing between babes in Christ and such as were able to bear strong meat, he put the highest things within reach of all; "Him we preach," he exclaims to the Colossians, "warning every man, and teaching every man in every wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ." There is no attainment in wisdom or in goodness which is barred against any man by the gospel; and there is no surer mark of faithlessness and treachery in a church than this, that it keeps its members in a perpetual pupilage or minority, discouraging the free use of Holy Scripture, and taking care that all that it contains is not read to all the brethren. Among the many tokens which mark the Church of Rome as faithless to the true conception of the gospel, which proclaims the end of man's minority in religion, and the coming to age of the true children of God, her treatment of Scripture is the most conspicuous. Let us who have the Book in our hands, and the Spirit to guide us, prize at its true worth this unspeakable gift.

This last caution is followed by the benediction with which in one form or another the Apostle concludes his letters. Here it is very brief: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." He ends with practically the same prayer as that with which he began: "Grace to you and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." And what is true of this Epistle is true of all the rest: the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is their Α and their Ω, their first word and their last. Whatever God has to say to us—and in all the New Testament letters there are things that search the heart and make it quake—begins and ends with grace. It has its fountain in the love of God; it is working out, as its end, the purpose of that love. I have known people take a violent dislike to the word grace, probably because they had often heard it used without meaning; but surely it is the sweetest and most constraining even of Bible words. All that God has been to man in Jesus Christ is summed up in it: all His gentleness and beauty, all His tenderness and patience, all the holy passion of His love, is gathered up in grace. What more could one soul wish for another than that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ should be with it?

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

CHAPTER I.

SALUTATION AND THANKSGIVING.

2 Thessalonians i. 1-4 (R. V.).

In beginning to expound the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, it is necessary to say a few words by way of introduction to the book as a whole. Certain questions occur to the mind whenever such a document as this is presented to it; and it will put us in a better position for understanding details if we first answer these. How do we know, for instance, that this Epistle is really the *second* to the Thessalonians? It has been maintained that it is the earlier of the two. Can we justify its appearance in the place which it usually occupies? I think we can. The tradition of the church itself counts for something. It is quite unmistakable, in other cases in which there are two letters addressed to the same people,—*e. g.*, the Epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy,—that they stand in the canon in the order of time. Presumably the same is the case here. Of course a tradition like this is not infallible, and if it can be proved false must be abandoned; but at the present moment, the tendency in most minds is to underestimate the historical value of such traditions; and, in the instance before us, tradition is supported by various indications in the Epistle itself. For example, in the other letter, Paul congratulates the Thessalonians on their reception of the gospel, and the characteristic experiences attendant upon it; here it is the wonderful growth of their faith, and the abounding of their love, which calls forth his thanksgiving, —surely a more advanced stage of Christian life being in view. Again, in the other Epistle there are slight hints of moral disorder, due to mis-

apprehension of the Lord's Second Coming; but in this Epistle such disorder is broadly exposed and denounced; the Apostle has heard of unruly busybodies, who do no work at all; he charges them in the name of the Lord Jesus to change their conduct, and bids the brethren avoid them, that they may be put to shame. Plainly the faults as well as the graces of the church are seen here at a higher growth. Once more, in chap. ii. 15 of this letter, there is reference to instruction which the Thessalonians have already received from Paul in a letter; and though he may quite conceivably have written them letters which no longer exist, still the natural reference of these words is to what we call the First Epistle. If anything else were needed to prove that the letter we are about to study stands in its right place, it might be found in the appeal of chap. ii. 1. "Our gathering together unto Him" is the characteristic revelation of the other, and therefore the earlier letter.

But though this Epistle is certainly later than the other, it is not much later. The Apostle has still the same companions—Silas and Timothy—to join in his Christian greeting. He is still in Corinth or its neighbourhood; for we never find these two along with him but there. The gospel, however, has spread beyond the great city, and taken root in other places, for he boasts of the Thessalonians and their graces in the "churches" of God. His work has so far progressed as to excite opposition; he is in personal peril, and asks the prayers of the Thessalonians, that he may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men. If we put all these things together, and remember the duration of Paul's stay in Corinth, we may suppose that some months separated the Second Epistle from the First.

What, now, was the main purpose of it? What had the Apostle in his mind when he sat down to write? To answer that, we must go back a little way.

A great subject of apostolic preaching at Thessalonica had been the Second Advent. So characteristic was it of the gospel message, that Christian converts from heathenism are defined as those who have turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven. This waiting, or expectation, was the characteristically Christian attitude; the Christian's hope was hidden in heaven, and he could not but look up and long for its appearing. But this attitude became strained, under various influences. The Apostle's teaching was pressed, as if he had said, not only that the day of the Lord was coming, but that it was actually here. Men, affecting to speak through the Spirit, patronised such fanaticism. We see from chap. ii. 2 that pretended words of Paul were put in circulation; and what was more deliberately wicked, a forged epistle was produced, in which his authority was claimed for this transformation of his doctrine. Weak-minded people were carried off their feet, and bad-hearted people feigned an exaltation they did not feel; and both together brought discredit on the church, and injured their own souls, by neglecting the commonest duties. Not only decorum and reputation were lost, but character itself was endangered. This was the situation to which Paul addressed himself.

We do not need to be fastidious in dealing with the Apostle's teaching on the Second Advent; our Saviour tells us that of the day and the hour no man knows, nor angel; nay, not even the Son, but the Father only. Certainly St. Paul did not know; and almost as certainly, in the ardour of his hope, he anticipated the end sooner than it was actually to arrive. He spoke of himself as one who might naturally enough expect to see the Lord come again; and it was only as experience brought him new light that in his later years he began to speak of a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. Not to die, had been his earlier hope, but to have the mortal being swallowed up of life; and it was this earlier hope he had communicated to the Thessalonians. They also hoped not to die; as the sky grew darker over them with affliction and persecution, their heated imaginations saw the glory of Christ ready to break through for their final deliverance. The present Epistle puts this hope, if one may say so, to a certain remove. It does not fix the date of the Advent; it does not tell us when the day of the Lord shall come; but it tells us plainly that it is not here yet, and that it will not be here till certain things have first happened. What these things are is by no means obvious; but this is not the place to discuss the question. All we have to notice is this: that with a view to counteracting the excitement at Thessalonica, which was producing bad consequences, St. Paul points out that the Second Advent is the term of a moral process, and that the world must run through a spiritual development of a particular kind before Christ can come again. The first Advent was in the fulness of the times; so will the second be; and though he might not be able to interpret all the signs, or tell when the great day would dawn, he could say to the Thessalonians, "The end is not yet."

This, I say, is the great lesson of the Epistle, the main thing which the Apostle has to communicate to the Thessalonians. But it is preceded by what may be called, in a loose sense, a consolatory paragraph, and it is followed up by exhortations, the same in purport as those of the First Epistle, but more peremptory and emphatic. The true preparedness for the Lord's Second Coming is to be sought, he assures them, not in this irrational exaltation, which is morally empty and worthless, but in diligent, humble, faithful performance of duty; in love, faith, and patience.

The greeting with which the Epistle opens is almost word for word the same as that of the First Epistle. It is a church which is addressed; and a church subsisting in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle has no other interest in the Thessalonians than as they are Christian people. Their Christian character and their Christian interests are the only things he cares for. One could wish it were so among us. One could wish our relation to God and His Son were so real and so dominant that it gave us an unmistakable character, in which we might naturally address each other, without any consciousness or suspicion of unreality. With every desire to think well of the Church, when we look to the ordinary tone of conversation and of correspondence among Christians, we can hardly think that this is so. There is an aversion to such directness of speech as was alone natural to the Apostle.

Even in church meetings there is a disposition to let the Christian character fall into the background; it is a sensible relief to many to be able to think of those about them as ladies and gentlemen, rather than as brothers and sisters in Christ. Yet it is this last relation only in virtue of which we form a church; it is the interests of this relation that our intercourse with one another as Christians is designed to serve. We ought not to look in the Christian assembly for what it was never meant to be,—for a society to further the temporal interests of its members; for an educational institution, aiming at the general enlightenment of those who frequent its meetings; still less, as some seem to be inclined to do, for a purveyor of innocent amusements: all these are simply beside the mark; the Church is not called to any such functions; her whole life is in God and Christ; and she can say nothing and do nothing for any man until his life has been brought to this source and centre. An apostolic interest in the Church is the interest of one who cares only for the relation of the soul to Christ; and who can say no more to those he loves best than John says to Gaius, "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

It is in accordance with this Spirit that the Apostle wishes the Thessalonians not any outward advantages, but grace and peace. Grace and peace are related as cause and effect. Grace is God's unmerited love, His free and beautiful goodness to the sinful; and when men receive it, it bears the fruit of peace. Peace is a far bigger word in the Bible than in common usage; and it has its very largest sense in these salutations, where it represents the old Hebrew greeting "Shālōm." Properly speaking, it means completeness, wholeness, health—the perfect soundness of the spiritual nature. This is what the Apostle wishes for the Thessalonians. Of course, there is a narrower sense of peace, in which it means the quieting of the perturbed conscience, the putting away of the alienation between the soul and God; but that is only the initial work of grace, the first degree of the great peace which is in view here. When grace has had its perfect work, it results in a more profound and steadfast peace,—a soundness of the whole nature, a restoration of the shattered spiritual health, which is the crown of all God's blessings. There is a vast difference in the degrees of bodily health between the man who is chronically ailing, always anxious, nervous about himself, and unable to trust himself if any unexpected drain is made upon his strength, and the man who has solid, unimpaired health, whose heart is whole within him, and who is not shaken by the thought of what may be. It is this radical soundness which is really meant by peace; thorough spiritual health is the best of God's blessings in the Christian life, as thorough bodily health is the best in the natural life. Hence the Apostle wishes it for the Thessalonians before everything else; and wishes it, as alone it can come, in the train of grace. The free love of God is all our hope. Grace is love imparting itself, giving itself away, as it were, to others, for their good. Only as that love comes to us, and is received in its fulness of blessing into our hearts, can we attain that stable spiritual health which is the end of our calling.

The salutation is followed, as usual, by a thanksgiving, which at the first glance seems endless. One long sentence runs, apparently without interruption, from the third verse to the end of the tenth. But it is plain, on a more attentive glance, that the Apostle goes off at a tangent; and that his thanksgiving is properly contained in the third and fourth verses: "We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren, even as it is meet, for that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which ye endure." It is worthy of remark that the mere existence of faults in a church never blinded the Apostle to its graces. There was much in this congregation to rectify, and a good deal to censure; there were ignorance, fanaticism, falsehood, sloth, unruliness; but though he knew of them all, and would rebuke them all before he had done, he begins with this grateful acknowledgment of a Divine work among them. It is not merely that Paul was constitutionally of a bright temperament, and looked naturally on the promising side of things,—I hardly think he was,—but he must have felt it was undutiful and unbecoming to say anything at all to Christian people, who had once been pagans, without thanking God for what He had done for them. Some of us have this lesson to learn, especially in regard to missionary and evangelistic work and its results. We are too ready to see everything in it except what is of God,—the mistakes made by the worker, or the misconceptions in new disciples that the light has not cleared up, and the faults of character that the Spirit has not overcome; and when we fix our attention on these things, it is very natural for us to be censorious. The natural man loves to find fault; it gives him at the cheapest rate the comfortable feeling of superiority. But it is a malignant eye which can see and delight in nothing but faults; before we comment on deficiencies or mistakes which have only become visible against the background of the new life, let us give thanks to God that the new life, in however lowly and imperfect a form, is there. It need not yet appear what it shall be. But we are bound, by duty, by truth, by all that is right and seemly, to say, Thanks be to God for what He has begun to do by His grace. There are some people who should never see half-done work; perhaps the same people should be forbidden to criticise missions either at home or abroad. The grace of God is not responsible for the faults of preachers or of converts; but it is the source of their virtues; it is the fountain of their new life; it is the hope of their future; and unless we welcome its workings with constant thanksgiving, we are in no spirit in which it can work through us.

But let us see for what fruit of grace the Apostle gives thanks here. It is because the faith of the Thessalonians grows exceedingly, and their mutual love abounds. In a word, it is for their progress in the Christian character. Here is a point of the first interest and importance. It is the very nature of life to grow; when growth is arrested, it is the beginning of decay. I would not like to fall into the very fault I have been exposing, and speak as if there were no progress, among Christians in general, in faith and love; but one of the discourage-

ments of the Christian ministry is undoubtedly the slowness, or it may be the invisibility, not to say the absence, of growth. At a certain stage in the physical life, we know, equilibrium is attained: we are at the maturity of our powers; our faces change little, our minds change little; the tones of our voices and the character of our handwriting are pretty constant; and when we get past that point, the progress is backward. But we can hardly say that this is an analogy by which we may judge the spiritual life. It does not run its full course here. It has not a birth, a maturity, and an inevitable decay, within the limits of our natural life. There is room for it to grow and grow unceasingly, because it is planned for eternity, and not for time. It should be in continual progress, ever improving, advancing from strength to strength. Day by day and year by year Christians should become better men and better women, stronger in faith, richer in love. The very steadiness and uniformity of our spiritual life has its disheartening side. Surely there is room, in a thing so great and expansive as life in Jesus Christ, for fresh developments, for new manifestations of trust in God, for new enterprises prompted and sustained by brotherly love. Let us ask whether we ourselves, each in his own place, face the trials of our life, its cares, its doubts, its terrible certainties, with a more unwavering faith in God than we had five years ago? Have we learned in that interval, or in all the years of our Christian profession, to commit our life more unreservedly to Him, to trust Him to undertake for us, in our sins, in our weakness, in all our necessities, temporal and spiritual? Have we become more loving than we were? Have we overcome any of our irrational and unchristian dislikes? Have we made advances, for Christ's sake and His Church's, to persons with whom we were at variance, and sought in brotherly love to foster a warm and loyal Christian feeling in the whole body of believers? God be thanked, there are some who know what faith and love are better than they once did; who have learned —and it needs learning—what it is to confide in God, and to love others in Him; but could an Apostle thank God that this advance was universal, and that the charity of every one of us all was abundant to all the rest?

The apostolic thanksgiving is supplemented in this particular case by something, not indeed alien to it, yet on a quite different level—a glorying before men. Paul thanked God for the increase of faith and love at Thessalonica; and when he remembered that he himself had been the means of converting the Thessalonians, their progress made him fond and proud; he boasted of his spiritual children in the churches of God. "Look at the Thessalonians," he said to the Christians in the south; "you know their persecutions, and the afflictions they endure; yet their faith and patience triumph over all; their sufferings only serve to bring their Christion goodness to perfection." That was a great thing to be able to say; it would be particularly telling in that old pagan world, which could meet suffering only with an inhuman defiance or a resigned indifference; it is a great thing to be able to say yet. It is a witness to the truth and power of the gospel, of which its humblest minister may feel justly proud, when the new spirit which it breathes into men gives them the victory over sorrow and pain. There is no persecution now to test the sincerity or the heroism of the Church as a whole; but there are afflictions still; and there must be few Christian ministers but thank God, and would do it always, as is meet, that He has allowed them to see the new life develop new energies under trial, and to see His children out of weakness made strong by faith and hope and love in Christ Jesus. These things are our true wealth and strength, and we are richer in them than some of us are aware. They are the mark of the gospel upon human nature; wherever it comes, it is to be identified by the combination of affliction and patience, of suffering and spiritual joy. That combination is peculiar to the kingdom of God: there is not the like found in any other kingdom on earth. Blessed, let us say, be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us such proofs of His love and power among us; He only doeth such wondrous things; let the earth be filled with His glory.

CHAPTER II.

SUFFERING AND GLORY.

2 Thessalonians i. 5-12 (R. V.).

In the preceding verses of this chapter, as in the opening of the First Epistle, the Apostle has spoken of the afflictions of the Thessalonians, and of the Christian graces which they have developed under them. To suffer for Christ's sake, he says, and at the same time to abound in faith and love and spiritual joy, is to have the mark of God's election on us. It is an experience so truly and characteristically Christian that the Apostle cannot think of it without gratitude and pride. He gives thanks to God on every remembrance of his converts. He boasts of their progress in all the churches of Achaia.

In the verses before us, another inference is drawn from the afflictions of the Thessalonians, and their gospel patience under them. The whole situation is a proof, or manifest token, of the righteous judgment of God. It has this in view, that the Thessalonians may be deemed worthy of the (heavenly) kingdom of God, on behalf of which they suffer. Here, we see, the Apostle sanctions with his authority the argument from the injustices of this life to the coming of another life in which they will be rectified. God is just, he says; and therefore this state of affairs, in which bad men oppress the innocent, cannot last for ever. It calls aloud for judgment; it proclaims its approach; it is a prognostic, a manifest token of it. The suffering which is here in view cannot be an end in itself. Even the graces which come to perfection in maintaining themselves against it, do not explain the whole meaning of affliction; it would remain a blot upon God's justice if it were not counterbalanced by the joys of His kingdom. "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." This is the gracious

side of the judgment. The suffering which is borne with joy and brave patience for Christ's sake proves how dear Christ is to the sufferer; and this love, tried with fire, is requited in due time with an answer in love that makes him forget it all.

This is one of the doctrines of Scripture that untroubled times find it easy to dispense with. There is even an affectation of superiority to what is called the moral vulgarity of being good for the sake of something beyond goodness. It is idle to enter on any abstract discussion of such a question. We are called by the gospel to a new life under certain definite conditions, one of them being the condition of suffering for its sake. The more thoroughly that condition is accepted the less disposition will there be to criticise the future blessedness which is its counterpoise and compensation. It is not the confessors and martyrs of the Christian faith—the men who die daily, like Paul, and share in the tribulations and patience of Jesus Christ, like John—who become weary of the glory which is to be revealed. And it is such only who are in a position to judge of the value of this hope. If it is dear to them, an inspiration and an encouragement, as it certainly is, it is surely worse than vain for those who are living an easier and a lower life to criticise it on abstract grounds. If we have no need of it, if we can dispense with any sight or grasp of a joy beyond the grave, let us take care that it is not owing to the absence from our life of that present suffering for Christ's sake, without which we cannot be His. "The connection," Bishop Ellicott says, "between holy suffering and future blessedness is mystically close and indissoluble"; we must through great tribulation enter into the kingdom of God; and all experience proves that, when such tribulation comes and is accepted, the recompense of reward here spoken of, and the Scriptures which give prominence to it, rise to the highest credit in the mind of the Church. It is not a token of our enlightenment and moral superiority, if we undervalue them; it is an indication that we are not drinking of the Lord's cup, or being baptised with His baptism.

But the reward is only one side of the righteous judgment foretold by the suffering of the innocent. It includes punishment as well. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you." We see here the very simplest conception of God's justice. It is a law of retribution, of vindication; it is the reaction, in this particular case, of man's sin against himself. The reaction is inevitable: if it does not come here, it comes in another world; if not now, in another life. The hope of the sinner is always that in some way or other this reaction may never take place, or that, when it does take place, it may be evaded; but that hope is doomed to perish. "If it were done when 'tis done," he says as he contemplates his sin in prospect; but it never is so done; it is exactly half done when he is finished with it; and the other half is taken in hand by God. Punishment is the other half of sin; as inseparable from it as heat from fire, as the inside of a vessel from the outside. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

One of the favourite pastimes of some modern historians is the whitewashing of persecutors. A dispassionate interest in the facts shows, we are told, in many cases, that the persecutors were not so black as they have been painted, and that the martyrs and confessors were no better than they should have been. Where fault is found at all, it is laid rather at the door of systems than of individuals; judgment is passed on institutions and on centuries that persons and their actions may go free. Practically that comes to writing history, which is the story of man's moral life, without recognising the place of conscience; it may sometimes have the look of intelligence, but at bottom it is immoral and false. Men must answer for their actions. It is no excuse for murdering the saints that the murderers think they are doing God service; it is an aggravation of their guilt. Every man knows that it is wicked to afflict the good; if he does not, it is because he has quite corrupted his conscience, and therefore has the greater sin. Moral blindness may include and explain every sin, but it justifies none; it is itself the sin of sins. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to those who afflict." If they cannot put themselves by sympathy into the place of others—which is the principle of all right conduct—God will put them in that place, and open their eyes. His righteous judgment is a day of grace to the innocent sufferers; He rewards their trouble with rest; but to the persecutor it is a day of vengeance; he eats the fruit of his doings.

It is characteristic of this Epistle, and of the pre-occupation of the Apostle's mind when he wrote it, that he here expands his notice of the time when this judgment is to take place into a vivid statement of its circumstances and issues. The judgment is executed at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in flaming fire. "At this moment," he would say, "Christ is unseen, and therefore by wicked men ignored, and sometimes by good men forgotten; but the day is coming when every eye shall see Him." The Apostle Peter, who had seen Christ in the flesh, as Paul had never done, and who probably felt His invisibility as few could feel it, is fond of this word "revelation" as a name for His reappearing. He speaks of faith which is to be found unto praise and honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. "Be sober," he says, "and hope to the end for the grace that is being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." And in another passage, much in keeping with this of St. Paul's, he says, "Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy." It is one of the great words of the New Testament; and its greatness is heightened in this place by the accompanying description. The Lord is revealed, attended by the angels of His power, in flaming fire. These accessories of the Advent are borrowed from the Old Testament; the Apostle clothes the Lord Jesus at His appearing in all the glory of the God of Israel.*

When Christ is thus revealed, it is in the character of a Judge: He renders vengeance to them

* For an excellent and instructive study of the relations of Jewish and Christian eschatology, see Stanton's "Jewish and Christian Messiah."

that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Two classes of guilty men are quite plainly distinguished by these words; and as plainly, though the English alone would not enable us to lay stress upon it, those two classes are the heathen and the Jews. Ignorance of God is the characteristic of paganism; when Paul wishes to describe the Gentiles from the religious point of view, he speaks of them as the Gentiles which know not God. Now, with us, ignorance is usually regarded as an excuse for sin; it is an extenuating circumstance, which calls for compassion rather than condemnation; and we are almost astonished in reading the Bible to find it used as a summary of the whole guilt and offence of the heathen world. But we must remember what it is that men are said not to know. It is not theology; it is not the history of the Jews, or the special revelations it contains; it is not any body of doctrines; it is God. And God, who is the fountain of life, the only source of goodness, does not hide Himself from men. He has His witnesses everywhere. There is something in all men which is on His side, and which, if it be regarded, will bring their souls to Him. Those who know not God are those who have stifled this inner witness, and separated themselves in doing so from all that is good. Ignorance of God means ignorance of goodness; for all goodness is from Him. It is not a lack of acquaintance with any system of ideas about God that is here exposed to the condemnation of Christ; but the practical lack of acquaintance with love, purity, truth. If men are familiar with the opposites of all these; if they have been selfish, vile, bad, false; if they have said to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways; we are content to have no acquaintance with Thee"—is it not inevitable that, when Christ is revealed as Judge of all, they should be excluded from His kingdom? What could they do in it? Where could could they be less in place?

The difficulty which some have felt about the ignorance of the Gentiles can hardly be raised about the disobedience of the Jews. The element of wilfulness, of deliberate antagonism to the good, to which we give such prominence in our idea of sin, is conspicuous here. The will of God for their salvation had been fully made known to this stubborn race; but they disobeyed, and persisted in their disobedience. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck"—so ran their own proverb—"shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Such was the sentence to be executed on them in the day of Christ.

When it is said that ignorance of God and disobedience to the gospel are here presented as the characteristics respectively of Gentile and Jew, it is not said that the passage is without significance for us. There may be some of us who are sinking day by day into an ever deeper ignorance of God. Those who live a worldly and selfish life, whose interests and hopes are bounded by this material order, who never pray, who do nothing, give nothing, suffer nothing for others, they, whatever their knowledge of the Bible or the catechism may be, do not know God, and fall under this pagan condemnation. And what of disobedience to the gospel? Notice the word which is here used by the Apostle; it implies a conception of the gospel which we are apt, in magnifying the grace of God, to overlook. We speak of receiving the gospel, believing it, welcoming it, and so forth; it is equally needful to remember that it claims our obedience. God not only beseeches us to be reconciled, He commands us to repent. He makes a display of His redeeming love in the gospel—a love which contains pardon, renewal, and immortality; and He calls on all men for a life in correspondence with that love. Salvation is not only a gift, but a vocation; we enter into it as we obey the voice of Jesus, "Follow Me"; and if we disobey, and choose our own way, and live a life in which there is nothing that answers to the manifestation of God as our Saviour, what can the end be? Can it be anything else than the judgment of which St. Paul here speaks? If we say, every day of our life, as the law of the gospel rings in our ears: "No, we will not have this Man to reign over us," can we expect anything else than that He will render vengeance? "Do we provoke the Lord to anger? Are we stronger than He?"

The ninth verse describes the terrible vengeance of the great day. "Such men," says the Apostle, "shall pay the penalty, everlasting destruction, away from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might." These are awful words, and it is no wonder that attempts have been made to empty them of the meaning which they bear upon their face. But it would be false to sinful men, as well as to the Apostle, and to the whole of New Testament teaching, to say that any art or device could in the least degree lessen their terrors. It has been boldly asserted, indeed, that the word rendered everlasting does not mean everlasting, but age-long; and that what is in view here is "an age-long destruction from the presence and glory of Christ, *i. e.*, the being shut out from all sight of and participation in the triumphs of Christ during that age" ["the age perhaps which immediately succeeds this present life"]. And this assertion is crowned by another, that those thus excluded nevertheless "abide in His presence and share His glory in the ages beyond." Anything more gratuitous, anything less in keeping with the whole tone of the passage, anything more daring in its arbitrary additions to the text, it would be impossible even to imagine. If the gospel, as conceived in the New Testament, has any character at all, it has the character of finality. It is God's last word to men. And the consequences of accepting or rejecting it are final; it opens no prospect beyond the life on the one hand, and the death on the other, which are the results of obedience and disobedience. Obey, and you enter into a light in which there is no darkness at all: disobey, and you pass eventually into a darkness in which there is no light at all. What God says to us in all Scripture, from beginning to end, is not, Sooner or later? but, Life or death? These are the alternatives before us; they are absolutely separate; they do not run into one another at any time, the most remote. It is necessary to speak the more earnestly of this matter, because there is a disposition, on the plea that it is impossible for us to divide men into two classes, to blur or even to obliterate the distinction between Christian and non-Christian. Many things prompt us to make the difference merely one of quantity—a more or less of con-

formity to some ideal standard—in which case, of course, a little more, or a little less, is of no great account. But that only means that we never take the distinction between being right with God, and being wrong with God, as seriously as God takes it; with Him it is simply infinite. The difference between those who obey, and those who do not obey, the gospel, is not the difference of a little better and a little worse; it is the difference of life and death. If there is any truth in Scripture at all, this is true—that those who stubbornly refuse to submit to the gospel, and to love and obey Jesus Christ, incur at the Last Advent an infinite and irreparable loss. They pass into a night on which no morning dawns.

This final ruin is here described as separation from the face of the Lord and the glory of His might. In both the Old Testament and the New, the vision of God is the consummation of blessedness. Thus we read in one psalm, "Before Thy face is fulness of joy"; in another, "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in uprightness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." In one of the Gospels, our Saviour says that in heaven the angels of the little ones do always behold the face of their Father who is in heaven; and in the Book of Revelation it is the crown of joy that His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face. From all this joy and blessedness they condemn themselves to exclusion who know not God, and disobey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Far from the face of the Lord and the glory of His power, their portion is in the outer darkness.

But in vivid contrast with this—for the Apostle does not close with this terrible prospect—is the lot of those who have chosen the good part here. Christ is revealed taking vengeance on the wicked, as has just been described; but He comes also to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed—including those Christians at Thessalonica. This is the Lord's and the Christian's interest in the great day. The glory that shines from Him is mirrored in and reflected from them. If there is a glory of the Christian even while he wears the body of his humiliation, it will be swallowed up in a glory more excellent when his change comes. Yet that glory will not be his own: it will be the glory of Christ which has transfigured him; men and angels, as they look at the saints, will admire not them, but Him who has made them anew in the likeness of Himself. All this is to take place "on that day"—the great and terrible day of the Lord. The voice of the Apostle rests with emphasis upon it; let it fill our minds and hearts. It is a day of revelation, above all things: the day on which Christ comes, and declares which life is eternally of worth, and which for ever worthless; the day on which some are glorified, and some pass finally from our view. Do not let the difficulties and mysteries of this subject, the problems we cannot solve, the decisions we could not give, blind our eyes to what Scripture makes so plain: we are not the judges, but the judged, in this whole scene; and the judgment is of infinite consequence for us. It is not a question of less or more, of sooner or later, of better or worse; what is at stake in our attitude to the gospel is life or death, heaven or hell, the outer darkness or the glory of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OF SIN.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 1-5 (R. V.).

IN the first chapter of this Epistle Paul depicted the righteous judgment of God which accompanies the advent of Christ. Its terrors and its glories blazed before his eyes as he prayed for those who were to read his letter. "With this in view," he says, "we also pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of the calling." The emphatic word in the sentence is "you." Among all believers in whom Christ was to be glorified, as they in Him, the Thessalonians were at this moment nearest to the Apostle's heart. Like others, they had been called to a place in the heavenly kingdom; and he is eager that they should prove worthy of it. They will be worthy only if God powerfully carries to perfection in them their delight in goodness, and the activities of their faith. That is the substance of his prayer. "The Lord enable you always to have unreserved pleasure in what is good, and to show the proof of faith in all you do. So you shall be worthy of the Christian calling, and the name of the Lord shall be glorified in you, and you in Him, in that day."

The second chapter seems, in our English Bibles, to open with an adjuration: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him." If that were right, we might suppose Paul's meaning to be: As you long for this great day, and anticipate its appearing as your dearest hope, let me conjure you not to entertain mischievous fancies about it; or, as you dread the day, and shrink from the terrible judgment which it brings, let me adjure you to think of it as you ought to think, and not discredit it by unspiritual excitement, bringing reproach on the Church in the eyes of the world. But this interpretation, though apt enough, is hardly justified by the use of the New Testament, and the Revised Version is nearer the truth when it gives the rendering "touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is of it the Apostle wishes to speak; and what he has to say is, that the true doctrine of it contains nothing which ought to produce unsettlement or vague alarms. In the First Epistle, especially in chap. v., he has enlarged on the moral attitude which is proper to those who cherish the Christian hope: they are to watch and be sober; they are to put off the works of darkness, and put on, as children of the day, the armour of light; they are to be ready and expectant always. Here he adds the negative counsel that they are not to be quickly shaken from their mind, as a ship is driven from her moorings by a storm, nor yet upset or troubled, whether by spirit or by word or letter purporting to be from him. These last expressions need a word of explanation. By "spirit" the Apostle no doubt means a Christian man speaking in the church under a spiritual impulse. Such speakers in Thessalonica would often take the Second Advent as their theme; but their utterances were open to criticism. It was of such utterances that the Apostle had said in his earlier letter, "Despise not prophesyings;

but prove all that is said, and hold fast that which is good." The spirit in which a Christian spoke was not necessarily the spirit of God; even if it were, it was not necessarily unmixed with his own ideas, desires, or hopes. Hence discernment of spirits was a valued and needful gift, and it seems to have been wanted at Thessalonica. Besides misleading utterances of this kind in public worship, there were circulated words ascribed to Paul, and if not a forged letter, at all events a letter purporting to contain his opinion, none of which had his authority. These words and this letter had for their substance the idea that the day of the Lord was now present—or, as one might say in Scotch, just here. It was this which produced the unspiritual excitement at Thessalonica, and which the Apostle wished to contradict.

A great mystery has been made out of the paragraph which follows, but without much reason. It certainly stands alone in St. Paul's writings, an Apocalypse on a small scale, reminding us in many respects of the great Apocalypse of John, but not necessarily to be judged by it, or brought into any kind of harmony with it. Its obscurity, so far as it is obscure, is due in part to the previous familiarity of the Thessalonians with the subject, which allowed the Apostle to take much for granted; and in part, no doubt, to the danger of being explicit in a matter which had political significance. But it is not really so obscure as it has been made out to be by some; and the reputation for humility which so many have sought, by adopting St. Augustine's confession that he had no idea what the Apostle meant, is too cheap to be coveted. We must suppose that St. Paul wrote to be understood, and was understood by those to whom he wrote; and if we follow him word by word, a sense will appear which is not really questionable except on extraneous grounds. What, then, does he say about the delaying of the Advent?

He says it will not come till the falling away, or apostasy, has come first. The Authorised Version says "a" falling away, but that is wrong. The falling away was something familiar to the Apostle and his readers; he was not introducing them to any new thought. But a falling away of whom? or from what? Some have suggested, of the members of the Christian Church from Christ,* but it is quite plain from the whole passage, and especially from ver. 12 f., that the Apostle is contemplating a series of events in which the Church has no part but as a spectator. But the "apostasy" is clearly a religious defection; though the word itself does not necessarily imply as much, the description of the falling away does; and if it be not of Christians, it must be of the Jews; the Apostle could not conceive of the heathen "who know not God" as falling away from Him. This apostasy reaches its height, finds its representative and hero, in the man of sin, or, as some MSS. have it, the man of lawlessness. When the Apostle says the man of sin, he means the man,—not a principle, nor a system, nor a series of persons, but an individual human person who is identified with sin, an incarnation of evil as Christ was of good, an Antichrist. The man of sin is also the son of perdition; this name expressing his fate—he is doomed to perish—as the other his nature. This person's portrait is then drawn by the Apostle. He is the adversary *par excellence*, he who sets himself in opposition, a human Satan, the enemy of Christ. The other features in the likeness are mainly borrowed from the description of the tyrant king Antiochus Epiphanes in the Book of Daniel: they may have gained fresh meaning to the Apostle from the recent revival of them in the insane Emperor Caligula. The man of sin is filled with demoniac pride; he lifts himself on high against the true God, and all gods, and all that men adore; he seats himself in the temple of God; he would like to be taken by all men for God. There has been much discussion over the temple of God in this passage. It is no doubt true that the Apostle sometimes uses the expression figuratively, of a church and its members—"The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are"—but it is surely inconceivable that a man should take his seat in that temple; when these words were fresh, no one could have put that meaning on them. The temple of God is, therefore, the temple at Jerusalem; it was standing when Paul wrote; and he expected it to stand till all this was fulfilled. When the Jews had crowned their guilt by falling away from God; in other words, when they had finally and as a whole decided against the gospel, and God's purpose to save them by it; when the falling away had been crowned by the revelation of the man of sin, and the profanation of the temple by his impious pride, then, and not till then, would come the end. "Do you not remember," says the Apostle, "that when I was with you I used to tell you this?"

When Paul wrote this Epistle, the Jews were the great enemies of the gospel; it was they who persecuted him from city to city, and roused against him everywhere the malice of the heathen; hostility to God was incarnated, if anywhere, in them. They alone, because of their spiritual privileges, were capable of the deepest spiritual sin. Already in the First Epistle he has denounced them as the murderers of the Lord Jesus and of their own prophets, a race that please not God and are contrary to all men, sinners on whom the threatened wrath has come without reserve. In the passage before us the course is outlined of that wickedness against which the wrath was revealed. The people of God, as they called themselves, fall definitely away from God; the monster of lawlessness who rises from among them can only be pictured in the words in which prophets portrayed the impiety and presumption of a heathen king; he thrusts God aside, and claims to be God himself.

There is only one objection to this interpretation of the Apostle's words, namely, that they have never been fulfilled. Some will think that objection final; and some will think it futile: I agree with the last. It proves too much; for it

* There are indications of such a thing in various words of Jesus. "Many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold."—Matt. xxiv. 11 f. "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect."—Matt. xxiv. 24. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"—Luke xviii. 8. What answers to these in St. Paul's writings we see in Acts xx. 29 f.; Eph. iv. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 1. But these passages belong to the very latest years in his life, and they are not connected with any such anticipations as are characteristic of the Thessalonian Apocalypse. The history of the Church, as Paul foresaw it, did not include in itself a phenomenon which could be described as ἡ ἀποστασία.

lies equally against every other interpretation of the words, however ingenious, as well as against the simple and natural one just given. It lies, in some degree, against almost every prophecy in the Bible. No matter what the apostasy, and the man of sin, are taken to be, nothing has ever appeared in history which answers exactly to Paul's description. The truth is that inspiration did not enable the apostles to write history before it happened; and though this forecast of the Apostle's has a spiritual truth in it, resting as it does on a right perception of the law of moral development, the precise anticipation which it embodies was not destined to be realised. Further, it must have changed its place in Paul's own mind within the next ten years; for, as Dr. Farrar has observed, he barely alludes again to the Messianic surroundings (or antecedents) of a second personal advent. "He dwells more and more on the mystic oneness with Christ, less and less on His personal return. He speaks repeatedly of the indwelling presence of Christ, and the believer's incorporation with Him, and hardly at all of that visible meeting in the air which at this epoch was most prominent in his thoughts."

But, it may be said, if this anticipation was not to be fulfilled, is it not altogether deceptive? is it not utterly misleading that a prophecy should stand in Holy Scripture which history was to falsify? I think the right answer to that question is that there is hardly any prophecy in Holy Scripture which has not been in a similar way falsified, while nevertheless in its spiritual import true. The details of this prophecy of St. Paul were not verified as he anticipated, yet the soul of it was. The Advent was not just then; it was delayed till a certain moral process should be accomplished; and this was what the Apostle wished the Thessalonians to understand. He did not know when it would be; but he could see so far into the law of God's working as to know that it would not come till the fulness of time; and he could understand that, where a final judgment was concerned, the fulness of time would not arrive till evil had had every opportunity, either to turn and repent, or to develop itself in the most utterly evil forms, and lie ripe for vengeance.

This is the ethical law which underlies the Apostle's prophecy; it is a law confirmed by the teaching of Jesus Himself, and illustrated by the whole course of history. The question is sometimes discussed whether the world gets better or worse as it grows older, and optimists and pessimists take opposite sides upon it. Both, this law informs us, are wrong. It does not get better only, nor worse only, but both. Its progress is not simply a progress in good, evil being gradually driven from the field; nor is it simply a progress in evil, before which good continually disappears: it is a progress in which good and evil alike come to maturity, bearing their ripest fruit, showing all that they can do, proving their strength to the utmost against each other; the progress is not in good in itself, nor in evil in itself, but in the antagonism of the one to the other. This is the same truth which we are taught by our Lord in the parable of the wheat and the tares: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares," etc. In the time of harvest: not till all is ripe for judgment, not till the wheat and the tares alike have shown all that is in them, will the judgment come. This is what St. Paul understood, and what the Thessalonians did not understand; and if his ignorance of the scale of the world, and the scale of God's purposes, made him apply this law to the riddle of history hastily, with a result which the event has not justified, that is nothing to the prejudice of the law itself, which was true when he applied it with his imperfect knowledge, and is true for application still.

One other remark is suggested by the description of the character in which sin culminates, viz., that as evil approaches its height it assumes ever more spiritual forms. There are some sins which betray man on the lower side of his nature, through the perversion of the appetites which he has in common with the brutes: the dominance of these is in some sense natural; they are not radically and essentially evil. The man who is the victim of lust or drunkenness may lose his soul by his sin, but he is its victim; there is not in his guilt that malignant hatred of good which is here ascribed to the man of sin. The crowning wickedness is this demoniac pride: the temper of one who lifts himself on high above God, owning no superior, nay, claiming for himself the highest place of all. This is rather spiritual than sensual: it may be quite free from the gross vices of the flesh, though the connection between pride and sensuality is closer than is sometimes imagined; but it is more conscious, deliberate, malignant, and damnable than any brutality could be. When we look at the world in any given age—our own or another—and make inquiry into its moral condition, this is a consideration which we are apt to lose sight of, but which is entitled to the utmost weight. The collector of moral statistics examines the records of criminal courts; he investigates the standard of honesty in commerce; he balances the evidences of peace, truth, purity, against those of violence, fraud, and immorality, and works out a rough conclusion. But that material morality leaves out of sight what is most significant of all—the spiritual forms of good and of evil in which the opposing forces show their inmost nature, and in which the world ripens for God's judgment. The man of sin is not described as a sensualist or a murderer; he is an apostate, a rebel against God, a usurper who claims not the palace but the temple for his own. This God-dethroning pride is the utmost length to which sin can go. The judgment will not come till it has fully developed; can any one see tokens of its presence?

In asking such a question we pass from the interpretation of the Apostle's words to their application. Much of the difficulty and bewilderment that have gathered about this passage are due to the confusion of these two quite different things.* The interpretation gives us the meaning of the very words the Apostle used. We have seen what that is, and that in its precise detail it was not destined to be fulfilled. But when we have passed behind the surface meaning, and laid hold on the law which

* A conspectus of the historical interpretations, most of which are really applications, of this passage, is given in most commentaries. The fullest is Lünemann's, which is followed by Alford. Farrar's Appendix is briefer.

the Apostle was applying this passage, then we can apply it ourselves. We can use it to read the signs of the times in our own or in any other age. We may see developments of evil, resembling in their main features the man of sin here depicted, in one quarter or another, and in one person or another; and if we do, we are bound to see in them tokens that a judgment of God is at hand; but we must not imagine that in so applying the passage we are finding out what St. Paul meant. That lies far, far behind us; and our application of his words can only claim our own authority, not the authority of Holy Scripture.

Of the multitude of applications which have been made of this passage since the Apostle wrote it, one only has had historical importance enough to be of interest to us—I mean that which is found in several Protestant confessions, including the Westminster Confession of Faith, and which declares the Pope of Rome, in the words of this last, to be "that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God." As an interpretation, of course, that is impossible; the man of sin is one man, and not a series, like the Popes; the temple of God in which a man sits is a temple made with hands, and not the Church; but when we ask whether or not it is a fair application of the Apostle's words, the question is altered. Dr. Farrar, whom no one will suspect of sympathy with the Papacy, is indignant that such an uncharitable idea should ever have crossed the mind of man. Many in the churches which hold by the Westminster Confession would agree with him. Of course it is a matter on which every one is entitled to judge for himself, and, whether right or wrong, ought not to be in a confession; but for my own part I have little scruple in the matter. There have been Popes who could have sat for Paul's picture of the man of sin better than any characters known to history—proud, apostate, atheist priests, sitting in the seat of Christ, blasphemously claiming His authority, and exercising His functions. And individuals apart—for there have been saintly and heroic Popes as well, true servants of the servants of God—the hierarchical system of the Papacy, with the monarchical priest at its head, incarnates and fosters that very spiritual pride of which the man of sin is the final embodiment; it is a seed-bed and nursery of precisely such characters as are here described. There is not in the world, nor has ever been, a system in which there is less that recalls Christ, and more that anticipates Antichrist, than the Papal system. And one may say so while acknowledging the debt that all Christians owe to the Romish Church, and while hoping that it may somehow in God's grace repent and reform.

It would ill become us, however, to close the study of so serious a subject with the censure of others. The mere discovery that we have here to do with a law of moral development, and with a supreme and final type of evil, should put us rather upon self-scrutiny. The character of our Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme and final type of good: it shows us the end to which the Christian life conducts those who follow it. The character of the man of sin shows the end of those who obey not His gospel. They become, in their resistance to Him, more and more identified with sin; their antagonism to God settles into antipathy, presumption, defiance; they become gods to themselves, and their doom is sealed. This picture is set here for our warning. We cannot of ourselves see the end of evil from the beginning; we cannot tell what selfishness and wilfulness come to, when they have had their perfect work; but God sees, and it is written in this place to startle us, and fright us from sin. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESTRAINT AND ITS REMOVAL.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 6-12 (R. V.).

CHRIST cannot come, the Apostle has told us, until the falling away has first come, and the man of sin been revealed. In the verses before us, we are told that the man of sin himself cannot come, in the full sense of the word, he cannot be revealed in his true character of the counter-Christ, till a restraining force, known to the Thessalonians, but only obscurely alluded to by the Apostle, is taken out of the way. The Last Advent is thus at two removes from the present. First, there must be the removal of the power which holds the man of sin in check; then the culmination of evil in that great adversary of God; and not till then the return of the Lord in glory as Saviour and Judge.

We might think that this put the Advent to such a distance as practically to disconnect it from the present, and make it a matter of little interest to the Christian. But, as we have seen already, what is significant in this whole passage is the spiritual law which governs the future of the world, the law that good and evil must ripen together, and in conflict with each other; and it is involved in that law that the final state of the world, which brings on the Advent, is latent, in all its principles and spiritual features, in the present. That day is indissolubly connected with this. The life that we now live has all the importance, and ought to have all the intensity, which comes from its bearing the future in its bosom. Through the eyes of this New Testament prophet we can see the end from the beginning; and the day on which we happen to read his words is as critical, in its own nature, as the great day of the Lord.

The end, the Apostle tells us, is at some distance, but it is preparing. "The mystery of lawlessness doth already work." The forces which are hostile to God, and which are to break out in the great apostasy, and the insane presumption of the man of sin, are even now in operation, but secretly. They are not visible to the careless, or to the infatuated, or to the spiritually blind; but the Apostle can discern them. Taught by the Spirit to read the signs of the times, he sees in the world around him symptoms of forces, secret, unorganised, to some extent inscrutable, yet unmistakable in their character. They are the beginnings of

the apostasy, the first workings, fettered as yet and baffled, of the power which is to set itself in the place of God. He sees also, and has already told the Thessalonians, of another power of an opposite character. "Ye know," he says, "that which restraineth . . . only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way." This restraining power is spoken of both in the neuter and the masculine, both as a principle or institution, and as a person; and there is no reason to doubt that those fathers of the Church are right who identified it with the Empire of Rome and its sovereign head. The apostasy was to take place among the Jews; and the Apostle saw that Rome and its Emperor were the grand restraint upon the violence of that stubborn race. The Jews had been his worst enemies, ever since he had embraced the cause of the Nazarene Messiah Jesus; and all that time the Romans had been his best friends. If injustice had been done him in their name, as at Philippi, atonement had been made; and, on the whole, he had owed to them his protection against Jewish persecution. He felt sure that his own experience was typical; the final development of hatred to God and all that was on God's side could not but be restrained so long as the power of Rome stood firm. That power was a sufficient check upon anarchic violence. While it held its ground, the powers of evil could not organise themselves and work openly; they constituted a mystery of iniquity, working, as it were, underground. But when this great restraint was removed, all that had been labouring so long in secret would come suddenly to view, in its full dimensions; the lawless one would stand revealed.

But, it may be asked, could Paul imagine that the Roman power, as represented by the Emperor, was likely to be removed within any measurable time? Was it not the very type and symbol of all that was stable and perpetual in man's life? In one way, it was; and as at least a temporary check on the final eruption of wickedness, it is here recognised to have a degree of stability; but it was certainly not eternal. Paul may have seen plainly enough in such careers as those of Caligula and Claudius the impending collapse of the Julian dynasty; and the very obscurity and reserve with which he expresses himself amount to a distinct proof that he has something in his mind which it was not safe to describe more plainly. Dr. Farrar has pointed to the remarkable correspondence between this passage, interpreted of the Roman Empire, and a paragraph in Josephus, in which that historian explains the visions of Daniel to his pagan readers. Josephus shows that the image with the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, and the ankles and feet of iron, represents a succession of four empires. He names the Babylonian as the first, and indicates plainly that the Medo-Persian and the Greek are the second and third; but when he comes to the fourth, which is destroyed by the stone cut out without hands, he does not venture, as all his countrymen did, to identify it with the Roman. That would have been disloyal in a courtier, and dangerous as well; so he remarks, when he comes to the point, that he thinks it proper to say nothing about the stone and the kingdom it destroys, his duty as a historian being to record what is past and gone, and not what is yet to come. In a precisely similar way does St. Paul here hint at an event which it would have been perilous to name. But what he means is: When the Roman power has been removed, the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord will come to destroy him.

What was said of the man of sin in the last chapter has again its application here. The Roman Empire did not fall within any such period as Paul anticipated; nor, when it did, was there any such crisis as he describes. The man of sin was not revealed, and the Lord did not come. But these are the human elements in the prophecy; and its interest and meaning for us lie in the description which an inspired writer gives of the final forms of wickedness, and their connection with principles which were at work around him, and are at work among us. He does not, indeed, come to these at once. He passes over them, and anticipates the final victory, when the Lord shall destroy the man of sin with the breath of His mouth, and bring him to nought by the appearance of His coming; he would not have Christian men face the terrible picture of the last workings of evil until they have braced and comforted their hearts with the prospect of a crowning victory. There is a great battle to be fought; there are great perils to be encountered; there is a prospect with something in it appalling to the bravest heart; but there is light beyond. It needs but the breath of the Lord Jesus; it needs but the first ray of His glorious appearing to brighten the sky, and all the power of evil is at an end. Only after he has fixed the mind on this does St. Paul describe the supreme efforts of the enemy.

His coming, he says—and he uses the word applied to Christ's advent, as though to teach us that the event in question is as significant for evil as the other for good—his coming is according to the working of Satan. When Christ was in the world, His presence with men was according to the working of God; the works that the Father gave Him to do, the same He did, and nothing else. His life was the life of God entering into our ordinary human life, and drawing into its own mighty and eternal current all who gave themselves up to Him. It was the supreme form of goodness, absolutely tender and faithful; using all the power of the Highest in pure unselfishness and truth. When sin has reached its height, we shall see a character in whom all this is reversed. Its presence with men will be according to the working of Satan; not an ineffective thing, but very potent; carrying in its train vast effects and consequences; so vast and so influential, in spite of its utter badness, that it is no exaggeration to describe its "coming" (*παρουσία*), its "appearing" (*ἐπιφάνεια*) and its "revelation" (*ἀποκάλυψις*), by the very same words which are applied to Christ Himself. If there is one word which can characterise this whole phenomenon, both in its principle and in its consummation, it is falsehood. The devil is a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies; and where things go on according to the working of Satan, there is sure to be a vast development of falsehood and delusion. This is a prospect which very few fear. Most of us are confident enough of the soundness of our minds, of the solidity of our principles, of

the justice of our consciences. It is very difficult for us to understand that we can be mistaken, quite as confident about falsehood as about truth, unsuspecting victims of pure delusion. We can see that some men are in this wretched plight, but that very fact seems to give us immunity. Yet the falsehoods of the last days, St. Paul tells us, will be marvellously imposing and successful. Men will be dazzled by them, and unable to resist. Satan will support his representative by power and signs and wonders of every description, agreeing in nothing but in the characteristic quality of falsehood. They will be lying miracles. Yet those who are of the truth will not be left without a safeguard against them, a safeguard found in this, that the manifold deceit of every kind which the devil and his agents employ, is deceit of unrighteousness. It furthers unrighteousness; it has evil as its end. By this it is betrayed to the good; its moral quality enables them to penetrate the lie, and to make their escape from it. However plausible it may seem on other grounds, its true character comes out under the touchstone of conscience, and it stands finally condemned.

This is a point for consideration in our own time. There is a great deal of falsehood in circulation—partly superstitious, partly quasi-scientific—which is not judged with the decision and severity that would be becoming in wise and good men. Some of it is more or less latent, working as a mystery of iniquity; influencing men's souls and consciences rather than their thoughts; disinclining them to prayer, suggesting difficulties about believing in God, giving the material nature the primacy over the spiritual, ignoring immortality and the judgment to come. The man knows very little, who does not know that there is a plausible case to be stated for atheism, for materialism, for fatalism, for the rejection of all belief in the life beyond the grave, and its connection with our present life; but however powerful and plausible the argument may be, he has been very careless of his spiritual nature, who does not see that it is a deceit of unrighteousness. I do not say that only a bad man could accept it; but certainly all that is bad in any man, and nothing that is good, will incline him to accept it. Everything in our nature that is unspiritual, slothful, earthly, at variance with God; everything that wishes to be let alone, to forget what is high, to make the actual and not the ideal its portion; everything that recalls responsibilities of which such a system would discharge us for ever, is on the side of its doctrines. But is not that itself a conclusive argument against the system? Are not all these most suspicious allies? Are they not, beyond dispute, our very worst enemies? And can it be possible that a way of thinking is true, which gives them undisputed authority over us? Do not believe it. Do not let any plausibility of argument impose upon you; but when the moral issue of a theory is plainly immoral, when by its working it is betrayed to be the leaven of the Sadducees, reject it as a diabolical deceit. Trust your conscience, that is, your whole nature, with its instinct for what is good, rather than any dialectic; it contains far more of what you are; and it is the whole man, and not the most unstable and self-confident of his faculties, that must judge. If there is nothing against a spiritual truth but the difficulty of conceiving how it can be, do not let that mental incapacity weigh against the evidence of its fruits.

The Apostle points to this line of thought, and to this safeguard of the good, when he says that those who come under the power of this vast working of falsehood are those who are perishing, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. But for this clause we might have said, Why expose men, defenceless, to such a terrific trial as is here depicted? Why exp ct weak, bewildered, unstable creatures to keep their feet, when falsehood comes in like a flood? But such queries would show that we mistook the facts. None are carried away by the prevailing falsehood but those who received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. It is a question, we see, not of the intelligence simply, but of the whole man. He does not say, They received not the truth; that might have been due to some cause over which they had no control. They might never have had so much as a good look at the truth; they might have got an incurable twist in their education, a flaw in their minds like a flaw in a mirror, that prevented them from ever seeing what the truth was like. These would be cases to stand apart. But he says, "They received not the love of the truth." That truth which is presented for our acceptance in the gospel is not merely a thing to scrutinise, to weigh, to judge by the rules of the bench or the jury box: it is a truth which appeals to the heart; from cultured and uncultured, from the clear-headed and the puzzle-headed, from the philosopher and the message boy, it demands the answer of love. It is this which is the true test of character—the answer which is given, not by the brain, disciplined or undisciplined, but by the whole man, to the revelation of the truth in Jesus Christ. Intelligence, by itself, may be a very little matter; all that some men have is but a tool in the hands of their passions; but the love of the truth, or its opposite, shows truly what we are. Those who love it are safe. They cannot love falsehood at the same time; all the lies of the devil and his agents are powerless to do them any harm. Satan, we see here, has no advantage over us that we do not first give him. The absence of liking for the truth, want of sympathy with Christ, a disposition to find less exacting ways than His, a resolution to find them or to make them, ending in a positive antipathy to Christ and to all the truth which He teaches and embodies,—these give the enemy his opportunity and his advantage over us. Put it to yourself in this light if you wish to discern your true attitude to the gospel. You may have difficulties and perplexities about it on one side or another; it runs out into mystery on every hand; but these will not expose you to the danger of being deceived, as long as you receive the love of it in your heart. It is a thing to command love; the truth as truth is in Jesus. All that is good in us is enlisted in its favour; not to love it is to be a bad man. A recent Unitarian lecturer has said that to love Jesus is not a religious duty; but that is certainly not a New Testament doctrine. It is not only a religious duty, but the sum of all such duties; to do it, or not to do it, is the decisive test of character, and the arbiter of fate. Does

not He Himself say—He who is the Truth—"He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me"? Does not His Apostle say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema"? Depend upon it, love to Him is all our goodness, and all our defence against the powers of evil. To grow cold and indifferent is to give the enemy of our souls an opening against us.

The last two verses in this passage are very striking. We have seen already two agents in the destruction of men's souls. They perish by their own agency, in that they do not welcome and love the truth; and they perish by the malevolence of the devil, who avails himself of this dislike to the truth to befool them by falsehood, and lead them ever further and further astray. But here we have a third agent, most surprising of all, God Himself. "For this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Is God, then, the author of falsehood? Do the delusions that possess the minds of men, and lead them to eternal ruin owe their strength to Him? Can He intend anybody to believe a lie, and especially a lie with such terrific consequences as are here in view? The opening words—"for this cause"—supply the answer to these questions. For this cause, *i. e.*, because they have not loved the truth, but in their liking for evil have turned their backs upon it, for this cause God's judgment comes upon them, binding them to their guilt. Nothing is more certain, however we may choose to express it, than the word of the wise man: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin." He chooses his own way, and he gets his fill of it. He loves the deceit of unrighteousness, the falsehood which delivers him from God and from His law; and by God's righteous judgment, acting through the constitution of our nature, he comes continually more and more under its power. He believes the lie, just as a good man believes the truth; he becomes every day more hopelessly beclouded in error; and the end is that he is judged. The judgment is based, not on his intellectual, but on his moral state. It is true he has been deluded, but his delusion is due to this, that he had pleasure in unrighteousness. It was this evil in him which gave weight to the sophistries of Satan.

Again and again in Scripture this is represented as the punishment of the wicked, that God gives them their own way, and infatuates them in it. The error works with ever greater power in their souls, till they cannot imagine that it is an error; none can deliver himself, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? "My people would not hearken to My voice, and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." "When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; . . . wherefore God gave them up to uncleanness." "They changed the truth of God into a lie; . . . for this cause God gave them up unto vile affections." "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. . . . God gave them over to a reprobate mind." "They received not the love of the truth: and for this cause God sendeth unto them a working of error." Sin bears its punishment in itself; when it has had its perfect work, we see that it has been executing a judgment of God more awful than anything we could conceive. If you would have Him on your side, your ally and not your adversary, receive the love of the truth.

This is the final lesson of the passage. We do not know all the forces that are at work in the world in the interest of error; but we know there are many. We know that the mystery of iniquity is already in operation. We know that falsehood, in this spiritual sense, has much in man which is its natural ally; and that we need to be steadily on our guard against the wiles of the devil. We know that passion is sophistical, and reason often weak, and that we see our true selves in the action of heart and conscience. Be faithful, therefore, to God at the core of your nature. Love the truth that you may be saved. This alone is salvation. This alone is a safeguard against all the delusions of Satan; it was one who knew God, who lived in God, who did always the works of God, who loved God as the only begotten Son the Father, who could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

CHAPTER V.

THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 13-17 (R. V.).

THE first part of this chapter is mysterious, awful, and oppressive. It deals with the principle of evil in the world, its secret working, its amazing power, its final embodiment in the man of sin, and its decisive overthrow at the Second Advent. The characteristic action of this evil principle is deceit. It deludes men, and they become its victims. True, it can only delude those who lay themselves open to its approach by an aversion to the truth, and by delight in unrighteousness; but when we look round us, and see the multitude of its victims, we might easily be tempted to despair of our race. The Apostle does not do so. He turns away from that gloomy prospect, and fixes his eyes upon another, serene, bright, and joyful. There is a son of perdition, a person doomed to destruction, who will carry many to ruin in his train; but there is a work of God going on in the world as well as a work of evil; and it also has its triumphs. Let the mystery of iniquity work as it will, "we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation."

The thirteenth and fourteenth verses of this chapter are a system of theology in miniature. The Apostle's thanksgiving covers the whole work of salvation from the eternal choice of God to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come. Let us observe the several points which it brings out. As a thanksgiving, of course, God is the main subject in it. Every separate clause only serves to bring out another aspect of the fundamental truth that salvation is of the Lord. What aspects, then, of this truth are presented in turn?

(1) In the first place, the original idea of salvation is God's. He chose the Thessalonians to it from the beginning. There are

really two assertions in this simple sentence—the one, that God chose them; the other, that His choice is eternal. The first of these is obviously a matter on which there is an appeal to experience. These Christian men, and all Christian men, could tell whether it was true or not that they owed their salvation to God. In point of fact, there has never been any doubt about that matter in any church, or indeed, in any religion. All good men have always believed that salvation is of the Lord. It begins on God's side. It can most truly be described from His side. Every Christian heart responds to the word of Jesus to the disciples: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Every Christian heart feels the force of St. Paul's words to the Galatians: "After that ye have known God, or rather were known of God." It is His taking knowledge of us which is the original, fundamental, decisive thing in salvation. That is a matter of experience; and so far the Calvinist doctrine of election, which has sometimes an unsubstantial, metaphysical aspect, has an experimental basis. We are saved, because God in His love has saved us; that is the starting-point. That also gives character, in all the Epistles, to the New Testament doctrine of election. The Apostle never speaks of the elect as an unknown quantity, a favoured few, hidden in the Church, or in the world, unknown to others or to themselves: "God," he says, "chose you,"—the persons addressed in this letter,—"and you know that He did." So does every one who knows anything of God at all. Even when the Apostle says, "God chose you from the beginning," he does not leave the basis of experience. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The purpose of God's love to save men, which comes home to them in their reception of the gospel, is not a thing of to-day or yesterday; they know it is not; it is the manifestation of His nature; it is as eternal as Himself; they can count on it as securely as they can on the Divine character; if God has chosen them at all, He has chosen them from the beginning. The doctrine of election in Scripture is a religious doctrine, based upon experience; it is only when it is separated from experience, and becomes metaphysical, and prompts men to ask whether they who have heard and received the gospel are elect or not—an impossible question on New Testament ground—that it works for evil in the Church. If you have chosen God, you know it is because He first chose you; and His will revealed in that choice is the will of the Eternal.

(2) Further, the means of salvation for men are of God. "He chose you," says the Apostle, "in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Perhaps "means" is not the most precise word to use here; it might be better to say that sanctification wrought by the Spirit, and belief of the truth, are the state in which, rather than the means by which, salvation is realised. But what I wish to insist upon is, that both are included in the Divine choice; they are the instruments or the conditions of carrying it into effect. And here, when we come to the accomplishment of God's purpose, we see how it combines a Divine and a human side. There is a sanctification, or consecration, wrought by the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man, the sign and seal of which is baptism, the entrance of the natural man into the new and higher life; and coincident with this, there is the belief of the truth, the acceptance of God's message of mercy, and the surrender of the soul to it. It is impossible to separate these two things, or to define their relation to each other. Sometimes the first seems to condition the second; sometimes the order is reversed. Now it is the Spirit which opens the mind to the truth; again it is the truth which exercises a sanctifying power like the Spirit. The two, as it were, interpenetrate each other. If the Spirit stood alone, man's mind would be baffled, his moral freedom would be taken away; if the reception of the truth were everything, a cold, rationalistic type of religion would supplant the ardour of the New Testament Christian. The eternal choice of God makes provision, in the combination of the Spirit and the truth, at once for Divine influence and for human freedom; for a baptism of fire and for the deliberate welcoming of revelation; and it is when the two are actually combined that the purpose of God to save is accomplished. What can we say here on the basis of experience? Have we believed the truth which God has declared to us in His Son? Has its belief been accompanied and made effectual by a sanctification wrought by His Spirit, a consecration which has made the truth live in us, and made us new creatures in Christ? God's choice does not become effective apart from this; it comes out in this; it secures its own accomplishment in this. His chosen are not chosen to salvation irrespective of any experience; none are chosen except as they believe the truth and are sanctified by His Spirit.

(3) Once more, the execution of the plan of salvation in time is of God. To this salvation, says Paul, He called you by our gospel. The apostles and their companions were but messengers: the message they brought was God's. The new truths, the warnings, the summonses, the invitations, all were His. The spiritual constraint which they exercised was His also. In speaking thus, the Apostle magnifies his office, and magnifies at the same time the responsibility of all who heard him preach. It is a light thing to listen to a man speaking his own thoughts, giving his own counsel, inviting assent to his own proposals; it is a solemn thing to listen to a man speaking truly in the name of God. The gospel that we preach is ours, only because we preach it and because we receive it; but the true description of it is, the gospel of God. It is His voice which proclaims the coming judgment; it is His voice which tells of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, even the forgiveness of our trespasses; it is His voice which invites all who are exposed to wrath, all who are under the curse and power of sin, to come to the Saviour. Paul had thanked God in the First Epistle that the Thessalonians had received his word, not as the word of man, but as what it was in truth, the word of the living God; and here he falls back again on the same thought in a new connection. It is too natural for us to put God as far as we can out of our minds, to keep Him for ever in the background, to have recourse to Him only in the last resort; but that easily becomes an evasion of the seriousness and the responsibilities of our life, a shutting of our eyes to its true significance, for which we may have to pay dear. God has

spoken to us all in His word and by His Spirit, —God, and not only some human preacher: see that ye despise not Him that speaketh.

(4) Lastly, under this head, the end proposed to us in obeying the gospel call is of God. It is the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul became a Christian and an Apostle, because he saw the Lord of Glory on the way to Damascus; and his whole conception of salvation was shaped by that sight. To be saved meant to enter into that glory into which Christ had entered. It was a condition of perfect holiness, open only to those who were sanctified by Christ's Spirit; but perfect holiness did not exhaust it. Holiness was manifested in glory, in a light surpassing the brightness of the sun, in a strength superior to every weakness, in a life no longer assailable by death. Weak, suffering, destitute—dying daily for Christ's sake —Paul saw salvation concentrated and summed up in the glory of Christ. To obtain this was to obtain salvation. "When Christ who is our life shall appear," he says elsewhere, "then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." If salvation were anything lower than this, there might be a plausible case to state for man as its author; but reaching as it does to this immeasurable height, who can accomplish it but God? It needs the operation of the might of His power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

One cannot read these two simple verses without wondering at the new world which the gospel created for the mind of man. What great thoughts are in them—thoughts that wander through eternity, thoughts based on the most sure and blessed of experiences, yet travelling back into an infinite past, and on into immortal glory; thoughts of the Divine presence and the Divine power interpenetrating and redeeming human life; thoughts addressed originally to a little company of working people, but unmatched for length and breadth and depth and height by all that pagan literature could offer to the wisest and the best. What a range and sweep there is in this brief summary of God's work in man's salvation. If the New Testament is uninteresting, can it be for any other reason than that we arrest ourselves at the words, and never penetrate to the truth which lies beneath?

On this review of the work of God the Apostle grounds an exhortation to the Thessalonians. "So then, brethren," he writes, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours." The objection that is brought against Calvinism is that it destroys every motive for action on our part, by destroying all need of it. If salvation is of the Lord, what is there for us to do? If God conceived it, planned it, executes it, and alone can perfect it, what room is left for the interference of man? This is a species of objection which would have appeared extremely perverse to the Apostle. Why, he would have exclaimed, if God left it to us to do, we might well sit down in despair and do nothing, so infinitely would the task exceed our powers; but since the work of salvation is the work of God, since He Himself is active on that side, there are reason, hope, motive, for activity on our part also. If we work in the same line with Him, toward the same end with Him, our labour will not be cast away; it will be triumphantly successful. God is at work; but so far from that furnishing a motive to non-exertion on our part, it is the strongest of all motives to action. Work out your own salvation, not because it is left to you to do, but because it is God who is working in you both will and deed in furtherance of His good pleasure. Fall in, the Apostle virtually says in this place, with the purpose of God to save you; identify yourselves with it; stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught.

"Traditions" is an unpopular word in one section of the Church because it has been so vastly abused in another. But it is not an illegitimate word in any church, and there is always a place for what it means. The generations are dependent on each other; each transmits to the future the inheritance it has received from the past; and that inheritance—embracing laws, arts, manners, morals, instincts, religion—can all be comprehended in the single word tradition. The gospel was handed over to the Thessalonians by St. Paul, partly in oral teaching, partly in writing; it was a complex of traditions in the simplest sense, and they were not to let any part of it go. Extreme Protestants are in the habit of opposing Scripture to tradition. The Bible alone, they say, is our religion; and we reject all unwritten authority. But, as a little reflection will show, the Bible itself is, in the first instance, a part of tradition; it is handed down to us from those who have gone before; it is delivered to us as a sacred deposit by the Church; and as such we at first regard it. There are good reasons, no doubt, for giving Scripture a fundamental and critical place among traditions. When its claim to represent the Christianity of the apostles is once made out, it is fairly regarded as the criterion of everything else that appeals to their authority. The bulk of so-called traditions in the Church of Rome are to be rejected, not because they are traditions, but because they are not traditions, but have originated in later times, and are inconsistent with what is known to be truly apostolic. We ourselves are bound to keep fast hold of all that connects us historically with the apostolic age. We would not disinherit ourselves. We would not lose a single thought, a single like or dislike, a single conviction or instinct, of all that proves us the spiritual posterity of Peter and Paul and John. Sectarianism destroys the historical sense; it plays havoc with traditions; it weakens the feeling of spiritual affinity between the present and the past. The Reformers in the sixteenth century—the men like Luther, Melanchthon, and Calvin—made a great point of what they called their catholicity, *i. e.*, their claim to represent the true Church of Christ, to be the lawful inheritors of apostolic tradition. They were right, both in their claim, and in their idea of its importance; and we will suffer for it, if, in our eagerness for independence, we disown the riches of the past.

The Apostle closes his exhortation with a prayer. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father which loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort * your hearts and stablish them in every good work and word." All human ef-

* For the verb in the singular, and its imports, compare 1st Epistle iii. 11.

fort, he seems to say, must be not only anticipated and called forth, but supported, by God. He alone it is who can give steadfastness to our pursuit of good in word and deed.

In his prayer the Apostle goes back to great events in the past, and bases his request on the assurance which they yield: "God," he says, "who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace." When did God do these gracious things? It was when He sent His Son into the world for us. He does love us now; He will love us for ever; but we go back for the final proof, and for the first conviction of this, to the gift of Jesus Christ. There we see God who loved us. The death of the Lord Jesus is specially in view. "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The eternal consolation is connected in the closest possible way with this grand assurance of love. It is not merely an unending comfort, as opposed to the transitory and uncertain joys of earth; it is the heart to exclaim with St. Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Here, and now, this eternal consolation is given to the Christian heart; here, and now, rather, it is enjoyed; it was given, once for all, on the cross at Calvary. Stand there, and receive that awful pledge of the love of God, and see whether it does not, even now, go deeper than any sorrow.

But the eternal consolation does not exhaust God's gifts. He has also in His grace given us good hope. He has made provision, not only for the present trouble, but for the future uncertainty. All life needs an outlook; and those who have stood beside the empty grave in the garden know how wide and glorious is the outlook provided by God for the believer in Jesus Christ. In the very deepest darkness, a light is kindled for him; in the valley of the shadow of death, a window is opened to him in heaven. Surely God, who sent His Son to die for us upon the Cross; God, who raised Him again from the dead on our behalf, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places,—surely He who has been at such cost for our salvation will not be slow to second all our efforts, and to establish our hearts in every good work and word.

How simply, one is tempted to say, it all ends—good works and good words; are these the whole fruits which God seeks in His great work of redemption? Does it need consolation so wonderful, hope so far-reaching, to secure patient continuance in well-doing? We know only too well that it does. We know that the comfort of God, the hope of God, prayer to God, are all needed; and that all we can make of all of them combined is not too much to make us steadily dutiful in word and deed. We know that it is not a disproportionate or unworthy moral, but one befitting the grandeur of his theme, when the Apostle concludes the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians in a tone very similar to that which rules here. The infinite hope of the Resurrection is made the basis of the commonest duties. "Therefore, my beloved brethren," he says, "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." That hope is to bear fruit on earth—in patience and loyalty, in humble and faithful service. It is to shed its radiance over the trivial round, the common task; and the Apostle does not think it wasted if it enables men and women to do well and not weary.

The difficulty of expounding this passage lies in the largeness of the thoughts; they include, in a manner, every part and aspect of the Christian life. Let each of us try to bring them near to himself. God has called us by His gospel: He has declared to us that Jesus our Lord was delivered for our offences, and that He was raised again to open the gates of life to us. Have we believed the truth? That is where the gospel begins for us. Is the truth within us, written on hearts that God's Spirit has separated from the world, and devoted to a new life? or is it outside of us, a rumour, a hearsay, to which we have no vital relation? Happy are those who have believed, and taken Christ into their souls, Christ who died for us and rose again; they have the forgiveness of sins, a pledge of love that disarms and vanquishes sorrow, an infallible hope that outlives death. Happy are those to whom the cross and the empty tomb give that confidence in God's love which makes prayer natural, hopeful, joyful. Happy are those to whom all these gifts of grace bring the strength to continue patiently in well-doing, and to be steadfast in every good work and word. All things are theirs—the world, and life, and death; things present and things to come; everlasting consolation and good hope; prayer, patience, and victory: all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

CHAPTER VI.

MUTUAL INTERCESSION.

2 Thessalonians iii. 1-5 (R. V.).

The main part of this letter is now finished. The Apostle has completed his teaching about the Second Advent, and the events which precede and condition it; and nothing remains to dispose of but some minor matters of personal and practical interest.

He begins by asking again, as at the close of the First Epistle, the prayers of the Thessalonians for himself and his fellow-workers. It was a strength and comfort to him, as to every minister of Christ, to know that he was remembered by those who loved him in the presence of God. But it is no selfish or private interest that the Apostle has in view when he begs a place in their prayers; it is the interest of the work with which he has identified himself. "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified." This was the one business and concern of his life; if it went well, all his desires were satisfied.

Hardly anything in the New Testament gives us a more characteristic look of the Apostle's soul than his desire that the word of the Lord should run. The word of the Lord is the gospel, of which he is the principal herald to the nations; and we see in his choice of this word his sense of its urgency. It was glad tidings to all

mankind; and how sorely needed wherever he turned his eyes! The constraint of Christ's love was upon his heart, the constraint of men's sin and misery; and he could not pass swiftly enough from city to city, to proclaim the reconciling grace of God, and call men from darkness unto light. His eager heart fretted against barriers and restraints of every description; he saw in them the malice of the great enemy of Christ: "I was minded once and again to come unto you, but Satan hindered me." Hence it is that he asks the Thessalonians to pray for their removal, that the word of the Lord may run. The ardour of such a prayer, and of the heart which prompts it, is far enough removed from the common temper of the Church, especially where it has been long established. How many centuries there were during which Christendom, as it was called, was practically a fixed quantity, shut up within the limits of Western European civilisation, and not aspiring to advance a single step beyond it, fast or slow. It is one of the happy omens of our own time that the apostolic conception of the gospel as an ever-advancing, ever-victorious force, has begun again to take its place in the Christian heart. If it is really to us what it was to St. Paul—a revelation of God's mercy and judgment which dwarfs everything else, a power omnipotent to save, an irresistible pressure of love on heart and will, glad tidings of great joy that the world is dying for—we shall share in this ardent, evangelical spirit, and pray for all preachers that the word of the Lord may run very swiftly. How it passed in apostolic times from land to land and from city to city—from Syria to Asia, from Asia to Macedonia, from Macedonia to Greece, from Greece to Italy, from Italy to Spain—till in one man's lifetime, and largely by one man's labour, it was known throughout the Roman world. It is easy, indeed, to overestimate the number of the early Christians; but we can hardly overestimate the fiery speed with which the Cross went forth conquering and to conquer. Missionary zeal is one note of the true Apostolic Church.

But Paul wishes the Thessalonians to pray that the word of the Lord may be glorified, as well as have free course. The word of the Lord is a glorious thing itself. As the Apostle calls it in another place, it is the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. All that makes the spiritual glory of God—His holiness, His love, His wisdom—is concentrated and displayed in it. But its glory is acknowledged, and in that sense heightened, when its power is seen in the salvation of men. A message from God that did nothing would not be glorified: it would be discredited and shamed. It is the glory of the gospel to lay hold of men, to transfigure them, to lift them out of evil into the company and the likeness of Christ. For anything else it does, it may not fill a great space in the world's eye; but when it actually brings the power of God to save those who receive it, it is clothed in glory. Paul did not wish to preach without seeing the fruits of his labour. He did the work of an evangelist; and he would have been ashamed of the evangel if it had not wielded a Divine power to overcome sin and bring the sinful to God. Pray that it may always have this power. Pray that when the word of the Lord is spoken it may not be an ineffective, fruitless word, but mighty through God.

There is an expression in Titus ii. 10 analogous to this: "Adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." That expression is less fervent, spoken at a lower level, than the one before us; but it more readily suggests, for that very reason, some duties of which we should be reminded here also. It comes home to all who try to bring their conduct into any kind of relation to the gospel of Christ. It is only too possible for us to disgrace the gospel; but it is in our power also, by every smallest action we do, to illustrate it, to set it off, to put its beauty in the true light before the eyes of men. The gospel comes into the world, like evrything else, to be judged on its merits; that is, by the effects which it produces in the lives of those who receive it. We are its witnesses; its character, in the general mind, is as good as our character; it is as lovely as we are lovely, as strong as we are strong, as glorious as we are glorious, and no more. Let us seek to bear it a truer and worthier witness than we have yet done. To adorn it is a calling far higher than most of us have aimed at; but if it comes into our prayers, if its swift diffusion and powerful operation are near our hearts in the sight of God, grace will be given us to do this also.

The next request of the Apostle has more of a personal aspect, yet it also has his work in view. He asks prayer that he and his friends may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men, he says, have not faith. The unreasonable and wicked men were no doubt the Jews in Corinth, from which place he wrote. Their malignant opposition was the great obstacle to the spread of the gospel; they were the representatives and instruments of the Satan who perpetually hindered him. The word here rendered unreasonable is a rare one in the New Testament. It occurs four times in all, and in each case is differently translated: once it is "amiss," once "harm," once "wickedness," and here "unreasonable." The margin in this place renders it "absurd." What it literally means is, "out of place"; and the Apostle signifies by it, that in the opposition of these men to the gospel there was something preposterous, something that baffled explanation; there was no reason in it, and therefore it was hopeless to reason with it. That is a disposition largely represented both in the Old Testament and the New, and familiar to every one who in preaching the gospel has come into close contact with men. It was one of the great trials of Jesus that He had to endure the contradiction of those who were sinners against themselves; who rejected the counsel of God in their own despite; in other words, were unreasonable men. The gospel, we must remember, is good news; it is good news to all men. It tells of God's love to the sinful; it brings pardon, holiness, immortal hope, to every one. Why, then, should anybody have a quarrel with it? Is it not enough to drive reason to despair, that men should wantonly, stubbornly, malignantly, hate and resist such a message? Is there anything in the world more provoking than to offer a real and indispensable service, out of a true and disinterested love, and to have it contemptuously rejected? That is the fate of the gospel in many quarters; that was the constant experience of our Lord and of St. Paul. No wonder, in the interests of his mission, the Apostle prays to be delivered from unreasonable

men. Are there any of us who come under this condemnation? who are senselessly opposed to the gospel, enemies in intention of God, but in reality hurting no one so much as ourselves? The Apostle does not indicate in his prayer any mode of deliverance. He may have hoped that in God's providence his persecutors would have their attention distracted somehow; he may have hoped that by greater wisdom, greater love, greater power of adaptation, of becoming all things to all men, he might vanquish their unreason, and gain access to their souls for the truth. In any case, his request shows us that the gospel has a battle to fight that we should hardly have anticipated—a battle with sheer perversity, with blind, wilful absurdity—and that this is one of its most dangerous foes. "Oh, that they were wise," God cries of His ancient people, "Oh, that they understood." He has the same lament to utter still.

We ought to notice the reason appended to this description of Paul's enemies: absurd and evil men, he says; for all men have not faith. Faith, of course, means the Christian faith: all men are not believers in Christ and disciples of Christ; and therefore the moral unreason and perversity of which I have spoken actually exist. He who has the faith is morally sane; he has that in him which is inconsistent with such wickedness and irrationality. We can hardly suppose, however, that the Apostle meant to state such a superfluous truism as that all men were not Christians. What he does mean is apparently that not all men have affinity for the faith, have aptitude or liking for it; as Christ said when He stood before Pilate, the voice of truth is only heard by those who are of the truth. So it was when the apostles preached. Among their hearers there were those who were of the truth, in whom there was, as it were, the instinct for the faith; they welcomed the message. Others, again, discovered no such natural relation to the truth; in spite of the adaptation of the message to human needs, they had no sympathy with it; there was no reaction in their hearts in its favour; it was unreasonable to them; and to God they were unreasonable. The Apostle does not explain this; he simply remarks it. It is one of the ultimate and inexplicable facts of human experience; one of the meeting-points of nature and freedom which defy our philosophies. Some are of kin to the gospel when they hear it; they have faith, and justify the counsel of God, and are saved: others are of no kin to the gospel; its wisdom and love wake no response in them; they have not faith; they reject the counsel of God to their own ruin; they are preposterous and evil men. It is from such, as hinderers of the gospel, that Paul prays to be delivered.

In the two verses which follow, he plays, as is were, with this word "faith." All men have not faith, he writes; but the Lord is faithful, and we have faith in the Lord touching you. Often the Apostle goes off thus at a word. Often, especially, he contrasts the trustworthiness of God with the faithlessness of men. Men may not take the gospel seriously; but the Lord does. He is in indubitable earnest with it; He may be depended upon to do His part in carrying it into effect. See how unselfishly, at this point, the Apostle turns from his own situation to that of his readers. The Lord is faithful who will stablish you, and keep you from the Evil One. Paul had left the Thessalonians exposed to very much the same trouble as beset himself wherever he went; but he had left them to One who, he well knew, was able to keep them from falling, and to preserve them against all that the devil and his agents could do.

And side by side with this confidence in God stood his confidence touching the Thessalonians themselves. He was sure in the Lord that they were doing, and would continue to do, the things which he commanded them; in other words, that they would lead a worthy and becoming Christian life. The point of this sentence lies in the words "in the Lord." Apart from the Lord, Paul could have had no such confidence as he here expresses. The standard of the Christian life is lofty and severe; its purity, its unworldliness, its brotherly love, its burning hope, were new things then in the world. What assurance could there be that this standard would be maintained, when the small congregation of working people in Thessalonica was cast upon its own resources in the midst of a pagan community? None at all, apart from Christ. If He had left them along with the Apostle, no one could have risked much upon their fidelity to the Christian calling. It marks the beginning of a new era when the Apostle writes, "We have confidence in the Lord touching you." Life has a new element now, a new atmosphere, new resources; and therefore we may cherish new hopes of it. When we think of them, the words include a gentle admonition to the Thessalonians, to beware of forgetting the Lord, and trusting to themselves; that is a disappointing path, which will put the Apostle's confidence toward them to shame. But it is an admonition as hopeful as it is gentle; reminding them that, though the path of Christian obedience cannot be trodden without constant effort, it is a path on which the Lord accompanies and upholds all who trust in Him. Here there is a lesson for us all to learn. Even those who are engaged in work for Christ are too apt to forget that the only hope of such work is the Lord. "Trust no man," says the wisest of commentators, "left to himself." Or to put the same thing more in accordance with the spirit of the text, there always is room for hope and confidence when the Lord is not forgotten. In the Lord, you may depend upon those who in themselves are weak, unstable, wilful, foolish. In the Lord, you may depend on them to stand fast, to fight their temptations, to overcome the world and the Wicked One. This kind of assurance, and the actual presence and help of Christ which justified it, are very characteristic of the New Testament. They explain the joyous, open, hopeful spirit of the early Church; they are the cause, as well as the effect, of that vigorous moral health which, in the decay of ancient civilisation, gave the Church the inheritance of the future. And still we may have confidence in the Lord that all whom He has called by His gospel will be able by His spiritual presence with them to walk worthy of that calling, and to confute alike the fears of the good and the contempt of the wicked. For the Lord is faithful, who will stablish them, and preserve them from the Evil One.

Once more the Apostle bursts into prayer, as he remembers the situation of these few sheep in the wilderness: "The Lord direct your hearts

into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." Nothing could be a better commentary than one of Paul's own affectionate Epistles on that much-discussed text. "Pray without ceasing." Look, for instance, through this one with which we are engaged. It begins with a prayer for grace and peace. This is followed by a thanksgiving in which God is acknowledged as the Author of all their graces. The first chapter ends with a prayer—an unceasing prayer—that God would count them worthy of His calling. In the second chapter Paul renews his thanksgiving on behalf of his converts, and prays again that God may comfort their hearts and stablish them in every good work and word. And here, the moment he has touched upon a new topic, he returns, as it were by instinct, to prayer. "The Lord direct your hearts." Prayer is his very element; he lives, and moves, and has his being, in God. He can do nothing, he cannot conceive of anything being done, in which God is not as directly participant as himself, or those whom he wishes to bless. Such an intense appreciation of God's nearness and interest in life goes far beyond the attainments of most Christians; yet here, no doubt, lies a great part of the Apostle's power.

The prayer has two parts: he asks that the Lord may direct their hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ. The love of God here means love to God; this is the sum of all Christian virtue, or at least the source of it. The gospel proclaims that God is love; it tells us that God has proved His love by sending His Son to die for our sins; it shows us Christ on the cross, in the passion of that love with which He loved us when He gave Himself for us; and it waits for the answer of love. It comprehended the whole effect of the gospel, the whole mystery of its saving and re-creating power, when the Apostle exclaimed, "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is this experience which in the passage before us he desires for the Thessalonians. There is no one without love, or at least without the power of loving, in his heart. But what is the object of it? On what is it actually directed? The very words of the prayer imply that it is easily misdirected. But surely if love itself best merits and may best claim love, none should be the object of it before Him who is its source. God has earned our love; He desires our love; let us look to the Cross where He has given us the great pledge of His own, and yield to its sweet constraint. The old law is not abolished, but to be fulfilled: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." If the Lord fix our souls to Himself by this irresistible attraction, nothing will be able to carry us away.

Love to God is naturally joyous; but life has other experiences than those which give free scope for its joyous exercise; and so the Apostle adds, "into the patience of Jesus Christ." The Authorised Version renders, "the patient waiting for Christ," as if what the Apostle prayed for were that they might continue steadfastly to hope for the Last Advent; but although that idea is characteristic of these Epistles, it is hardly to be found in the words. Rather does he remind his readers that in the difficulties and sufferings of the path which lies before them, no strange thing is happening to them, nothing that has not already been borne by Christ in the spirit in which it ought to be borne by us. Our Saviour Himself had need of patience. He was made flesh, and all that the children of God have to suffer in this world has already been suffered by Him. This prayer is at once warning and consoling. It assures us that those who will live godly will have trials to bear: there will be untoward circumstances; feeble health; uncongenial relations; misunderstanding and malice; unreasonable and evil men; abundant calls for patience. But there will be no sense of having missed the way, or of being forgotten by God; on the contrary, there will be in Jesus Christ, ever present, a type and a fountain of patience, which will enable them to overcome all that is against them. The love of God and the patience of Christ may be called the active and the passive sides of Christian goodness,—its free, steady outgoing to Him who is the source of all blessing; and its deliberate, steady, hopeful endurance, in the spirit of Him who was made perfect through suffering. The Lord direct our hearts into both, that we may be perfect men in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN WORTH OF LABOUR.

2 Thessalonians iii. 6-15 (R. V.).

This passage is very similar in contents to one in the fourth chapter of the First Epistle. The difference between the two is in tone; the Apostle writes with much greater severity on this than on the earlier occasion. Entreaty is displaced by command; considerations of propriety, the appeal to the good name of the church, by the appeal to the authority of Christ; and good counsel by express directions for Christian discipline. Plainly the moral situation, which had caused him anxiety some months before, had become worse rather than better. What, then, was the situation to which he here addresses himself so seriously? It was marked by two bad qualities—a disorderly walk, and idleness.

"We hear," he writes, "of some that walk among you disorderly." The metaphor in the word is a military one; the underlying idea is that every man has a post in life or in the Church, and that he ought to be found, not away from his post, but at it. A man without a post is a moral anomaly. Every one of us is part of a whole, a member of an organic body, with functions to discharge which can be discharged by no other, and must therefore be steadily discharged by himself. To walk disorderly means to forget this, and to act as if we were independent; now at this, now at that, according to our discretion or our whim; not rendering the community a constant service, in a place of our own—a service which is valuable, largely because it can be counted on. Every one knows the extreme unsatisfactoriness of those men who never can keep a place when they get it. Their friends plague themselves to find new openings for them; but without any gross offence, such as drunkenness or dishonesty, they persistently fall out of them; there is something about them which seems to render them incapable of sticking to their post. It is an un-

fortunate constitution, perhaps; but it is a grave moral fault as well. Such men settle to nothing, and therefore they render no permanent service to others; whatever they might be worth otherwise, they are worth nothing in any general estimate, simply because they cannot be depended upon. What is more, they are worth nothing to themselves; they never accumulate moral, any more than material, capital; they have no reserve in them of fidelity, sobriety, discipline. They are to be pitied, indeed, as all sinners are to be pitied; but they are also to be commanded, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to lay their minds to their work, and to remember that steadfastness in duty is an elementary requirement of the gospel. Among the Thessalonians it was religious excitement that unsettled men, and made them abandon the routine of duty; but whatever be the cause, the evil results are the same. And, on the other hand, when we are loyal, constant, regularly at our post, however humble it be, we render a real service to others, and grow in strength of character ourselves. It is the beginning of all discipline and of all goodness to have fixed relations and fixed duties, and a fixed determination to be faithful to them.

Besides this disorderly walk, with its moral instability, Paul heard of some who worked not at all. In other words, idleness was spreading in the church. It went to a great and shameless length. Christian men apparently thought nothing of sacrificing their independence, and eating bread for which they had not wrought. Such a state of affairs was peculiarly offensive at Thessalonica, where the Apostle had been careful to set so different an example. If any one could have been excused for declining to labour, on the ground that he was preoccupied with religious hopes and interests, it was he. His apostolic ministry was a charge which made great demands upon his strength; it used up the time and energy which he might otherwise have given to his trade: he might well have urged that other work was a physical impossibility. More than this, the Lord had ordained that they who preached the gospel should live by the gospel; and on that ground alone he was entitled to claim maintenance from those to whom he preached. But though he was always careful to safeguard this right of the Christian ministry, he was as careful, as a rule, to refrain from exercising it; and in Thessalonica, rather than prove a burden to the church, he had wrought and toiled, night and day, with his own hands. All this was an example for the Thessalonians to imitate; and we can understand the severity with which the Apostle treats that idleness which alleges in its defence the strength of its interest in religion. It was a personal insult.

Over against this shallow pretence Paul sets the Christian virtue of industry, with its stern law, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." If he claims to lead a superhuman angelic life, let him subsist on angels' food. What we find in this passage is not the exaggeration which is sometimes called the gospel of work; but the soberer and truer thought that work is essential, in general, to the Christian character. The Apostle plays with the words when he writes, "That work not at all, but are busybodies"; or, as it has been reproduced in English, who are busy only with what is not their business. This is, in point of fact, the moral danger of idleness, in those who are not otherwise vicious.* Where men are naturally bad, it multiplies temptations and opportunities for sin; Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do. But even where it is the good who are concerned, as in the passage before us, idleness has its perils. The busybody is a real character—a man or a woman who, having no steady work to do, which must be done whether it is liked or disliked, and which is therefore wholesome, is too apt to meddle in other people's affairs, religious or worldly; and to meddle, too, without thinking that it is meddling; an impertinence; perhaps a piece of downright, stone-blind Pharisaism. A person who is not disciplined and made wise by regular work has no idea of its moral worth and opportunities; nor has he, as a rule, any idea of the moral worthlessness and vanity of such an existence as his own.

There seem to have been a good many fussy people in Thessalonica, anxious about their industrious neighbours, concerned for their lack of interest in the Lord's coming, perpetually meddling with them—and living upon them. It is no wonder that the Apostle expresses himself with some peremptoriness: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." The difficulty about the application of this rule is that it has no application except to the poor. In a society like our own, the busybody may be found among those for whom this law has no terror; they are idle, simply because they have an income which is independent of labour. Yet what the Apostle says has a lesson for such people also. One of the dangers of their situation is that they should underestimate the moral and spiritual worth of industry. A retired merchant, a military or naval officer on half-pay, a lady with money in the funds and no responsibilities but her own—all these have a deal of time on their hands; and if they are good people, it is one of the temptations incident to their situation, that they should have what the Apostle calls a busybody's interest in others. It need not be a spurious or an affected interest; but it misjudges the moral condition of others, and especially of the labouring classes, because it does not appreciate the moral content of a day full of work. If the work is done honestly at all, it is a thing of great price; there are virtues embedded in it, patience, courage, endurance, fidelity, which contribute as much to the true good of the world and the true enrichment of personal character as the pious solicitude of those who have nothing to do but be pious. Perhaps these are things that do not require to be said. It may rather be the case in our own time that mere industry is overvalued; and certainly a natural care for the spiritual interests of our brethren, not Pharisaic, but Christian, not meddlesome, but most earnest, can never be in excess. It is the busybody whose interference is resented; the brother, once he is recognised as a brother, is made welcome.

Convinced as he is that for mankind in general "no work" means "no character," Paul commands and exhorts in the Lord Jesus all such as he has been speaking of to work with quietness, and to eat their own bread. Their excite-

* *Cf.* 1 Tim. v. 13: "And withal they learn also to be idle, going about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."

ment was both unnatural and unspiritual. It was necessary for their moral health that they should escape from it, and learn how to walk orderly, and to live at their post. The quietness of which he speaks is both inward and outward. Let them compose their minds, and cease from their fussiness; the agitation within, and the distraction without, are equally fruitless. Far more beautiful, far more Christlike, than any busybody, however zealous, is he who works with quietness and eats his own bread. Probably the bulk of the Thessalonian Church was quite sound in this matter; and it is to encourage them that the Apostle writes, "But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing." The bad behaviour of the busybodies may have been provoking to some, infectious in the case of others; but they are to persevere, in spite of it, in the path of quiet industry and good conduct. This has not the pretentiousness of an absorbed waiting for the Lord, and a vaunted renunciation of the world; but it has the character of moral loveliness; it exercises the new man in the powers of the new life.

Along with his judgment on this moral disorder, the Apostle gives the Church directions for its treatment. It is to be met with reserve, protest, and love.

First, with reserve: "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us; . . . note that man, that ye have no company with him." The Christian community has a character to keep, and that character is compromised by the misconduct of any of its members. To such misconduct, therefore, it cannot be, and should not be, indifferent: indifference would be suicidal. The Church exists to maintain a moral testimony, to keep up a certain standard of conduct among men; and when that standard is visibly and defiantly departed from, there will be a reaction of the common conscience in the Church, vigorous in proportion to her vitality. A bad man may be quite at home in the world; he may find or make a circle of associates like himself; but there is something amiss, if he does not find himself alone in the Church. Every strong life closes itself against the intrusion of what is alien to it—a strong moral life most emphatically of all. A wicked person of any description ought to feel that the public sentiment of the Church is against him, and that as long as he persists in his wickedness he is virtually, if not formally, excommunicated. The element of communion in the Church is spiritual soundness; "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." But if anyone begins to walk in darkness, he is out of the fellowship. The only hope for him is that he may recognise the justice of his exclusion, and, as the Apostle says, be ashamed. He is shut out from the society of others that he may be driven in upon himself, and compelled, in spite of wilfulness, to judge himself by the Christian standard.

But reserve, impressive as it may be, is not enough. The erring brother is to be admonished; that is, he is to be gravely spoken to about his error. Admonition is a difficult duty. Not every one feels at liberty, or is at liberty, to undertake it. Our own faults sometimes shut our mouths; the retort courteous, or uncourteous, to any admonition from us, is too obvious. But though such considerations should make us humble and diffident, they ought not to lead to neglect of plain duty. To think too much of one's faults is in some circumstances a kind of perverted vanity; it is to think too much of oneself. We have all our faults, of one kind or another; but that does not prohibit us from aiding each other to overcome faults. If we avoid anger and censoriousness; if we shun, as well as disclaim, the spirit of the Pharisee, then with all our imperfections God will justify us in speaking seriously to others about their sins. We do not pretend to judge them; we only appeal to themselves to say whether they are really at ease when they stand on one side, and the word of God and the conscience of the Church on the other. In a sense, this is specially the duty of the elders of the Church. It is they who are pastors of the flock of God, and who are expressly responsible for this moral guardianship; but there is no officialism in the Christian community which limits the interest of any member in all the rest, or exempts him from the responsibility of pleading the cause of God with the erring. How many Christian duties there are which seem never to have come in the way of some Christians.

Finally, in the discipline of the erring, an essential element is love. Withdraw from him, and let him feel he is alone; admonish him, and let him be convinced he is gravely wrong; but in your admonition remember that he is not an enemy, but a brother. Judgment is a function which the natural man is prone to assume, and which he exercises without misgiving. He is so sure of himself, that instead of admonishing, he denounces; what he is bent upon is not the reclamation, but the annihilation, of the guilty. Such a spirit is totally out of place in the Church; it is a direct defiance of the spirit which created the Christian community, and which that community is designed to foster. Let the sin be never so flagrant, the sinner is a brother; he is one for whom Christ died. To the Lord who brought him he is inexpressibly valuable; and woe to the reprover of sin who forgets this. The whole power of discipline which is committed to the Church is for edification, not for destruction; for the building up of Christian character, not for pulling it down. The case of the offender is the case of a brother; if we are true Christians, it is our own. We must act toward him and his offence as Christ acted toward the world and its sin: no judgment without mercy, no mercy without judgment. Christ took the sin of the world on Himself, but He made no compromise with it; He never extenuated it; He never spoke of it or treated it but with inexorable severity. Yet though the sinful felt to the depth of their hearts His awful condemnation of their sins, they felt that in assenting to that condemnation there was hope. To them, as opposed to their sins, He was winning, condescending, loving. He received sinners, and in His company they sinned no more.

Thus it is that in the Christian religion everything comes back to Christ and to the imitation of Christ. He is the pattern of those simple and hardy virtues, industry and steadfastness. He wrought at His trade in Nazareth till the hour came for Him to enter on His supreme vocation; who can undervalue the possibilities of goodness in the lives of men who work with quietness and eat their own bread, that remembers it was over a village carpenter the heavenly

voice sounded, "This is My beloved Son"? Christ is the pattern also for Christian discipline in its treatment of the erring. No sinner could feel himself, in his sin, in communion with Christ: the Holy One instinctively withdrew from him, and he felt he was alone. No offender had his offence simply condoned by Jesus: the forgiveness of sins which He bestows includes condemnation as well as remission; it is wrought in one piece out of His mercy and His judgment. But neither, again, did any offender, who bowed to Christ's judgment, and suffered it to condemn him, find himself excluded from His mercy. The Holy One was the sinner's friend. Those whom He at first repelled were irresistibly drawn to Him. They begun, like Peter, with "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; they ended, like him, with "Lord, to whom shall we go?" This, I say, is the pattern which is set before us, for the discipline of the erring. This includes reserve, admonition, love, and much more. If there be any other commandment, it is summarily comprehended in this word, "Follow Me."

CHAPTER VIII.

FAREWELL.

2 THESSALONIANS iii. 16-18 (R. V.).

THE first verse of this short passage is taken by some as in close connection with what goes before. In the exercise of Christian discipline, such as it has been described by the Apostle, there may be occasions of friction or even of conflict in the Church; it is this which he would obviate by the prayer, "The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always." The contrast is somewhat forced and disproportioned; and it is certainly better to take this prayer, standing as it does at the close of the letter, in the very widest sense. Not merely freedom from strife, but peace in its largest Christian meaning, is the burden of his petition.

The Lord of peace Himself is Christ. He is the Author and Originator of all that goes by that name in the Christian communion. The word "peace" was not, indeed, a new one; but it had been baptised into Christ, like many another and become a new creation. Newman said that when he passed out of the Church of England into the Church of Rome, all the Christian ideas were, so to speak, magnified; everything appeared on a vaster scale. This is a very good description, at all events, of what one sees on passing from natural morality to the New Testament, from writers so great even as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius to the Apostles. All the moral and spiritual ideas are magnified—sin, holiness, peace, repentance, love, hope, God, man, attain to new dimensions. Peace, in particular, was freighted to a Christian with a weight of meaning which no pagan could conceive. It brought to mind what Christ had done for man, He who had made peace by the blood of His Cross; it gave that assurance of God's love, that consciousness of reconciliation, which alone goes to the bottom of the soul's unrest. It brought to mind also what Christ had been. It recalled that life which had faced all man's experience, and had borne through all a heart untroubled by doubts of God's goodness. It recalled that solemn bequest: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." In every sense and in every way it was connected with Christ; it could neither be conceived nor possessed apart from Him; He was Himself the Lord of the Christian peace.

The Apostle shows his sense of the comprehensiveness of this blessing by the adjuncts of his prayer. He asks the Lord to give it to the Thessalonians uninterruptedly, and in all the modes of its manifestation. Peace may be lost. There may be times at which the consciousness of reconciliation passes away, and the heart cannot assure itself before God; these are the times in which we have somehow lost Christ, and only through Him can we have our peace with God restored. "Uninterruptedly" we must count upon Him for this first and fundamental blessing; He is the Lord of Reconciling Love, whose blood cleanses from all sin, and makes peace between earth and Heaven for ever. Or there may be times at which the troubles and vexations of life become too trying for us; and instead of peace within, we are full of care and fear. What resource have we then but in Christ, and in the love of God revealed to us in Him? His life is at once a pattern and an inspiration; His great sacrifice is the assurance that the love of God to man is immeasurable, and that all things work together for good to them that love Him. When the Apostle prayed this prayer, he no doubt thought of the life which lay before the Thessalonians. He remembered the persecutions they had already undergone at the hands of the Jews; the similar troubles that awaited them; the grief of those who were mourning for their dead; the deeper pain of those on whose hearts rushed suddenly, from time to time, the memory of days and years wasted in sin; the moral perplexities that were already rising among them,—he remembered all these things, and because of them he prayed, "The Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times in every way." For there are many ways in which peace may be possessed; as many ways as there are disquieting situations in man's life. It may come as penitent trust in God's mercy; it may come as composure in times of excitement and danger; as meekness and patience under suffering; as hope when the world would despair; it may come as unselfishness, and the power to think of others, because we know God is taking thought for us,—as "a heart at leisure from itself, to soothe and sympathise." All these are peace. Such peace as this—so deep and so comprehensive, so reassuring and so emancipating—is the gift of Christ alone. He can give it without interruption; He can give it with virtues as manifold as the trials of the life without or the life within.

Here, properly speaking, the letter ends. The Apostle has communicated his mind to the Thessalonians as fully as their situation required; and might end, as he did in the First Epistle, with his benediction. But he remembers the unpleasant incident, mentioned in the beginning of chap. ii., of a letter purporting to be from him, though not really his; and he takes care to prevent such a mistake for the future. This Epistle, like almost all the rest, had been written by some one to the Apostle's dictation; but as a guarantee of genuineness, he closes it with a line or two in his own hand. "The salutation of me Paul with mine own

hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." What does "so I write" mean? Apparently, "You see the character of my writing; it is a hand quite recognisable as mine; a few lines in this hand will authenticate every letter that comes from me."

Perhaps "every letter" only means every one which he would afterwards write to Thessalonica; certainly attention is not called in all the Epistles to this autographic close. It is found in only two others—1st Corinthians (xvi. 21) and Colossians (iv. 18)—exactly as it stands here, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand"; in others it may have been thought unnecessary, either because, like Galatians, they were written throughout in his own hand; or, like 2d Corinthians and Philemon, were conveyed by persons equally known and trusted by the Apostle and the recipients. The great Epistle to the Romans, to judge from its various conclusions, seems to have been from the very beginning a sort of circular letter; and the personal character, made prominent by the autograph signature, was less in place then. The same remark applies to the Epistle to the Ephesians. As for the pastoral Epistles, to Timothy and Titus, they may have been autographic throughout; in any case, neither Timothy nor Titus was likely to be imposed upon by a letter falsely claiming to be Paul's. They knew their master too well.

If it was possible to make a mistake in the Apostle's lifetime, and to take as his an Epistle which he never wrote, is it impossible to be similarly imposed upon now? Have we reasonable grounds for believing that the thirteen Epistles in the New Testament, which bear his name upon their front, really came from his hand? That is a question which in the last hundred years, and especially in the last fifty, has been examined with the amplest learning and the most minute and searching care. Nothing that could possibly be alleged against the authenticity of any of these Epistles, however destitute of plausibility, has been kept back. The references to them in early Christian writers, their reception in the early Church, the character of their contents, their style, their vocabulary, their temper, their mutual relations, have been the subject of the most thorough investigation. Nothing has ever been more carefully tested than the historical judgment of the Church in receiving them; and though it would be far from true to say that there were no difficulties, or no divergence of opinion, it is the simple truth that the consent of historical critics in the great ecclesiastical tradition becomes more simple and decided. The Church did not act at random in forming the apostolic canon. It exercised a sound mind in embodying in the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour the books which it did embody, and no other. Speaking of Paul in particular, one ought to say that the only writings ascribed to him, in regard to which there is any body of doubtful opinion, are the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Many seem to feel, in regard to these, that they are on a lower key than the undoubtedly Pauline letters; there is less spirit in them, less of the native originality of the gospel, a nearer approach to moral commonplace; they are not unlike a half-way house between the apostolic and the post-apostolic age. These are very dubious grounds to go upon; they will impress different minds very differently; and when we come to look at the outward evidence for these letters, they are almost better attested, in early Christian writers, than anything else in the New Testament. Their semi-legal character, and the positive rules with which they abound, inferior as they make them in intellectual and spiritual interest to high works of inspiration like Romans and Colossians, seem to have enabled simple Christian people to get hold of them, and to work them out in their congregations and their homes. All that Paul wrote need not have been on one level; and it is almost impossible to understand the authority which these Epistles immediately and universally obtained, if they were not what they claimed to be. Only a very accomplished scholar could appreciate the historical arguments for and against them; yet I do not think it is unfair to say that even here the traditional opinion is in the way, not of being reversed, but of being confirmed.

The very existence of such questions, however, warns us against mistaken estimates of Scripture. People sometimes say, if there be one point uncertain, our Bible is gone. Well, there are points uncertain; there are points, too, in regard to which an ordinary Christian can only have a kind of second-hand assurance; and this of the genuineness of the pastoral Epistles is one. There is no doubt a very good case to be made out for them by a scholar; but not a case which makes doubt impossible. Yet our Bible is not taken away. The uncertainty touches, at most, the merest fringe of apostolic teaching; nothing that Paul thought of any consequence, or that is of any consequence to us, but is abundantly unfolded in documents which are beyond the reach of doubt. It is not the letter, even of the New Testament, which quickens, but the Spirit; and the Spirit exerts its power through these Christian documents as a whole, as it does through no other documents in the world. When we are perplexed as to whether an apostle wrote this or that, let us consider that the most important books in the Bible—the Gospels and the Psalms—do not name their authors at all. What in the Old Testament can compare with the Psalter? Yet these sweet songs are practically anonymous. What can be more certain than that the Gospels bring us into contact with a real character —the Son of Man, the Saviour of sinners? Yet we know their authors only through a tradition, a tradition indeed of weight and unanimity that can hardly be over-estimated; but simply a tradition, and not an inward mark such as Paul here sets on his letter for the Thessalonians. "The Church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;" as long as we are actually brought into connection with Him through Scripture, we must be content to put up with the minor uncertainties which are inseparable from a religion which has had a birth and a history.

But to return to the text. The Epistle closes, as the Apostle's custom is, with a benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Grace is pre-eminently a Pauline word; it is found alike in the salutations with which Paul addresses his churches, and in the benedictions with which he bids them farewell; it is the beginning and the end of his gospel; the element in which Christians live, and move, and have their being. He excludes no one from his blessing; not even those who had been walk-

ing disorderly, and setting at naught the tradition they had received from him; their need is the greatest of all. If we had imagination enough to bring vividly before us the condition of one of these early churches, we would see how much is involved in a blessing like this, and what sublime confidence it displays in the goodness and faithfulness of our Lord. The Thessalonians, a few months ago, had been heathens; they had known nothing of God and His Son; they were living still in the midst of a heathen population, under the pressure of heathen influences both on thought and conduct, beset by numberless temptations; and if they were mindful of the country from which they had come forth, not without opportunity to return. Paul would willingly have stayed with them to be their pastor and teacher, their guide and their defender, but his missionary calling made this impossible. After the merest introduction to the gospel, and to the new life to which it calls those who receive it, they had to be left to themselves. Who should keep them from falling? Who should open their eyes to understand the ideal which the Christian is summoned to work out in his life? Amid their many enemies, where could they look for a sufficient and ever-present ally? The Apostle answers these questions when he writes, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Although he has left them, they are not really alone. The free love of God, which visited them at first uncalled, will be with them still, to perfect the work it has begun. It will beset them behind and before; it will be a sun and a shield to them, a light and a defence. In all their temptations, in all their sufferings, in all their moral perplexities, in all their despondencies, it will be sufficient for them. There is not any kind of succour which a Christian needs which is not to be found in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, then, we bring to a close our study of the two earliest Epistles of St. Paul. They have given us a picture of the primitive apostolic preaching, and of the primitive Christian Church. That preaching embodied revelations, and it was the acceptance of these revelations that created the new society. The Apostle and his fellow-evangelists came to Thessalonica telling of Jesus, who had died and risen again, and who was about to return to judge the living and the dead. They told of the impending wrath of God, that wrath which was revealed already against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and was to be revealed in all its terrors when the Lord cam . They preached Jesus as the Deliverer from the coming wrath, and gathered, through faith in Him, a Church living in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. To an uninterested spectator, the work of Paul and his companions would have seemed a very little thing; he would not have discovered its originality and promise; he would hardly have counted upon its permanence. In reality, it was the greatest and most original thing ever seen in the world. That handful of men and women in Thessalonica was a new phenomenon in history; life had attained to new dimensions in them; it had heights and depths in it, a glory and a gloom, of which the world had never dreamed before; all moral ideas were magnified, as it were, a thousandfold; an intensity of moral life was called into being, an ardent passion for goodness, a spiritual fear and hope, which made them capable of all things. The immediate effects, indeed, were not unmixed; in some minds not only was the centre of gravity shifted, but the balance utterly upset; the future and unseen became so real to them, or were asserted to be so real, that the present and its duties were totally neglected. But with all misapprehensions and moral disorders, there was a new experience; a change so complete and profound that it can only be described as a new creation. Possessed by Christian faith, the soul discovered new powers and capacities; it could combine "much affliction" with "joy of the Holy Ghost"; it could believe in inexorable judgment and in infinite mercy; it could see into the depths of death and life; it could endure suffering for Christ's sake with brave patience; it had been lost, but had found itself again. The life that had once been low, dull, vile, hopeless, uninteresting, became lofty, vast, intense. Old things had passed away; behold, all things had become new.

The Church is much older now than when this Epistle was written; time has taught her many things; Christian men have learned to compose their minds and to curb their imaginations; we do not lose our heads nowadays, and neglect our common duties, in dreaming on the world to come. Let us say that this is gain; and can we say further that we have lost nothing which goes some way to counterbalance it? Are the new things of the gospel as real to us, and as commanding in their originality, as they were at the first? Do the revelations which are the sum and substance of the gospel message, the warp and woof of apostolic preaching, bulk in our minds as they bulk in this letter? Do they enlarge our thoughts, widen our spiritual horizon, lift to their own high level, and expand to their own scale, our ideas about God and man, life and death, sin and holiness, things visible and invisible? Are we deeply impressed by the coming wrath and by the glory of Christ? Have we entered into the liberty of those whom the revelation of the world to come enabled to emancipate themselves from this? These are the questions that rise in our minds as we try to reproduce the experience of an early Christian church. In those days, everything was of inspiration; now, so much is of routine. The words that thrilled the soul then have become trite and inexpressive; the ideas that gave new life to thought appear worn and commonplace. But that is only because we dwell on the surface of them, and keep their real import at a distance from the mind. Let us accept the apostolic message in all its simplicity and compass; let us believe, and not merely say or imagine we believe, that there is a life beyond death, revealed in the Resurrection, a judgment to come, a wrath of God, a heavenly glory; let us believe in the infinite significance, and in the infinite difference, of right and wrong, of holiness and sin; let us realise the love of Christ, who died for our sins, who calls us to fellowship with God, who is our Deliverer from the coming wrath; let these truths fill, inspire, and dominate our minds, and for us, too, faith in Christ will be a passing from death unto life.

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THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

BY THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, M. A., D. D.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHARACTER AND GENUINENESS OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES.

1 Timothy i.; 2 Timothy i. 1; Titus i. 1.

The first question which confronts us on entering upon the study of the Pastoral Epistles is that of their authenticity, which of late has been confidently denied. In reading them are we reading the farewell words of the great Apostle to the ministers of Christ? Or are we reading only the well-meant but far less weighty counsels of one who in a later age assumed the name and imitated the style of St. Paul? It seems necessary to devote the first of these expositions to a discussion of this question.

The title "Pastoral Epistles" could hardly be improved, but it might easily be misunderstood as implying more than is actually the case. It calls attention to what is the most conspicuous, but by no means the only characteristic in these Epistles. Although the words which most directly signify the pastor's office, such as "shepherd," "feed," "tend," and "flock," do not occur in these letters and do occur elsewhere in Scripture, yet in no other books in the Bible do we find so many directions respecting the pastoral care of Churches. The title is much less appropriate to 2 Timothy than to the other two Epistles. All three are both pastoral and personal; but while 1 Timothy and Titus are mainly the former, 2 Timothy is mainly the latter. The three taken together stand between the other Epistles of St. Paul and the one to Philemon. Like the latter, they are personal; like the rest, they treat of large questions of Church doctrine, practice, and government, rather than of private and personal matters. Like that to Philemon, they are addressed, not to Churches, but to individuals; yet they are written to them, not as private friends, but as delegates, though not mere delegates, of the Apostle, and as officers of the Church. Moreover, the important Church matters of which they treat are regarded not as in the other Epistles, from the point of view of the congregation or of the Church at large, but rather from that of the overseer or minister. And, as being official rather than private letters, they are evidently intended to be read by other persons besides Timothy and Titus.

Among the Epistles which bear the name of St. Paul none have excited so much controversy as these, especially as regards their genuineness. But the controversy is entirely a modern one. It is little or no exaggeration to say that from the first century to the nineteenth no one ever denied or doubted that they were written by St. Paul. It is true that certain heretics of the second century rejected some or all of them. Marcion, and perhaps Basilides, rejected all three. Tatian, while maintaining the Apostolicity of the Epistle to Titus, repudiated those to Timothy. And Origen tells us that some people doubted about 2 Timothy because it contained the name of Jannes and Jambres, which do not occur in the Old Testament. But it is well known that Marcion, in framing his mutilated and meagre canon of the Scriptures, did not profess to do so on critical grounds. He rejected everything except an expurgated edition of St. Luke and certain Epistles of St. Paul,—not because he doubted their authenticity, but because he disliked their contents. They did not fit into his system. And the few others who rejected one or more of these Epistles did so in a similar spirit. They did not profess to find that these documents were not properly authenticated, but they were displeased with passages in them. The evidence, therefore, justifies us in asserting that, with some very slight exception in the second century, these three Epistles were, until quite recent times, universally accepted as written by St. Paul.

This large fact is greatly emphasised by two considerations. (1) The repudiation of them by Marcion and others directed attention to them. They were evidently not accepted by an oversight, because no one thought anything about them. (2) The evidence respecting the general acceptance of them as St. Paul's is full and positive, and reaches back to the earliest times. It does not consist merely or mainly in the absence of evidence to the contrary. Tertullian wonders what can have induced Marcion, while accepting the Epistle to Philemon, to reject those to Timothy and Titus: and of course those who repudiated them would have pointed out weak places in their claim to be canonical if such had existed. And even if we do not insist upon the passages in which these Epistles are almost certainly quoted by Clement of Rome (*cir.* A. D. 95), Ignatius of Antioch (*cir.* A. D. 112), Polycarp of Smyrna (*cir.* A. D. 112), and Theophilus of Antioch (*cir.* A. D. 180), we have direct evidence of a very convincing kind. They are found in the Peshitto, or early Syriac Version, which was made in the second century. They are contained in the Muratorian canon, the date of which may still be placed as not later than A. D. 170. Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, states that "Paul mentions Linus in the Epistle to Timothy," and he quotes Titus iii. 10 with the introduction "as Paul also says." Eusebius renders it probable that both Justin Martyr and Hegesippus quoted from 1 Timothy; and he himself places all three Epistles among the universally accepted books, and not among the disputable writings: *i. e.*, he places them with the Gospels, Acts, 1 Peter, 1 John, and the other Epistles of St. Paul, and not with James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. In this arrangement he is preceded by Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, both of whom quote frequently from all three Epistles, sometimes as the words of Scripture, sometimes as of "the Apostle," sometimes as of Paul, sometimes as of the Spirit. Occasionally it is expressly stated that the words quoted are addressed to Timothy or to Titus.

It would take us too far afield to examine in detail the various considerations which have induced some eminent critics to set aside this strong array of external evidence and reject one or more of these Epistles. They fall in the main under four heads. (1) The difficulty of finding a place for these letters in the life of St. Paul as given us in the Acts and in his own writings. (2) The large amount of peculiar phraseology not found in any other Pauline Epistles. (3) The Church organisation indicated in these letters, which is alleged to be of a later date than St. Paul's time. (4) The erroneous doctrines and practices attacked, which are also said to be those of a later age. To most of these points we shall have to return on some future occasion: but for the present this much may be asserted with confidence. (1) In the Acts and in the other Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle's life is left incomplete. There is nothing to forbid us from supposing that the remaining portion amounted to several years, during which these three letters were written. The second Epistle to Timothy in any case has the unique interest of being the last extant utterance of the Apostle St. Paul. (2) The phraseology which is peculiar to each of these Epistles is not greater in amount than the phraseology which is peculiar to the Epistle to the Galatians, which even Baur admits to be of unquestionable genuineness. The peculiar diction which is common to all three Epistles is well accounted for by the peculiarity of the common subject, and by the fact that these letters are separated by several years from even the latest among the other writings of St. Paul. (3, 4) There is good reason for believing that during the lifetime of St. Paul the organisation of the Church corresponded to that which is sketched in these letters, and that errors were already in existence such as these letters denounce.

Although the controversy is by no means over, two results of it are very generally accepted as practically certain. (1) The three Epistles must stand or fall together. It is impossible to accept two, or one, or any portion of one of them, and reject the rest. They must stand or fall with the hypothesis of St. Paul's second imprisonment. If the Apostle was imprisoned at Rome only once, and was put to death at the end of that imprisonment, then these three letters were not written by him.

(1) The Epistles stand or fall together: they are all three genuine, or all three spurious. We must either with the scholars of the Early Church, of the Middle Ages, and of the Renaissance, whether Roman or Protestant, and with a clear majority of modern critics, accept all three letters; or else with Marcion, Basilides, Eichhorn, Bauer, and their followers, reject all three. As Credner himself had to acknowledge, after having at first advocated the theory, it is impossible to follow Tatian in retaining Titus as apostolic, while repudiating the other two as forgeries. Nor have the two scholars who originated the modern controversy found more than one critic of eminence to accept their conclusion that both Titus and 2 Timothy, are genuine, but 1 Timothy not. Yet another suggestion is made by Reuss, that 2 Timothy is unquestionably genuine, while the other two are doubtful. And lastly we have Pfleiderer admitting that 2 Timothy contains at least two sections which have with good reason been recognised as genuine (i. 15-18 and iv. 9-21), and Renan asking whether the forger of these three Epistles did not possess some authentic letters of St. Paul which he has enshrined in his composition.

It will be seen, therefore, that those who impugn the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles are by no means agreed among themselves. The evidence in some places is so strong, that many of the objectors are compelled to admit that the Epistles are at least in part the work of St. Paul. That is, certain portions, which admit of being severely tested, are found to stand the test, and are passed as genuine, in spite of surrounding difficulties. The rest, which does not admit of such testing, is repudiated on account of the difficulties. No one can reasonably object to the application of whatever tests are available, nor to the demand for explanations of difficulties. But we must not treat what cannot be satisfactorily tested as if it had been tested and found wanting; nor must we refuse to take account of the support which those parts which can be thoroughly sifted lend to those for which no decisive criterion can be found. Still less must we proceed on the assumption that to reject these Epistles or any portion of them is a proceeding which gets rid of difficulties. It is merely an exchange of one set of difficulties for another. To unbiassed minds it will perhaps appear that the difficulties involved in the assumption that the Pastoral Epistles are wholly or partly a forgery, are not less serious than those which have been urged against the well-established tradition of their genuineness. The very strong external evidence in their favour has to be accounted for. It is already full, clear, and decided, as soon as we could at all expect to find it, viz., in Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. And it must be noticed that these witnesses give us the traditional beliefs of several chief centres in Christendom. Irenæus speaks with full knowledge of what was accepted in Asia Minor, Rome, and Gaul; Clement witnesses for Egypt, and Tertullian for North America. And although the absence of such support would not have caused serious perplexity, their direct evidence is very materially supported by passages closely parallel to the words of the Pastoral Epistles found in writers still earlier than Irenæus. Renan admits the relationship between 2 Timothy and the Epistle of Clement of Rome, and suggests that each writer has borrowed from a common source. Pfleiderer admits that the Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp "displays striking points of contact with 2 Timothy." Bauer's theory, that all three letters are as late as A. D. 150, and are an attack on Marcion, finds little support now. But we are still asked to believe that 2 Timothy was forged in the reign of Trajan (98-117) and the other two Epistles in the reign of Hadrian (117-138). Is it credible that a forgery perpetrated A. D. 120-135 would in less than fifty years be accepted in Asia Minor, Rome, Gaul, Egypt, and North Africa, as a genuine letter of the Apostle St. Paul? And yet this is what must have happened in the case of 1 Timothy, if the hypothesis just stated is correct. Nor is this all: Marcion, as we know, rejected all three of the Pastoral Epistles; and Tertullian cannot think why Marcion should do so. But, when Marcion was framing his canon, about the reign of Hadrian, 2 Timothy, according to these dates, would be scarcely twenty years old, and 1 Timothy would be brand-new. If this had been

so, would Marcion, with his intimate knowledge of St. Paul's writings, have been in ignorance of the fact; and if he had known it, would he have failed to denounce the forgery? Or again, if we assume that he merely treated this group of Epistles with silent contempt, would not his rejection of them, which was well known, have directed attention to them, and caused their recent origin to be quickly discovered? From all which it is manifest that the theory of forgery by no means frees us from grave obstacles.

It will be observed that the external evidence is large in amount and overwhelmingly in favour of the Apostolic authorship. The objections are based on internal evidence. But some of the leading opponents admit that even the internal evidence is in favour of certain portions of the Epistles. Let us, then, with Renan, Pfleiderer, and others admit that parts of 2 Timothy were written by St. Paul; then there is strong presumption that the whole letter is by him; for even the suspected portions have the external evidence in their favour, together with the support lent to them by those parts for which the internal evidence is also satisfactory. Add to which the improbability that any one would store up genuine letters of St. Paul for fifty years and then use parts of them to give substance to a fabrication. Or let us with Reuss contend that in 2 Timothy "the whole Epistle is so completely the natural expression of the actual situation of the author, and contains, unsought and for the most part in the form of mere allusions, such a mass of minute and unessential particulars, that, even did the name of the writer not chance to be mentioned at the beginning, it would be easy to discover it." Then there is strong presumption that the other two letters are genuine also; for they have the external evidence on their side, together with the good character reflected upon them by their brother Epistle. This result is of course greatly strengthened, if, quite independently of 2 Timothy, the claims of Titus to be Apostolic are considered to be adequate. With two of the three letters admitted to be genuine, the case for the remaining letter becomes a strong one. It has the powerful external evidence on its side, backed up by the support lent to it by its two more manifestly authentic companions. Thus far, therefore, we may agree with Baur: "The three Epistles are so much alike that none of them can be separated from the others; and from this circumstance the identity of their authorship may be confidently inferred." But when he asserts that whichever of this family of letters be examined will appear as the betrayer of his brethren, he just reverses the truth. Each letter, upon examination, lends support to the other two; "and a threefold cord is not easily broken." The strongest member of the family is 2 Timothy: the external evidence in its favour is ample, and no Epistle in the New Testament is more characteristic of St. Paul. It would be scarcely less reasonable to dispute 2 Corinthians. And if 2 Timothy be admitted, there is no tenable ground for excluding the other two.

II. But not only do the three Epistles stand or fall together, they stand or fall with the hypothesis of the release and second imprisonment of the Apostle. The contention that no place can be found for the Pastoral Epistles in the narrative of the Acts is valid; but it is no objection to the authenticity of the Epistles. The conclusion of the Acts implies that the end of St. Paul's life is not reached in the narrative. "He abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling," implies that after that time a change took place. If that change was his death, how unnatural not to mention it! The conclusion is closely parallel to that of St. Luke's Gospel; and we might almost as reasonably contend that "they were continually in the temple," proves that they were never "clothed with power from on high," because they were told to "tarry in the city" until they were so clothed, as contend that "abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling," proves that at the end of the two years came the end of St. Paul's life. Let us grant that the conclusion of the Acts is unexpectedly abrupt, and that this abruptness constitutes a difficulty. Then we have our choice of two alternatives. Either the two years of imprisonment were followed by a period of renewed labour, or they were cut short by the Apostle's martyrdom. Is it not more easy to believe that the writer did not consider that this new period of work, which would have filled many chapters, fell within the scope of his narrative, than that he omitted so obvious a conclusion as St. Paul's death, for which a single verse would have sufficed? But let us admit that to assert that St. Paul was released at the end of two years is to maintain a mere hypothesis: yet to assert that he was not released is equally to maintain a mere hypothesis. If we exclude the Pastoral Epistles, Scripture gives no means of deciding the question, and whichever alternative we adopt we are making a conjecture. But which hypothesis has most evidence on its side? Certainly the hypothesis of the release. (1) The Pastoral Epistles, even if not by St. Paul, are by some one who believed that the Apostle did a good deal after the close of the Acts. (2) The famous passage in Clement of Rome (Cor. v.) tells that St. Paul "won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world, and having reached the furthest bound of the West (*τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως*)." This probably means Spain; and if St. Paul ever went to Spain as he hoped to do (Rom. xv. 24, 28), it was after the imprisonment narrated in the Acts. Clement gives us the tradition in Rome (*cir.* A. D. 95). (3) The Muratorian fragment (*cir.* A. D. 170) mentions the "departure of Paul from the city to Spain." (4) Eusebius ("H. E.," II. xxii. 2) says that at the end of the two years of imprisonment, according to tradition, the Apostle went forth again upon the ministry of preaching, and on a second visit to the city ended his career by martyrdom under Nero; and that during this imprisonment he composed the Second Epistle to Timothy. All this does not amount to proof; but it raises the hypothesis of the release to a high degree of probability. Nothing of this kind can be urged in favour of the counter-hypothesis. To urge the improbability that the labours of these last few years of St. Paul's life would be left unrecorded is no argument. (1) They are partly recorded in the Pastoral Epistles. (2) The entire labours of most of the Twelve are left unrecorded. Even of St. Paul's life, whole years are left a blank. How fragmentary the narrative in the Acts must be is proved by the autobiography in 2 Corinthians. That we have very scanty notice of St. Paul's doings between the two imprisonments does not

render the existence of such an interval at all doubtful.

The result of this preliminary discussion seems to show that the objections which have been urged against these Epistles are not such as to compel us to doubt that in studying them we are studying the last writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. If any doubts still survive, a closer examination of the details will, it is hoped, tend to remove rather than to strengthen them. When we have completed our survey, we may be able to add our testimony to those who through many centuries have found these writings a source of Divine guidance, warning, and encouragement, especially in ministerial work. The experience of countless numbers of pastors attests the wisdom of the Church, or in other words the good Providence of God, in causing these Epistles to be included among the sacred Scriptures.

"It is an established fact," as Bernhard Weiss rightly points out ("Introduction to the New Testament," vol. i. p. 410), "that the essential, fundamental features of the Pauline doctrine of salvation are even in their specific expression reproduced in our Epistles with a clearness such as we do not find in any Pauline disciple, excepting perhaps Luke or the Roman Clement." Whoever composed them had at his command, not only St. Paul's forms of doctrine and expression, but large funds of Apostolic zeal and discretion, such as have proved capable of warming the hearts and guiding the judgments of a long line of successors. Those who are conscious of these effects upon themselves will probably find it easier to believe that they have derived these benefits from the great Apostle himself, rather than from one who, with however good intentions, assumed his name and disguised himself in his mantle. Henceforward, until we find serious reason for doubt, it will be assumed that in these Epistles we have the farewell counsels of none other than St. Paul.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER II.

TIMOTHY THE BELOVED DISCIPLE OF ST. PAUL—HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

1 Timothy i. 2; 2 Timothy i. 2.

In the relation of St. Paul to Timothy we have one of those beautiful friendships between an older and a younger man which are commonly so helpful to both. It is in such cases, rather than where the friends are equals in age, that each can be the real complement of the other. Each by his abundance can supply the other's wants, whereas men of equal age would have common wants and common supplies. In this respect the friendship between St. Paul and Timothy reminds us of that between St. Peter and St. John. In each case the friend who took the lead was much older than the other; and (what is less in harmony with ordinary experience) in each case it was the older friend who had the impulse and the enthusiasm, the younger who had the reflectiveness and the reserve. These latter qualities are perhaps less marked in St. Timothy than in St. John, but nevertheless they are there, and they are among the leading traits of his character. St. Paul leans on him while he guides him, and relies upon his thoughtfulness and circumspection in cases requiring firmness, delicacy, and tact. Of the affection with which he regarded Timothy we have evidence in the whole tone of the two letters to him. In the sphere of faith Timothy is his "own true child" (not merely adopted, still less suppositious), and his "beloved child." St. Paul tells the Corinthians that as the best means of making them imitators of himself he has sent unto them "Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every Church" (1 Cor. iv. 17). And a few years later he tells the Philippians that he hopes to send Timothy shortly unto them, that he may know how they fare. For he has no one like him, who will have a genuine anxiety about their welfare. The rest care only for their own interests. "But the proof of him ye know, that, as a child a father, so he slaved with me for the Gospel" (ii. 22). Of all whom he ever converted to the faith Timothy seems to have been to St. Paul the disciple who was most beloved and most trusted. Following the example of the fourth Evangelist, Timothy might have called himself "The disciple whom Paul loved." He shared his spiritual father's outward labours and most intimate thoughts. He was with him when the Apostle could not or would not have the companionship of others. He was sent on the most delicate and confidential missions. He had charge of the most important congregations. When the Apostle was in his last and almost lonely imprisonment it was Timothy whom he summoned to console him and receive his last injunctions.

There is another point in which the beloved disciple of the Pastoral Epistles resembles the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel. We are apt to think of both of them as always young. Christian art nearly invariably represents St. John as a man of youthful and almost feminine appearance. And, although in Timothy's case, painters and sculptors have not done much to influence our imagination, yet the picture which we form for ourselves of him is very similar to that which we commonly receive of St. John. With strange logic this has actually been made an argument against the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles. Myth, we are told, has given to this Christian Achilles the attributes of eternal youth. Timothy was a lad of about fifteen when St. Paul converted him at Lystra, in or near A. D. 45; and he was probably not yet thirty-five when St. Paul wrote the first Epistle to him. Even if he had been much older there would be nothing surprising in the tone of St. Paul's letters to him. It is one of the commonest experiences to find elderly parents speaking of their middle-aged children as if they were still boys and girls. This trait, as being so entirely natural, ought to count as a touch beyond the reach of a forger rather than as a circumstance that ought to rouse our suspicions, in the letters of "Paul the aged" to a friend who was thirty years younger than himself.

Once more, the notices of Timothy which

have come down to us, like those which we have respecting the beloved disciple are very fragmentary; but they form a beautiful and consistent sketch of one whose full portrait we long to possess.

Timothy was a native, possibly of Derbe, but more probably of the neighbouring town of Lystra, where he was piously brought up in a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. It was probably during St. Paul's first visit to Lystra, on his first missionary journey, that he became the boy's spiritual father, by converting him to the Christian faith. It was at Lystra that the Apostle was stoned by the mob and dragged outside the city as dead: and there is no improbability in the suggestion that, when he recovered consciousness and re-entered the town, it was in the home of Timothy that he found shelter. In any case Lystra was to the Apostle a place of strangely mixed associations; the brutality of the pagan multitude side by side with the tender friendship of the young Timothy. When St. Paul on his next missionary journey again visited Lystra he found Timothy already enjoying a good report among the Christians of that place and of Iconium for his zeal and devotion during the six or seven years which had elapsed since his first visit. Perhaps he had been engaged in missionary work in both places. The voices of the prophets had singled him out as one worthy of bearing office in the Church; and the Apostle, still grieving over the departure of Barnabas with John Mark, recognised in him one who with Silas could fill the double vacancy. The conduct of the Apostle of the Gentiles on this occasion has sometimes excited surprise. Previously to the ordination, Paul, the great proclaimer of the abrogation of the Law by the Gospel, circumcised the young evangelist. The inconsistency is more apparent than real. It was an instance of his becoming "all things to all men" for the salvation of souls, and of his sacrificing his own convictions in matters that were not essential, rather than cause others to offend. Timothy's father had been a Gentile, and the son, though brought up in his mother's faith, had never been circumcised. To St. Paul circumcision was a worthless rite. The question was, whether it was a harmless one. This depended upon circumstances. If, as among the Galatians, it caused people to rely upon the Law and neglect the Gospel, it was a superstitious obstacle with which no compromise could be made. But if it was a passport whereby preachers, who would otherwise be excluded, might gain access to Jewish congregations, then it was not only a harmless, but a useful ceremony. In the synagogue Timothy as an uncircumcised Jew would have been an intolerable abomination, and would never have obtained a hearing. To free him from this crippling disadvantage, St. Paul subjected him to a rite which he himself knew to be obsolete. Then followed the ordination, performed with great solemnity by the laying on of the hands of all the elders of the congregation: and the newly ordained Evangelist forthwith set out to accompany Paul and Silas in their labours for the Gospel. Wherever they went they distributed copies of the decrees of the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem, which declared circumcision to be unnecessary for Gentiles. Their true position with regard to circumcision was thus made abundantly evident. For the sake of others they had abstained from availing themselves of the very liberty which they proclaimed.

In the Troad they met Luke the beloved physician (as indicated by the sudden use of the first person plural in the Acts), and took him on with them to Philippi. Here probably, as certainly afterwards at Berœa, Timothy was left behind by Paul and Silas to consolidate their work. He rejoined the Apostle at Athens, but was thence sent back on a mission to Thessalonica, and on his return found St. Paul at Corinth. The two Epistles written from Corinth to the Thessalonians are in the joint names of Paul and Timothy. At Corinth, as at Lystra, Iconnium, and Philippi, Timothy became prominent for his zeal as an evangelist; and then for about five years we lose sight of him. We may think of him as generally at the side of St. Paul, and as always working with him; but of the details of the work we are ignorant. About A. D. 57 he was sent by St. Paul on a delicate mission to Corinth. This was before 1 Corinthians was written; for in that letter St. Paul states that he has sent Timothy to Corinth, but writes as if he expected that the letter would reach Corinth before him. He charges the Corinthians not to aggravate the young evangelist's natural timidity, and not to let his youth prejudice them against him. When St. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia later in the year, Timothy was again with him, for his name is coupled with Paul's: and he is still with him when the Apostle wrote to the Romans from Corinth, for he joins in sending salutations to the Roman Christians. We find him still at St. Paul's side on his way back to Jerusalem through Philippi, the Troad, Tyre, and Cæsarea. And here we once more lose trace of him for some years. We do not know what he was doing during St. Paul's two years' imprisonment at Cæsarea; but he joined him during the first imprisonment at Rome, for the Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon are written in the names of Paul and Timothy. From the passage already quoted from Philippians we may conjecture that Timothy went to Philippi and returned again before the Apostle was released. At the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty." It is possible that the imprisonment to which this notice refers was contemporaneous with the first imprisonment of St. Paul, and that it is again referred to in 1 Timothy (vi. 12) as "the good confession" which he "confessed in the sight of many witnesses."

The few additional facts respecting Timothy are given us in the two letters to him. Some time after St. Paul's release the two were together in Ephesus; and when the Apostle went on into Macedonia he left his companion behind him to warn and exhort certain holders of erroneous doctrine to desist from teaching it. There were tears, on the younger friend's side at any rate, to which St. Paul alludes at the opening of the Second Epistle; and they were natural enough. The task imposed upon Timothy was no easy one; and after the dangers and sufferings to which the Apostle had been exposed, and which his increasing infirmities continually augmented, it was only too possible that the friends would never meet again. So far as we know, these gloomy apprehensions may have been realised. In his first letter, written from Macedonia, St. Paul expresses a hope of

returning very soon to Timothy; but, like some other hopes expressed in St. Paul's Epistles, it was perhaps never fulfilled. The second letter, written from Rome, contains no allusion to any intermediate meeting. In this second letter he twice implores Timothy to do all he can to come to him without delay, for he is left almost alone in his imprisonment. But whether Timothy was able to comply with this wish we have no means of knowing. We like to think of the beloved disciple as comforting the last hours of his master; but, although the conjecture may be a right one, we must remember that it is conjecture and no more. With the Second Epistle to him ends all that we really know of Timothy. Tradition and ingenious guesswork add a little more which can be neither proved nor disproved. More than two hundred years after his death, Eusebius tells us that he is related to have held the office of overseer of the diocese of Ephesus; and five centuries later Nicephorus tells us, that he was beaten to death by the Ephesian mob for protesting against the licentiousness of their worship of Artemis. It has been conjectured that Timothy may be the "Angel" of the Church of Ephesus, who is partly praised and partly blamed in the Apocalypse, and parallels have been drawn between the words of blame in Rev. ii. 4, 5, and the uneasiness which seems to underlie one or two passages in the Second Epistle to Timothy. But the resemblances are too slight to be relied upon. All we can say is, that even if the later date be taken for the Apocalypse, Timothy may have been overseer of the Church of Ephesus at the time when the book was written.

But of all the scattered memorials that have come down to us respecting this beautiful friendship between the great Apostle and his chief disciple, the two letters of the older friend to the younger are by far the chief. And there is so much in them that fits with exquisite nicety into the known conditions of the case that it is hard to imagine how any forger of the second century could so have thrown himself into the situation. Where else in that age have we evidence of any such literary and historical skill? The tenderness and affection, the anxiety and sadness, the tact and discretion, the strength and large-mindedness of St. Paul are all there; and his relation to his younger but much-trusted disciple is quite naturally sustained throughout. Against this it is not much to urge that there are some forty words and phrases in these Epistles which do not occur in the other Epistles of St. Paul. The explanation of that fact is easy. Partly they are words which in his other Epistles he had no need to use; partly they are words which the circumstances of these later letters suggested to him, and which those of the earlier letters did not. The vocabulary of every man of active mind who reads and mixes with other men, especially if he travels much, is perpetually changing. He comes across new metaphors, new figures of speech, remembers them, and uses them. The reading of such a work as Darwin's "Origin of Species" gives a man command of a new sphere of thought and expression. The conversation of such a man as "Luke the beloved physician" would have a similar effect on St. Paul. We shall never know the minds or the circumstances which suggested to him the language which has now become our own possession; and it is unreasonable to suppose that the process of assimilation came to a dead stop in the Apostle's mind when he finished the Epistles of the first imprisonment. The result, therefore, of this brief survey of the life of Timothy is to confirm rather than to shake our belief that the letters which are addressed to him were really written by his friend St. Paul.

The friendship between these two men of different gifts and very different ages is full of interest. It is difficult to estimate which of the two friends gained most from the affection and devotion of the other. No doubt Timothy's debt to St. Paul was immense: and which of us would not think himself amply paid for any amount of service and sacrifice, in having the privilege of being the chosen friend of such a man as St. Paul? But, on the other hand, few men could have supplied the Apostle's peculiar needs as Timothy did. That intense craving for sympathy which breathes so strongly throughout the writings of St. Paul, found its chief human satisfaction in Timothy. To be alone in a crowd is a trial to most men; and few men have felt the oppressiveness of it more keenly than St. Paul. To have some one, therefore, who loved and reverenced him, who knew his "ways" and could impress them on others, who cared for those for whom Paul cared and was ever willing to minister to them as his friend's missioner and delegate—all this and much more was inexpressibly comforting to St. Paul. It gave him strength in his weaknesses, hope in his many disappointments, and solid help in his daily burden of "anxiety for all the Churches." Specially consoling was the clinging affection of his young friend at those times when the Apostle was suffering from the coldness and neglect of others. At the time of his first imprisonment the respect or curiosity of the Roman Christians had moved many of them to come out thirty miles to meet him on his journey from Cæsarea to Rome; yet as soon as he was safely lodged in the house of his jailor they almost ceased to minister to him. But the faithful disciple seems to have been ever at his side. And when the Romans treated Paul with similar indifference during his second imprisonment, it was this same disciple that he earnestly besought to come with all speed to comfort him. It was not merely that he loved and trusted Timothy as one upon whose devotion and discretion he could always rely: but Timothy was the one among his many disciples who had sacrificed everything for St. Paul and his Master. He had left a loving mother and a pleasant home in order to share with the Apostle a task which involved ceaseless labour, untold anxiety, not a little shame and obloquy, and at times even danger to life and limb. When he might have continued to live on as the favourite of his family, enjoying the respect of the presbyters and prophets of Lycaonia, he chose to wander abroad with the man to whom, humanly speaking, he owed his salvation, "in journeyings often," in perils of every kind from the powers of nature, and from the violence or treachery of man, and in all those countless afflictions and necessities of which St. Paul gives us such a touching summary in the second letter to the Corinthians. All this St. Paul knew, and he knew the value of it to himself and the Church; and hence the warm affection with which the Apostle always speaks of him and to him.

But what did not Timothy owe to his friend, his father in the faith, old enough to be his father in the flesh? Not merely his conversion

and his building up in Christian doctrine, though that was much, and the chief item of his debt. But St. Paul had tenderly watched over him among the difficulties to which a person of his temperament would be specially exposed. Timothy was young, enthusiastic, sensitive, and at times showed signs of timidity. If his enthusiasm were not met with a generous sympathy, there was danger lest the sensitive nature would shrivel up on contact with an unfeeling world, and the enthusiasm driven in upon itself would be soured into a resentful cynicism. St. Paul not only himself gave to his young disciple the sympathy that he needed; he encouraged others also to do the same. "Now if Timothy come," he writes to the Corinthians, "see that he be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do: let no man therefore despise him." He warned these factious and fastidious Greeks against chilling the generous impulses of a youthful evangelist by their sarcastic criticisms. Timothy might be wanting in the brilliant gifts which Corinthians adored: in knowledge of the world, in address, in oratory. But he was real. He was working God's work with a single heart and with genuine fervour. It would be a cruel thing to mar that simplicity or quench that fervour, and thus turn a genuine enthusiast into a cold-blooded man of the world. On their treatment of him might depend whether he raised them to his own zeal for Christ, or they dragged him down to the level of their own paralysing superciliousness.

The dangers from which St. Paul thus generously endeavoured to shield Timothy, are those which beset many an ardent spirit, especially in England at the present day. Everywhere there is a cynical disbelief in human nature and a cold contempt for all noble impulses, which throw a damp and chilling atmosphere over society. At school and at the university, in family life and in domestic service, young men and young women are encouraged to believe that there is no such thing as unselfishness or holiness, and that enthusiasm is always either silly or hypocritical. By sarcastic jests and contemptuous smiles they are taught the fatal lesson of speaking slightingly, and at last of thinking slightingly, of their own best feelings. To be dutiful and affectionate is supposed to be childish, while reverence and trust are regarded as mere ignorance of the world. The mischief is a grave one, for it poisons life at its very springs. Every young man and woman at times has aspirations which at first are only romantic and sentimental, and as such are neither right nor wrong. But they are nature's material for higher and better things. They are capable of being developed into a zeal for God and for man such as will ennoble the characters of all who come under its influence. The sentimentalist may become an enthusiast, and the enthusiast a hero or a saint. Woe to him who gives to such precious material a wrong turn, and by offering cynicism instead of sympathy turns all its freshness sour. The loss does not end with the blight of an exuberant and earnest character. There are huge masses of evil in the world, which seem to defy the good influences that from time to time are brought to bear upon them. Humanly speaking, there seems to be only one hope of overcoming these strongholds of Satan,—and that is by the combined efforts of many enthusiasts. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." It will be a grievous prospect for mankind, if faith in God, in ourselves, and in our fellowmen becomes so unfashionable as to be impossible. And this is the faith which makes enthusiasts. If we have not this faith ourselves, we can at least respect it in others. If we cannot play the part of Timothy, and go forth with glowing hearts to whatever difficult and distasteful work may be placed before us, we can at least avoid chilling and disheartening others; and sometimes at least we may so far follow in the footsteps of St. Paul as to protect from the world's cynicism those who, with hearts more warm perhaps than wise, are labouring manfully to leave the world purer and happier than they found it.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINE CONDEMNED IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES A JEWISH FORM OF GNOSTICISM—THE GNOSTIC'S PROBLEM.

1 Timothy i. 2, 3.

This Epistle falls into two main divisions, of which the first continues down to the 13th verse of chap. iii. It treats of three different subjects: Christian doctrine; Christian worship; and the Christian ministry. The first of these three subjects is introduced in the words of the text, which in the original form an incomplete sentence. The last four words, "so do I now," are not expressed in the Greek. But something must be supplied to complete the sense; and it is more natural to understand with the Revisers "So do I now exhort thee," than with the A. V. "So do thou tarry at Ephesus." But the question is not of great moment and cannot be decided with absolute certainty. It is of more importance to enquire what was the nature of the "different doctrine" which Timothy was to endeavour to counteract. And on this point we are not left in serious doubt. There are various expressions used respecting it in these two letters to Timothy which seem to point to two factors in the heterodoxy about which St. Paul is anxious. It is clear that the error is Jewish in origin; and it is almost equally clear that it is Gnostic as well. The evidence of the letter to Titus tends materially to confirm these conclusions.

(1) The heresy is Jewish in character. Its promoters "desire to be teachers of the law" (ver. 7). Some of them are "they of the circumcision" (Tit. i. 10). It consists in "Jewish fables" (Tit. i. 14). The questions which it raises are "fightings about the Law" (Tit. iii. 9).

(2) Its Gnostic character is also indicated. We are told both in the text and in the Epistle to Titus (i. 14; iii. 9) that it deals in "fables and genealogies." It is "empty talking" (ver. 6), "disputes of words" (vi. 4), and "profane babblings" (vi. 20). It teaches an unscriptural and unnatural ascetism (iv. 3, 8). It is "Gnosis falsely so called" (vi. 20).

A heresy containing these two elements, Judaism and Gnosticism, meets us both before and after the period covered by the Pastoral Epistles: before in the Epistle to the Colossians; afterwards in the Epistle of Ignatius. The evidence gathered from these three sources is entirely in harmony with what we learn elsewhere—that the

earliest forms of Christian Gnosticism were Jewish in character. It will be observed that this is indirect confirmation of the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles. The Gnosticism condemned in them is Jewish; and any form of Gnosticism that was in existence in St. Paul's time would almost certainly be Jewish.

Professor Godet has pointed out how entirely the relation of Judaism to Christianity which is implied in these Epistles, fits in with their being the last group of Epistles written by St. Paul. At first, Judaism was entirely outside the Church, opposing and blaspheming. Then it entered the Church and tried to make the Church Jewish, by foisting the Mosaic Law upon it. Lastly, it becomes a fantastic heresy inside the Church, and sinks into profane frivolity. "Pretended revelations are given as to the names and genealogies of angels; absurd ascetic rules are laid down as counsels of perfection, while daring immorality defaces the actual life." This is the phase which is confronted in the Pastoral Epistles: and St. Paul meets it with a simple appeal to faith and morality.

It is quite possible that the "fables," or "myths," and "genealogies" ought to be transferred from the Gnostic to the Jewish side of the account. And thus Chrysostom interprets the passage. "By fables he does not mean the Law; far from it; but inventions and forgeries, and counterfeit doctrines. For, it seems, the Jews wasted their whole discourse on these unprofitable points. They numbered up their fathers and grandfathers, that they might have the reputation of historical knowledge and research." The "fables" then, may be understood to be those numerous legends which the Jews added to the Old Testament, specimens of which abound in the Talmud. But similar myths abound in Gnostic systems, and therefore "fables" may represent both elements of the heterodox teaching. So also with the "endless genealogies." These cannot well refer to the genealogies in Genesis, for they are not endless, each of them being arranged in tens. But it is quite possible that Jewish speculations about the genealogies of angels may be meant. Such things, being purely imaginary, would be endless. Or the Gnostic doctrine of emanations, in its earlier and cruder forms, may be intended. By genealogies in this sense early thinkers, especially in the East, tried to bridge the chasm between the Infinite and the Finite, between God and creation. In various systems it is assumed that matter is inherently evil. The material universe has been from the beginning not "very good" but very bad. How then can it be believed that the Supreme Being, infinite in goodness, would create such a thing? This is incredible: the world must be the creature of some inferior and perhaps evil being. But when this was conceded, the distance between this inferior power and the supreme God still remained to be bridged. This, it was supposed, might be done by an indefinite number of generations, each lower in dignity than the preceding one, until at last a being capable of creating the universe was found. From the Supreme God emanated an inferior deity, and from this lower power a third still more inferior; and so on, until the Creator of the world was reached. These ideas are found in the Jewish philosopher Philo; and it is to these that St. Paul probably alludes in the "endless genealogies which minister questionings rather than a dispensation of God." The idea that matter is evil dominates the whole philosophy of Philo. He endeavoured to reconcile this with the Old Testament, by supposing that matter is eternal; and that it was out of pre-existing material that God, acting through His creative powers, made the world which He pronounced to be "very good." These powers are sometimes regarded as the angels, sometimes as existences scarcely personal. But they have no existence apart from their source, any more than a ray apart from the sun. They are now the instruments of God's Providence, as formerly of His creative power.

St. Paul condemns such speculations on four grounds. (1) They are fables, myths, mere imaginings of the human intellect in its attempt to account for the origin of the world and the origin of evil. (2) They are endless and interminable. From the nature of things there is no limit to mere guesswork of this kind. Every new speculator may invent a fresh genealogy of emanations in his theory of creation, and may make it any length that he pleases. If hypotheses need never be verified,—need not even be capable of verification,—one may go on constructing them *ad infinitum*. (3) As a natural consequence of this (*αἵτινες*) they minister questionings and nothing better. It is all barren speculation and fruitless controversy. Where any one may assert without proof, any one else may contradict without proof; and nothing comes of this see-saw of affirmation and negation. (4) Lastly, these vain imaginings are a different doctrine. They are not only empty, but untrue, and are a hindrance to the truth. They occupy the ground which ought to be filled with the dispensation of God which is in faith. Human minds are limited in their capacity, and, even if these empty hypotheses were innocent, minds that were filled with them would have little room left for the truth. But they are not innocent: and those who are attracted by them become disaffected towards the truth. It is impossible to love both, for the two are opposed to one another. These fables are baseless; they have no foundation either in revelation or in human life. Moreover they are vague, shifting, and incoherent. They ramble on without end. But the Gospel is based on a Divine Revelation, tested by human experience. It is an economy, a system, an organic whole, a dispensation of means to ends. Its sphere is not unbridled imagination or audacious curiosity, but faith.

The history of the next hundred and fifty years amply justifies the anxiety and severity of St. Paul. The germs of Gnostic error, which were in the air when Christianity was first preached, fructified with amazing rapidity. It would be hard to find a parallel in the history of philosophy to the speed with which Gnostic views spread in and around Christendom between A. D. 70 and 220. Eusebius tells us that, as soon as the Apostles and those who had listened "with their own ears to their inspired wisdom had passed away, then the conspiracy of godless error took its rise through the deceit of false teachers, who (now that none of the Apostles was any longer left) henceforth endeavoured with brazen face to preach their knowledge falsely so called in opposition to the preaching of the truth."* Throughout the Christian world, and especially in intellectual centres such as

* "H. E.," VI. xxxii. 8.

Ephesus, Alexandria, and Rome, there was perhaps not a single educated congregation which did not contain persons who were infected with some form of Gnosticism. Jerome's famous hyperbole respecting Arianism might be transferred to this earlier form of error, perhaps the most perilous that the Church has ever known: "The whole world groaned and was amazed to find itself Gnostic."

However severely we may condemn these speculations, we cannot but sympathise with the perplexities which produced them. The origin of the universe, and still more the origin of evil, still remain unsolved problems. No one in this life is ever likely to reach a complete solution of either. What is the origin of the material universe? To assume that it is not a creature, but that matter is eternal, is to make two first principles, one spiritual and one material; and this is perilously near making two Gods. But the belief that God made the world is by no means free from difficulty. What was His motive in making the world? Was His perfection increased by it? Then God was once not fully perfect. Was His perfection diminished by the act of creation? Then God is now not fully perfect; and how can we suppose that He would voluntarily surrender anything of His absolute perfection? Was God neither the better nor the worse for the creation of the universe? Then the original question returns with its full force: What induced Him to create it? We cannot suppose that creation was an act of caprice. No complete answer to this enigma is possible for us. One thing we know—that God is light and that God is love. And we may be sure that in exercising His creative power He was manifesting His perfect wisdom and His exhaustless affection.

But will the knowledge that God is light and that God is love help us to even a partial solution of that problem which has wrung the souls of countless saints and thinkers with anguish—the problem of the origin of evil? How could a God who is perfectly wise and perfectly good, make it possible for evil to arise, and allow it to continue after it had arisen? Once more the suggestion that there are two First Principles presents itself, but in a more terrible form. Before, it was the thought that there are two co-eternal Existences, God and Matter. Now, it is the suggestion that there are two co-eternal, and perhaps co-equal Powers, Good and Evil. This hypothesis, impossible for a Christian and rejected by John Stuart Mill, creates more difficulties than it solves. But, if this is the wrong answer, what is the right one? Cardinal Newman, in one of the most striking passages even in his works, has told us how the problem presents itself to him. "Starting then with the being of God (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape, I find difficulty in doing so in mood and figure to my satisfaction), I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror, and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me, when I look into this living busy world and see no reflection of its Creator. This is, to me, one of the great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist, when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only; and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society, but these do not warn me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll full of 'lamentations, and mourning, and woe.' . . . What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one, of whom, from one cause or other, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and condition of his being. And so I argue about the world;—if there be a God, since there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God." *

But this only carries us a short way towards a solution. Why did God allow the "aboriginal calamity" of sin to be possible? This was the Gnostic's difficulty, and it is our difficulty still. Can we say more than this by way of an answer? God willed that angels and men should honour Him with a voluntary, and not a mechanical service. If they obeyed Him, it should be of their own free will, and not of necessity. It should be possible to them to refuse service and obedience. In short, God willed to be reverenced and worshipped, and not merely served and obeyed. A machine can render service; and a person under the influence of mesmerism may be forced to obey. But do we not all feel that the voluntary service of a conscious and willing agent, who prefers to render rather than to withhold his service, is a nobler thing both for him who gives, and him who receives it? Compulsory labour is apt to turn the servant into a slave and the master into a tyrant. We see, therefore, a reason why the Creator in creating conscious beings made them also moral; made them capable of obeying Him of their own free will, and therefore also capable of disobeying Him. In other words, He made sin, with all its consequences, possible. Then it became merely a question of historical fact whether any angelic or human being would ever abuse his freedom by choosing to disobey. That "aboriginal calamity," we know, has taken place; and all the

* "Apologia pro Vita Sua" (Longmans, 1864), pp. 376–379.

moral and physical evil which now exists in the world is the natural consequence of it.

This is, perhaps, the best solution that the human mind is likely to discover, respecting this primeval and terrible mystery. But it is only a partial solution; and the knowledge that we have still not attained to a complete answer to the question which perplexed the early Gnostics, ought to banish from our minds anything like arrogance or contempt, when we condemn their answer as unchristian and inadequate. "The end of the charge" which has been given to us is not the condemnation of others, but "love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORAL TEACHING OF THE GNOSTICS—ITS MODERN COUNTERPART.

1 Timothy i. 8-11.

The speculations of the Gnostics in their attempts to explain the origin of the universe and the origin of evil, were wild and unprofitable enough; and in some respects involved a fundamental contradiction of the plain statements of Scripture. But it was not so much their metaphysical as their moral teaching which seemed so perilous to St. Paul. Their "endless genealogies" might have been left to fall with their own dead weight, so dull and uninteresting were they. Specimens of them still survive, in what is known to us of the systems of Basilides and Valentinus; and which of us, after having laboriously worked through them, ever wished to read them a second time? But it is impossible to keep one's philosophy in one compartment in one's mind, and one's religion and morality quite separate from it in another. However unpractical metaphysical speculations may appear, it is beyond question that the views which we hold respecting such things may have momentous influence upon our life. It was so with the early Gnostics, whom St. Paul urges Timothy to keep in check. Their doctrine respecting the nature of the material world and its relation to God, led to two opposite forms of ethical teaching, each of them radically opposed to Christianity.

This fact fits in very well with the character of the Pastoral Epistles, all of which deal with this early form of error. They insist upon discipline and morality, more than upon doctrine. These last solemn charges of the great Apostle aim rather at making Christian ministers, and their congregations, lead pure and holy lives, than at constructing any system of theology. Erroneous teaching must be resisted; the plain truths of the Gospel must be upheld; but the main thing is holiness of life. By prayer and thanksgiving, by quiet and grave conduct, by modesty and temperance, by self-denial and benevolence, by reverence for the sanctity of home life, Christians will furnish the best antidote to the intellectual and moral poison which the false teachers are propagating. "The sound doctrine" has its fruit in a healthy, moral life, as surely as the "different doctrine" leads to spiritual pride and lawless sensuality.

The belief that Matter and everything material is inherently evil, involved necessarily a contempt for the human body. This body was a vile thing; and it was a dire calamity for the human mind to be joined to such a mass of evil. From this premise various conclusions, some doctrinal and some ethical, were drawn.

On the doctrinal side it was urged that the resurrection of the body was incredible. It was disastrous enough to the soul that it should be burdened with a body in this world. That this degrading alliance would be continued in the world to come was a monstrous belief. Equally incredible was the doctrine of the Incarnation. How could the Divine Word consent to be united to so evil a thing as a material frame? Either the Son of Mary was a mere man, or the body which the Christ assumed was not real. It is with these errors that St. John deals, some twelve or fifteen years later, in his Gospel and Epistles.

On the ethical side the tenet that the human body is utterly evil produced two opposite errors,—asceticism and antinomian sensuality. And both of these are aimed at in these Epistles. If the enlightenment of the soul is everything, and the body is utterly worthless, then this vile clog to the movement of the soul must be beaten under and crushed, in order that the higher nature may rise to higher things. The body must be denied all indulgence, in order that it may be starved into submission (iv. 3). On the other hand, if enlightenment is everything and the body is worthless, then every kind of experience, no matter how shameless, is of value, in order to enlarge knowledge. Nothing that a man can do can make his body more vile than it is by nature, and the soul of the enlightened is incapable of pollution. Gold still remains gold, however often it is plunged in the mire.

The words of the three verses taken as a text, look as if St. Paul was aiming at evil of this kind. These Judaising Gnostics "desired to be teachers of the Law." They wished to enforce the Mosaic Law, or rather their fantastic interpretations of it, upon Christians. They insisted upon its excellence, and would not allow that it has been in many respects superseded. "We know quite well," says the Apostle, "and readily admit, that the Mosaic Law is an excellent thing; provided that those who undertake to expound it make a legitimate use of it. They must remember that, just as law in general is not made for those whose own good principles keep them in the right, so also the restrictions of the Mosaic Law are not meant for Christians who obey the Divine will in the free spirit of the Gospel." Legal restrictions are intended to control those who will not control themselves; in short, for the very men who by their strange doctrines are endeavouring to curtail the liberties of others. What they preach as "the Law" is really a code of their own, "commandments of men who turn away from the truth. . . . They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Tit. i. 14, 16). In rehearsing the various kinds of sinners for whom law exists, and who are to be found (he hints) among these false teachers, he goes roughly through the Decalogue. The four commandments of the First Table are indicated in general and comprehensive terms; the first five commandments of the Second Table are taken one by one, flagrant violators being specified in each case. Thus the stealing of a human being in order to make him a slave is mentioned as the

most outrageous breach of the eighth commandment. The tenth commandment is not distinctly indicated, possibly because the breaches of it are not so easily detected. The overt acts of these men were quite sufficient to convict them of gross immorality, without enquiring as to their secret wishes and desires. In a word, the very persons who in their teaching were endeavouring to burden men with the ceremonial ordinances, which had been done away in Christ, were in their own lives violating the moral laws, to which Christ had given a new sanction. They tried to keep alive, in new and strange forms, what had been provisional and was now obsolete, while they trampled under foot what was eternal and Divine.

"If there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine." In these words St. Paul sums up all the forms of transgression not specified in his catalogue. The sound, healthy teaching of the Gospel is opposed to the morbid and corrupt teaching of the Gnostics, who are sickly in their speculations (vi. 4), and whose word is like an eating sore (2 Tim. ii. 17). Of course healthy teaching is also health-giving, and corrupt teaching is corrupting; but it is the primary and not the derived quality that is stated here. It is the healthiness of the doctrine in itself, and its freedom from what is diseased or distorted, that is insisted upon. Its wholesome character is a consequence of this.

This word "sound" or "healthy" as applied to doctrine, is one of a group of expressions which are peculiar to the Pastoral Epistles, and which have been condemned as not belonging to St. Paul's style of language. He never uses "healthy" in his other Epistles; therefore these three Epistles, in which the phrase occurs eight or nine times, are not by him.

This kind of argument has been discussed already, in the first of these expositions. It assumes the manifest untruth, that as life goes on men make little or no change in the stock of words and phrases which they habitually use. With regard to this particular phrase, the source of it has been conjectured with a fair amount of probability. It may come from "the beloved physician," who, at the time when St. Paul wrote the second Epistle to Timothy, was the Apostle's sole companion. It is worth remarking that the word here used for "sound" (with the exception of one passage in the Third Epistle of St. John) occurs nowhere in the New Testament in the literal sense of being in sound bodily health, except in the Gospel of St. Luke. And it occurs nowhere in a figurative sense, except in the Pastoral Epistles. It is obviously a medical metaphor; a metaphor which anyone who had never had anything to do with medicine might easily use, but which is specially likely to be used by a man who had lived much in the society of a physician. Before we call such a phrase un-Pauline we must ask: (1) Is there any passage in the earlier Epistles of St. Paul where he would certainly have used this word "sound," had he been familiar with it? (2) Is there any word in the earlier Epistles which would have expressed his meaning here equally well? If either of these questions is answered in the negative, then we are going beyond our knowledge in pronouncing the phrase "sound doctrine" to be un-Pauline.

"Contrary to the sound doctrine." It sums up in a comprehensive phrase the doctrinal and moral teaching of the Gnostics. What they taught was unsound and morbid, and as a consequence poisonous and pestilential. While professing to accept and expound the Gospel, they really disintegrated it and explained it away. They destroyed the very basis of the Gospel message; for they denied the reality of sin. And they equally destroyed the contents of the message; for they denied the reality of the Incarnation. Nor were they less revolutionary on the moral side than on the doctrinal. The foundations of morality are sapped when intellectual enlightenment is accounted as the one thing needful, while conduct is treated as a thing of no value. Principles of morality are turned upside down when it is maintained that any act which adds to one's knowledge is not only allowable, but a duty. It is necessary to remember these fatal characteristics of this early form of error, in order to appreciate the stern language used by St. Paul and St. John respecting it, as also by St. Jude and the author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter.

St. John in his Epistles deals mainly with the doctrinal side of the heresy,—the denial of the reality of sin and the reality of the Incarnation: although the moral results of doctrinal error are also indicated and condemned. In the Apocalypse, as in St. Paul and in the Catholic Epistles, it is mainly the moral side of the false teaching that is denounced, and that in both its opposite phases. The Epistle to the Colossians deals with the ascetic tendencies of early gnosticism. The Apocalypse and the Catholic Epistles deal with its licentious tendencies. The Pastoral Epistles treat of both asceticism and licentiousness, but chiefly of the latter, as is seen from the passage before us and from the first part of chapter iii. in the Second Epistle. As we might expect, St. Paul uses stronger language in the Pastoral Epistles than he does in writing to the Colossians; and in St. John and the Catholic Epistles we find stronger language still. Antinomian licentiousness is a far worse evil than misguided asceticism, and in the interval between St. Paul and the other writers the profligacy of the Antinomian Gnostics had increased. St. Paul warns the Colossians against delusive "persuasiveness of speech," against "vain deceit," "the rudiments of the world," "the precepts and doctrines of men." He cautions Timothy and Titus respecting "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils," "profane and old wives' fables," "profane babblings" and teachings that "will eat as doth a gangrene," "vain talkers and deceivers" whose "mind and conscience is deceived," and the like. St. John denounces these false teachers as "liars," "seducers," "false prophets," "deceivers," and "antichrists;" and in Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter we have the profligate lives of these false teachers condemned in equally severe terms.

It should be observed that here again everything falls into its proper place if we assume that the Pastoral Epistles were written some years later than the Epistle to the Colossians and some years earlier than those of St. Jude and St. John. The ascetic tendencies of Gnosticism developed first. And though they still continued in teachers like Tatian and Marcion, yet from the close of the first century the licentious conclusions drawn from the premises that the human body is worthless and that all knowledge is Divine became more and more prevalent; as is seen

in the teaching of Carpocrates and Epiphanes, and in the monstrous sect of the Cainites. It was quite natural, therefore, that St. Paul should attack Gnostic asceticism first in writing to the Colossians, and afterwards both it and Gnostic licentiousness in writing to Timothy and Titus. It was equally natural that his language should grow stronger as he saw the second evil developing, and that those who saw this second evil at a more advanced stage should use sterner language still.

The extravagant theories of the Gnostics to account for the origin of the universe and the origin of evil are gone and are past recall. It would be impossible to induce people to believe them, and only a comparatively small number of students ever even read them. But the heresy that knowledge is more important than conduct, that brilliant intellectual gifts render a man superior to the moral law, and that much of the moral law itself is the tyrannical bondage of an obsolete tradition, is as dangerous as ever it was. It is openly preached and frequently acted upon. The great Florentine artist, Benvenuto Cellini, tells us in his autobiography that when Pope Paul III. expressed his willingness to forgive him an outrageous murder committed in the streets of Rome, one of the gentlemen at the Papal Court ventured to remonstrate with the Pope for condoning so heinous a crime. "You do not understand the matter as well as I do," replied Paul III.: "I would have you to know that men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, are not bound by the laws." Cellini is a braggart, and it is possible that in this particular he is romancing. But, even if the story is his invention, he merely attributes to the Pope the sentiments which he cherished himself, and upon which (as experience taught him) other people acted. Over and over again his murderous violence was overlooked by those in authority, because they admired and wished to make use of his genius as an artist. "Ability before honesty" was a common creed in the sixteenth century, and it is abundantly prevalent in our own. The most notorious scandals in a man's private life are condoned if only he is recognised as having talent. It is the old Gnostic error in a modern and sometimes agnostic form. It is becoming daily more clear that the one thing needful for the regeneration of society, whether upper, middle, or lower, is the creation of a "sound" public opinion. And so long as this is so, God's ministers and all who have the duty of instructing others will need to lay to heart the warnings which St. Paul gives to his followers Timothy and Titus.

CHAPTER V.

THE LORD'S COMPASSION IN ENABLING A BLASPHEMER AND A PERSECUTOR TO BECOME A SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS AND A PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

1 Timothy i. 12-14.

In the concluding sentence of the preceding paragraph (vv. 3, 11) the Apostle points out that what he has been saying respecting the erroneous teaching and practice of the heterodox innovators is entirely in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel which had been committed to his trust. This mention of his own high commission to preach "the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God" suggests at once to him some thoughts both of thankfulness and humility, to which he now gives expression. His own experience of the Gospel, especially in connection with his conversion from being a persecutor to becoming a preacher, offer further points of contrast between Gnosticism and Christianity.

The false teachers wasted thought and attention upon barren speculations, which, even if they could under any conceivable circumstances be proved true, would have supplied no guidance to mankind in regulating conduct. And whenever Gnostic teaching became practical, it frittered away morality in servile observances, based on capricious interpretations of the Mosaic Law. Of true morality there was an utter disregard, and frequently an open violation. Of the one thing for which the self-accusing conscience was yearning—the forgiveness of sin—it knew nothing, because it had no appreciation of the reality of sin. Sin was only part of the evil which was inherent in the material universe, and therefore in the human body. A system which had no place for the forgiveness of sin had also no place for the Divine compassion, which it is the purpose of the Gospel to reveal. How very real this compassion and forgiveness are, and how much human beings stand in need of them, St. Paul testifies from his own experience, the remembrance of which makes him burst out into thanksgiving.

The Apostle offers thanks to Jesus Christ, the source of all his strength, for having confidence in him as a person worthy of trust. This confidence He proved by "appointing Paul to His service;" a confidence all the more marvellous and worthy of gratitude because Paul had before been "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." He had been a blasphemer, for he had thought that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" and he had been a persecutor, for he had punished believers "oftentimes in all the synagogues," and "strove to make them blaspheme." That is ever the persecutor's aim;—to make those who differ from him speak evil of what they reverence but he abhors; to say they renounce what in their heart of hearts they believe. There is, therefore, thus far an ascending scale in the iniquity which the Apostle confesses. He not only blasphemed the Divine Name himself, but he endeavoured to compel others to do the same. The third word, although the English Version obscures the fact, continues the ascending scale of self-condemnation. "Injurious" does scant justice to the force of the Greek word used by the Apostle (ὑβριστής), although it is not easy to suggest a better rendering. The word is very common in classical authors, but in the New Testament occurs only here and in Rom. i. 30, where the A. V. translates it "despiteful" and the R. V. "insolent." It is frequent in the Septuagint. It indicates one who takes an insolent and wanton delight in violence, one whose pleasure lies in outraging the feelings of others. The most conspicuous instance of it in the New Testament, and perhaps anywhere, would be the Roman soldiers mocking and torturing Jesus Christ with the crown of thorns and the royal robe. Of such conduct St. Paul himself since his conversion

had been the victim, and he here confesses that before his conversion he had been guilty of it himself. In his misguided zeal he had punished innocent people, and he had inflicted punishment, not with pitying reluctance, but with arrogant delight.

It is worth pointing out that in this third charge against himself, as well as in the first, St. Paul goes beyond what he states in the similar passages in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Philippians, and Galatians. There he simply draws attention to the fact that he had been a persecutor who had made havoc of the Church. He says nothing about blaspheming or taking an insolent satisfaction in the pain which he inflicted. This has some bearing on the genuineness of this Epistle. (1) It shows that St. Paul was in the habit of alluding to the fact that he had been a persecutor. It was part of his preaching, for it proved that his conversion was directly and immediately God's work. He did not owe the Gospel which he preached to any persuasion on the part of man. It is, therefore, quite in harmony with St. Paul's practice to insist on his former misconduct. But it may be urged that a forger might notice this and imitate it. That of course is true. But if these Epistles are a forgery, they are certainly not forged with any intention of injuring St. Paul's memory. Is it likely, then, that a forger, in imitating the self-accusation of the Apostle, would use stronger language than the Apostle himself himself uses in those Epistles which are indisputably his? Would he go out of his way to use such strong language as "blasphemer," and "insolent oppressor"? But, if St. Paul wrote these Epistles, this exceptionally strong language is thoroughly natural in a passage in which the Apostle wishes to place in as strong a light as may be the greatness of the Divine compassion in forgiving sins, as manifested in his own case. He had been foremost as a bitter and arrogant opponent of the Gospel; and yet God had singled him out to be foremost in preaching it. Here was a proof that no sinner need despair. What comfort for a fallen race could the false teachers offer in comparison with this?

Like St. Peter's sin in denying his Lord, St. Paul's sin in persecuting Him was overruled for good. The Divine process of bringing good out of evil was strongly exemplified in it. The Gnostic teachers had tried to show how, by a gradual degradation, evil might proceed from the Supreme Good. There is nothing Divine in such a process as that. The fall from good to evil is rather a devilish one, as when an angel of light became the Evil One and involved mankind in his own fall. Divinity is shown in the converse process of making what is evil work towards what is good. Under Divine guidance St. Paul's self-righteous confidence and arrogant intolerance were turned into a blessing to himself and others. The recollection of his sin kept him humble, intensified his gratitude, and gave him a strong additional motive to devote himself to the work of bringing others to the Master who had been so gracious to himself. St. Chrysostom in commenting on this passage in his Homilies on the Pastoral Epistles points out how it illustrates St. Paul's humility, a virtue which is more often praised than practised. "This quality was so cultivated by the blessed Paul, that he is ever looking out for inducements to be humble. They who are conscious to themselves of great merits must struggle much with themselves if they would be humble. And he too was one likely to be under violent temptations, his own good conscience swelling him up like a gathering tumour. . . . Being filled, therefore, with high thoughts, and having used magnificent expressions, he at once depresses himself, and engages others also to do the like. Having said, then, that the Gospel was committed to his trust, lest this should seem to be said with pride, he checks himself at once, adding by way of correction, I thank Him that enabled me, Christ Jesus our Lord, for that He counted me faithful, appointing me to His service. Thus everywhere, we see, he conceals his own merit and ascribes everything to God, yet so far only as not to take away free will."

These concluding words are an important qualification. The Apostle constantly insists on his conversion as the result of a special revelation of Jesus Christ to himself, in other words a miracle: he nowhere hints that his conversion in itself was miraculous. No psychological miracle was wrought, forcing him to accept Christ against his will. God converts no one by magic. It is a free and reasonable service that He asks for from beings whom He has created free and reasonable. Men were made moral beings, and He who made them such does not treat them as machines. In his defence at Cæsarea St. Paul tells Herod Agrippa that he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He might have been. He might, like Judas, have resisted all the miraculous power displayed before him and have continued to persecute Christ. If he had no choice whatever in the matter, it was an abuse of language to affirm that he "was not disobedient." And in that case we should need some other metaphor than "kicking against the goads." It is impossible to kick against the goads if one has no control over one's own limbs. The limbs and the strength to use them were God's gifts, without which he could have done nothing. But with these gifts it was open to him either to obey the Divine commands or "even to fight against God"—a senseless and wicked thing, no doubt, but still possible. In this passage the Divine and the human sides are plainly indicated. On the one hand, Christ enabled him and showed confidence in him: on the other, Paul accepted the service and was faithful. He might have refused the service; or, having accepted it, he might have shown himself unfaithful to his trust.

"Howbeit, I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." These words are sometimes misunderstood. They are not intended as an excuse, any more than St. John's designation of himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" are intended as a boast. St. John had been the recipient of very exceptional favours. Along with only St. Peter and St. James he had been present at the raising of Jairus's daughter, at the Transfiguration, and at the Agony in Gethsemane. From even these chosen three he had been singled out to be told who was the traitor; to have the lifelong charge of providing for the Mother of the Lord; to be the first to recognise the risen Lord at the sea of Tiberias. What was the explanation of all these honours? The recipient of them had only one to give. He had no merits, no claim to anything of the kind; but Jesus loved him.

So also with St. Paul. There were multitudes of Jews who, like himself, had had, as he tells the Romans, "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." There were many who, like himself, had opposed the truth and persecuted the Christ. Why did any of them obtain mercy? Why did he receive such marked favour and honour? Not because of any merit on their part or his: but because they had sinned ignorantly (*i. e.*, without knowing the enormity of their sin,) and because "the grace of the Lord abounded exceedingly." The Apostle is not endeavouring to extenuate his own culpability, but to justify and magnify the Divine compassion. Of the whole Jewish nation it was true that "they knew not what they did" in crucifying Jesus of Nazareth; but it was true in very various degrees. "Even of the rulers many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God." It was because St. Paul did not in this way sin against light that he found mercy, not merely in being forgiven the sin of persecuting Christ, but in being enabled to accept and be faithful in the service of Him whom he had persecuted.

Two of the changes made by the Revisers in this passage seem to call for notice: they both occur in the same phrase and have a similar tendency. Instead of "putting me into the ministry" the R. V. gives us "appointing me to His service." A similar change has been made in verse 7 of the next chapter, where "I was appointed a preacher" takes the place of "I am ordained a preacher," and in John xv. 16 where "I chose you and appointed you" has been substituted for "I have chosen you and ordained you." In these alterations the Revisers are only following the example set by the A. V. itself in other passages. In 2 Tim. i. 11, as in Luke x. 1, and 1 Thess. v. 9, both versions have "appointed." The alterations are manifest improvements. In the passage before us it is possible that the Greek has the special signification of "putting me into the ministry," but it is by no means certain, and perhaps not even probable, that it does so. Therefore the more comprehensive and general translation, "appointing me to His service," is to be preferred. The wider rendering includes and covers the other; and this is a further advantage. To translate the Greek words used in these passages (*τιθέναι, ποιεῖν, κ. τ. λ.*) by such a very definite word as "ordain" leads the reader to suppose these texts refer to the ecclesiastical act of ordination; of which there is no evidence. The idea conveyed by the Greek in this passage, as in John xv. 16, is that of placa man at a particular post, and would be as applicable to civil as to ministerial duties. We are not, therefore, justified in translating it by a phrase which has distinct ecclesiastical associations.

The question is not one of mere linguistic accuracy. There are larger issues involved than those of correct translation from Greek to English. If we adopt the wider rendering, then it is evident that the blessing for which St. Paul expresses heartfelt gratitude, and which he cites as evidence of Divine compassion and forgiveness, is not the call to be an Apostle, in which none of us can share, nor exclusively the call to be a minister of the Gospel, in which only a limited number of us can share; but also the being appointed to any service in Christ's kingdom, which is an honour to which all Christians are called. Every earnest Christian knows from personal experience this evidence of the Divine character of the Gospel. It is full of compassion for those who have sinned; not because, like the Gnostic teachers, it glosses over the malignity and culpability of sin, but because, unlike Gnosticism, it recognises the preciousness of each human soul, and the difficulties which beset it. Every Christian knows that he has inherited an evil nature:—so far he and the Gnostic are agreed. But he also knows that to the sin which he has inherited he has added sin for which he is personally responsible, and which his conscience does not excuse as if it were something which is a misfortune and not a fault. Yet he is not left without remedy under the burden of these self-accusations. He knows that, if he seeks for it, he can find forgiveness, and forgiveness of a singularly generous kind. He is not only forgiven, but restored to favour and treated with respect. He is at once placed in a position of trust. In spite of the past, it is assumed that he will be a faithful servant, and he is allowed to minister to his Master and his Master's followers. To him also "the grace of our Lord" has "abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." The generous compassion shown to St. Paul is not unique or exceptional; it is typical. And it is a type, not to the few, but to many; not to clergy only, but to all. "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all His long-suffering, for an ensample of them which should hereafter believe on Him unto eternal life."

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHECIES ON TIMOTHY—THE PROPHETS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, AN EXCEPTIONAL INSTRUMENT OF EDIFICATION.

1 Timothy i. 18-20.

In this section St. Paul returns from the subject of the false teachers against whom Timothy has to contend (vv. 3-11), and the contrast to their teaching exhibited by the Gospel in the Apostle's own case (vv. 12-17), to the main purpose of the letter, viz., the instructions to be given to Timothy for the due performance of his difficult duties as overseer of the Church of Ephesus. The section contains two subjects of special interest, each of which requires consideration;—the prophecies respecting Timothy and the punishment of Hymenæus and Alexander.

1. "This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee." As the margin of the R. V. points out, this last phrase might also be read "according to the prophecies which led the way to thee," for the Greek may mean either. The question is, whether St. Paul is referring to certain prophecies which "led the way to" Timothy, *i. e.*, which designated him as specially suited for the ministry, and led to his ordination by St. Paul and the presbyters; or whether he is referring to certain prophecies which were uttered over Timothy (*ἐπὶ σέ*) either at the time of his conversion or of his ad-

mission to the ministry. Both the A. V. and the R. V. give the preference to the latter rendering, which (without excluding such a view) does not commit us to the opinion that St. Paul was in any sense led to Timothy by these prophecies, a thought which is not clearly intimated in the original. All that we are certain of is, that long before the writing of this letter prophecies of which Timothy was the object were uttered over him, and that they were of such a nature as to be an incentive and support to him in his ministry.

But if we look on to the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter in this Epistle and to the sixth of the first chapter in the Second, we shall not have much doubt when these prophecies were uttered. There we read, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery!" and "For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands." Must we not believe that these two passages and the passage before us all refer to the same occasion —the same crisis in Timothy's life? In all three of them St. Paul appeals to the spiritual gift that was bestowed upon his disciple "by means of prophecy" and "by means of the laying on of hands." The same preposition and case (διά with the genitive) is used in each case. Clearly, then, we are to understand that the prophesying and the laying on of hands accompanied one another. Here only the prophesying is mentioned. In chapter iv. the prophesying, accompanied by the imposition of the presbyters' hands, is the means by which the grace is conferred. In the Second Epistle only the laying on of the Apostle's hands is mentioned, and it is spoken of as the means by which the grace is conferred. Therefore, although the present passage by itself leaves the question open, yet when we take the other two into consideration along with it, we may safely neglect the possibility of prophecies which led the way to the ordination of Timothy, and understand the Apostle as referring to those sacred utterances which were a marked element in his disciple's ordination and formed a prelude and earnest of his ministry. These sacred utterances indicated a Divine commission and Divine approbation publicly expressed respecting the choice of Timothy for this special work. They were also a means of grace; for by means of them a spiritual blessing was bestowed upon the young minister. In alluding to them here, therefore, St. Paul reminds him Who it was by whom he was really chosen and ordained. It is as if he said, "We laid our hands upon you; but it was no ordinary election made by human votes. It was God who elected you; God who gave you your commission, and with it the power to fulfil it. Beware, therefore, of disgracing His appointment and of neglecting or abusing His gift."

The voice of prophecy, therefore, either pointed out Timothy as a chosen vessel for the ministry, or publicly ratified the choice which had already been made by St. Paul and others. But by whom was this voice of prophecy uttered? By a special order of prophets? Or by St. Paul and the presbyters specially inspired to act as such? The answer to this question involves some consideration of the office, or rather function, of a prophet, especially in the New Testament.

The word "prophet" is frequently understood in far too limited a sense. It is commonly restricted to the one function of predicting the future. But, if we may venture to coin words in order to bring out points of differences, there are three main ideas involved in the title "prophet." (1) A for-teller; one who speaks for or instead of another, especially one who speaks for or in the name of God; a Divine messenger, ambassador, interpreter, or spokesman. (2) A forth-teller; one who has a special message to deliver forth to the world; a proclaimer, harbinger, or herald. (3) A fore-teller; one who tells beforehand what is coming; a predicter of future events. To be the bearer or interpreter of a Divine message is the fundamental conception of the prophet in classical Greek; and to a large extent this conception prevails in both the Old and the New Testament. To be in immediate intercourse with Jehovah, and to be His spokesman to Israel, was what the Hebrews understood by the gift of prophecy. It was by no means necessary that the Divine communication which the prophet had to make known to the people should relate to the future. It might be a denunciation of past sins, or an exhortation respecting present conduct, quite as naturally as a prediction of what was coming. And in the Acts and Pauline Epistles the idea of a prophet remains much the same. He is one to whom has been granted special insight into God's counsels, and who communicates these mysteries to others. Both in the Jewish and primitive Christian dispensations, the prophets are the means of communication between God and His Church. Eight persons are mentioned by name in the Acts of the Apostles as exercising this gift of prophecy: Agabus, Barnabas, Symeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, Judas, Silas, and St. Paul himself. On certain occasions the Divine communication made to them by the Spirit included a knowledge of the future; as when Agabus foretold the great famine (xi. 28) and the imprisonment of St. Paul (xxi. 11), and when St. Paul told that the Holy Spirit testified to him in every city, that bonds and afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem (xx. 23). But this is the exception rather than the rule. It is in their character of prophets that Judas and Silas exhort and confirm the brethren. And, what is of special interest in reference to the prophecies uttered over Timothy, we find a group of prophets having special influence in the selection and ordination of Apostolic evangelists. "And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. Then when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (xiii. 2, 3).

We see, therefore, that these New Testament prophets were not a regularly constituted order, like apostles, with whom they are joined both in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xii. 28) and in that to the Ephesians (iv. 11). Yet they have this in common with apostles, that the work of both lies rather in founding Churches than in governing them. They have to convert and edify rather than to rule. They might or might not be apostles or presbyters as well as prophets; but as prophets they were men or women (such as the daughters of Philip) on whom a special gift of the Holy Spirit had been

conferred: and this gift enabled them to understand and expound Divine mysteries with inspired authority, and at times also to foretell the future.

So long as we bear these characteristics in mind, it matters little how we answer the question as to who it was that uttered the prophecies over Timothy at the time of his ordination. It may have been St. Paul and the presbyters who laid their hands upon him, and who on this occasion, at any rate, were endowed with the spirit of prophecy. Or it may have been that besides the presbyters there were prophets also present, who, at this solemn ceremony, exercised their gift of inspiration. The former seems more probable. It is clear from chap. iv. 14, that prophecy and imposition of hands were two concomitant acts by means of which spiritual grace was bestowed upon Timothy; and it is more reasonable to suppose that these two instrumental acts were performed by the same group of persons, than that one group prophesied, while another laid their hands on the young minister's head.

This gift of prophecy, St. Paul tells the Corinthians (1 Cor. xiv.), was one specially to be desired; and evidently it was by no means a rare one in the primitive Church. As we might expect, it was most frequently exercised in the public services of the congregation. "When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. . . . Let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern. But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence. For ye all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted; and the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." The chief object of the gift, therefore, was instruction and consolation for the conversion of unbelievers (24, 25), and for the building up of the faithful.

But we shall probably be right in making a distinction between the prophesying which frequently took place in the first Christian congregations, and those special interventions of the Holy Spirit of which we read occasionally. In these latter cases it is not so much spiritual instruction in an inspired form that is communicated, as a revelation of God's will with regard to some particular course of action. Such was the case when Paul and Silas were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia," and when "they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not:" or when on his voyage to Rome Paul was assured that he would stand before Cæsar, and that God had given him the lives of all those who sailed with him.*

Some have supposed that the Revelation of St. John was intended to mark the close of New Testament prophecy and to protect the Church against unwarrantable attempts at prophecy until the return of Christ to judge the world. This view would be more probable if the later date for the Apocalypse could be established. But if, as is far more probable, the Revelation was written *cir.* A. D. 68, it is hardly likely that St. John, during the lifetime of Apostles, would think of taking any such decisive step. In his First Epistle, written probably fifteen or twenty years after the Revelation, he gives a test for distinguishing true from false prophets (iv. 1-4); and this he would not have done, if he had believed that all true prophecy had ceased.

In the newly discovered "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" we find prophets among the ministers of the Church, just as in the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Philippians. The date of this interesting treatise has yet to be ascertained; but it seems to belong to the period between the Epistles of St. Paul and those of Ignatius. We may safely place it between the writings of St. Paul and those of Justin Martyr. In the Epistles to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xii. 28) we have "First apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then" those who had special gifts, such as healing or speaking with tongues. In Ephes. iv. 11 we are told that Christ "gave some to be apostles; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." The Epistle to the Philippians is addressed "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," where the plural shows that "bishop" cannot be used in the later diocesan sense; otherwise there would be only one bishop at Philippi. Prophets, therefore, in St. Paul's time are a common and important branch of the ministry. They rank next to apostles, and a single congregation may possess several of them. In Ignatius and later writers the ministers who are so conspicuous in the Acts and in St. Paul's Epistles disappear, and their place is taken by other ministers whose offices, at any rate in their later forms, are scarcely found in the New Testament at all. These are the bishops, presbyters, and deacons; to whom were soon added a number of subordinate officials, such as readers, exorcists, and the like. The ministry, as we find it in the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles," is in a state of transition from the Apostolic to the latter stage. As in the time of St. Paul we have both itinerant and local ministers; the itinerant ministers being chiefly apostles and prophets, whose functions do not seem to be marked off from one another very distinctly; and the local ministry consisting of two orders only, bishops and deacons, as in the address to the Church of Philippi. When we reach the Epistles of Ignatius and other documents of a date later than A. D. 110, we lose distinct traces of these itinerant apostles and prophets. The title "Apostle" is becoming confined to St. Paul and the Twelve, and the title of "Prophet" to the Old Testament prophets.

The gradual cessation or discredit of the function of the Christian prophet is thoroughly intelligible. Possibly the spiritual gift which rendered it possible was withdrawn from the Church. In any case the extravagances of enthusiasts who deluded themselves into the belief that they possessed the gift, or of impostors who deliberately assumed it, would bring the office into suspicion and disrepute. Such things were possible even in Apostolic times, for both St. Paul and St. John give cautions about it, and directions for dealing with the abuse and the false assumption of prophecy. In the next century the eccentric delusions of Montanus and his followers, and their vehement attempts to force their supposed revelations upon the whole Church, completed the discredit of all profession to prophetical power. This discredit has been intensified from time to time whenever such professions have been renewed; as, for example, by the extravagances of the Zwickau Prophets or Abecedarians in Luther's time, or of the Irvingites in our own day.

* Acts xvi. 6, 7, xxvii. 24; comp. xviii. 9, xx. 23, xxi. 4, 11, xxii. 17-21.

Since the death of St. John and the close of the Canon, Christians have sought for illumination in the written word of Scripture rather than in the utterances of prophets. It is there that each one of us may find "the prophecies that went before on" us, exhorting us and enabling us to "war the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience." There will always be those who crave for something more definite and personal; who long for, and perhaps create for themselves and believe in, some living authority to whom they can perpetually appeal. Scripture seems to them unsatisfying, and they erect for themselves an infallible pope, or a spiritual director, whose word is to be to them as the inspired utterances of a prophet. But we have to fall back on our own consciences at last: and whether we take Scripture or some other authority as our infallible guide, the responsibility of the choice still rests with ourselves. If a man will not hear Christ and His Apostles, neither will he be persuaded though a prophet was granted to him. If we believe not their writings, how shall we believe his words?

CHAPTER VII.

THE PUNISHMENT OF HYMENÆUS AND ALEXANDER.—DELIVERING TO SATAN AN EXCEPTIONAL INSTRUMENT OF PURIFICATION.—THE PERSONALITY OF SATAN.

1 Timothy i. 19, 20.

In the preceding discourse one of the special *charismata* which distinguish the Church of the Apostolic age was considered,—the gift of prophecy. It seems to have been an exceptional boon to enable the first Christians to perform very exceptional work. On the present occasion we have to consider a very different subject—the heavy penalty inflicted on two grievous offenders. This again would seem to be something exceptional. And the special gift and the special punishment have this much in common, that both of them were extraordinary means for promoting and preserving the holiness of the Church. The one existed for the edification, the other for the purification, of the members of the Christian community.

The necessity of strict discipline both for the individual and for the community had been declared by Christ from the outset. The eye that caused offence was to be plucked out, the hand and the foot that caused offence were to be cut off, and the hardened offender who refused to listen to the solemn remonstrances of the congregation was to be treated as a heathen and an outcast. The experience of the primitive Church had proved the wisdom of this. The fall of Judas had shown that the Apostolic band itself was not secure from evil of the very worst kind. The parent Church of Jerusalem was no sooner founded than a dark stain was brought upon it by the conduct of two of its members. In the very first glow of its youthful enthusiasm Ananias and Sapphira conspired together to pervert the general unselfishness to their own selfish end, by attempting to gain the credit for equal generosity with the rest, while keeping back something for themselves. The Church of Corinth was scarcely five years old, and the Apostle had been absent from it only about three years, when he learnt that in this Christian community, the firstfruits of the heathen world, a sin which even the heathen regarded as a monstrous pollution, had been committed, and that the congregation were glorying in it. Christians were boasting that the incestuous union of a man with his father's wife during his father's lifetime was a splendid illustration of Christian liberty. No stronger proof of the dangers of lax discipline could have been given. In the verses before us we have instances of similar peril on the doctrinal side. And in the insolent opposition which Diotrephes offered to St. John we have an illustration of the dangers of insubordination. If the Christian Church was to be saved from speedy collapse, strict discipline in morals, in doctrine, and in government, was plainly necessary.

The punishment of the incestuous person at Corinth should be placed side by side with the punishment of Hymenæus and Alexander, as recorded here. The two cases mutually explain one another. In each of them there occurs the remarkable formula of delivering or handing over to Satan. The meaning of it is not indisputable, and in the main two views are held respecting it. Some interpret it as being merely a synonym for excommunication. Others maintain that it indicates a much more exceptional penalty, which might or might not accompany excommunication.

1. On the one hand it is argued that the expression "deliver unto Satan" is a very intelligible periphrasis for "excommunicate." Excommunication involved "exclusion from all Christian fellowship, and consequently banishment to the society of those among whom Satan dwelt, and from which the offender had publicly severed himself." It is admitted that "handing over to Satan" is strong language to use in order to express ejection from the congregation and exclusion from all acts of worship, but it is thought that the acuteness of the crisis makes the strength of language intelligible.

2. But the strength of language needs no apology, if the "delivering unto Satan" means something extraordinary, over and above excommunication. This, therefore, is an advantage which the second mode of interpreting the expression has at the outset. Excommunication was a punishment which the congregation itself could inflict; but this handing over to Satan was an Apostolic act, to accomplish which the community without the Apostle had no power. It was a supernatural infliction of bodily infirmity, or disease, or death, as a penalty for grievous sin. We know this in the cases of Ananias and Sapphira and of Elymas. The incestuous person at Corinth is probably another instance: for "the destruction of the flesh" seems to mean some painful malady inflicted on that part of his nature which had been the instrument of his fall, in order that by its chastisement the higher part of his nature might be saved. And, if this be correct, then we seem to be justified in assuming the same respecting Hymenæus and Alexander. For although nothing is said in their case respecting "the destruction of the flesh," yet the expression "that they may be taught not to blaspheme," implies something of a similar kind. The word for "taught" (παιδευθῶσι) implies discipline and chastisement, sometimes in Classi-

cal Greek, frequently in the New Testament, a meaning which the word "teach" also not unfrequently has in English (Judges viii. 16). In illustration of this it is sufficient to point to the passage in Heb. xii., in which the writer insists that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Throughout the section this very word (παιδεύειν) and its cognate (παιδεία) are used. It is, therefore, scarcely doubtful that St. Paul delivered Hymenæus and Alexander to Satan, in order that Satan might have power to afflict their bodies (just as he was allowed power over the body of Job), with a view to their spiritual amelioration. This personal suffering, following close upon their sin and declared by the Apostle to be a punishment for it, would teach them to abandon it. St. Paul himself, as he has just told us, had been a blasphemer and by a supernatural visitation had been converted: why should not these two follow in both respects in his steps? Satan's willingness to co-operate in such measures need not surprise us. He is always ready to inflict suffering; and the fact that suffering sometimes draws the sufferer away from him and nearer to God, does not deter him from inflicting it. He knows well that suffering not unfrequently has the very opposite effect. It hardens and exasperates some men, while it humbles and purifies others. It makes one man say "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It makes another will to "renounce God and die." Satan hoped in Job's case to be able to provoke him to "renounce God to His face." In the case of these two blasphemers he would hope to induce them to blaspheme all the more.

We may pass by the question, "In what way did Hymenæus and Alexander blaspheme?" We can only conjecture that it was by publicly opposing some article of the Christian faith. But conjectures without evidence are not very profitable. If we were certain that the Hymenæus here mentioned with Alexander is identical with the one who is condemned with Philetus in 2 Tim. ii. 18 for virtually denying the resurrection, we should have some evidence. But this identification, although probable, is not certain. Still less certain is the identification of the Alexander condemned here with "Alexander the coppersmith," who in 2 Tim. iv. 14 is said to have done the Apostle much evil. But none of these questions is of great moment. What is of importance to notice is the Apostolic sentence upon the two blasphemers. And in it we have to notice four points. (1) It is almost certainly not identical with excommunication by the congregation, although it very probably was accompanied by this other penalty. (2) It is of a very extraordinary character, being a handing over into the power of the Evil One. (3) Its object is the reformation of the offenders, while at the same time (4) it serves as a warning to others, lest they by similar offences should suffer so awful a punishment. To all alike it brought home the serious nature of such sins. Even at the cost of cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye, the Christian community must be kept pure in doctrine as in life.

These two passages,—the one before us, and the one respecting the case of incest at Corinth,—are conclusive as to St. Paul's teaching respecting the existence and personality of the devil. They are supported and illustrated by a number of other passages in his writings; as when he tell the Thessalonians that "Satan hindered" his work, or warns the Corinthians that "even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light," and tells them that his own sore trouble in the flesh was like Job's, "a messenger of Satan to buffet" him. Not less clear is the teaching of St. Peter and St. John in Epistles which, with those of St. Paul to the Corinthians, are among the best authenticated works in ancient literature. "Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour," says the one: "He that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning," says the other. And, if we need higher authority, there is the declaration of Christ to the malignant and unbelieving Jews. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." With regard to this last passage, those who deny the personal existence of Satan must maintain either (1) that the Evangelist here attributes to Christ words which He never used; or (2) that Christ was willing to make use of a monstrous superstition in order to denounce his opponents with emphasis; or (3) that He Himself erroneously believed in the existence of a being who was a mere figment of an unenlightened imagination: in other words, that "the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil," when all the while there was no devil and no works of his to be destroyed.

The first of these views cuts at the root of all trust in the Gospels as historical documents. Words which imply that Satan is a person are attributed to Christ by the Synoptists no less than by St. John; and if the Evangelists are not to be believed in their report of Christ's sayings on this topic, what security have we that they are to be believed as to their reports of the rest of His teaching; or indeed as to anything which they narrate? Again, how are we to account for the very strong statements made by the Apostles themselves respecting the evil one, if they had never heard anything of the kind from Christ.

The second view has been adopted by Schleiermacher, who thinks that Christ accommodated His teaching to the ideas then prevalent among the Jews respecting Satan without sharing them Himself. He knew that Satan was a mere personification of the moral evil which every man finds in his own nature and in that of his fellowmen: but the Jews believed in the personality of this evil principle, and He acquiesced in the belief, not as being true, but as offering no fundamental opposition to His teaching. But is this consistent with the truthfulness of Christ? If a personal devil is an empty superstition, He went out of His way to confirm men in their belief in it. Why teach that the enemy who sowed the tares is the devil? Why interpret the birds that snatch away the freshly sown seed as Satan? It would have been so easy in each case to have spoken of impersonal temptations. Again, what motive can Christ have had for telling His Apostles (not the ignorant and superstitious multitude), that He Himself had endured the repeated solicitations of a personal tempter, who had conversed and argued with Him?

Those who, like Strauss and Renan, believe Jesus of Nazareth to have been a mere man, would naturally adopt the third view. In believing in the personality of Satan Jesus merely shared the superstitions of His age. To all those who wish to discuss with him whether we are still Christians, Strauss declares that "the belief in a devil is one of the most hideous sides of the ancient Christian faith," and that "the extent to which this dangerous delusion still controls men's ideas or has been banished from them is the very thing to regard as a measure of culture." But at the same time he admits that "to remove so fundamental a stone is dangerous for the whole edifice of the Christian faith. It was the young Goethe who remarked against Bahrdt that if ever an idea was biblical, this one [of the existence of a personal Satan] was such." And elsewhere Strauss declares that the conception of the Messiah and His kingdom without the antithesis of an infernal kingdom with a personal chief is as impossible as that of a North pole without a South pole.

To refuse to believe in an evil power external to ourselves is to believe that human nature itself is diabolical. Whence come the devilish thoughts that vex us even at the most sacred and solemn moments? If they do not come from the evil one and his myrmidons, they come from ourselves:—they are our own offspring. Such a belief might well drive us to despair. So far from being a "hideous" element in the Christian faith, the belief in a power "not ourselves, that makes for" wickedness, is a most consoling one. It has been said that, if there were no God, we should have to invent one: and with almost equal truth we might say that, if there were no devil, we should have to invent one. Without a belief in God bad men would have little to induce them to conquer their evil passions. Without a belief in a devil good men would have little hope of ever being able to do so.

The passage before us supplies us with another consoling thought with regard to this terrible adversary, who is always invisibly plotting against us. It is often for our own good that God allows him to have an advantage over us. He is permitted to inflict loss upon us through our persons and our property, as in the case of Job, and the woman whom he bowed down for eighteen years, in order to chasten us and teach us that "we have not here an abiding city." And he is permitted even to lead us into sin, in order to save us from spiritual pride, and to convince us that apart from Christ and in our own strength we can do nothing. These are not Satan's motives, but they are God's motives in allowing him to be "the ruler of this world," and to have much power over human affairs. Satan inflicts suffering from love of inflicting it, and leads into sin from love of sin: but God knows how to bring good out of evil by making the Evil One frustrate his own wiles. The devil malignantly afflicts souls that come within his power; but the affliction leads to those souls being "saved in the day of the Lord." It had that blessed effect in the case of the incestuous person at Corinth. Whether the same is true of Hymenæus and Alexander, there is nothing in Scripture to tell us. It is for us to take care that in our case the chastisements which inevitably follow upon sin do not drive us further and further into it, but teach us to sin no more.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP; INTERCESSORY PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING—THE SOLIDARITY OF CHRISTENDOM AND OF THE HUMAN RACE.

1 Timothy ii. 1.

The first chapter of the Epistle is more or less introductory. It repeats what St. Paul had already said to his beloved disciple by word of mouth, on the subject of Christian doctrine, and the necessity of keeping it pure. It makes a digression respecting the Apostle's own conversion. It reminds Timothy of the hopeful prophecies uttered over him at his ordination; and it points out the terrible consequences of driving conscience from the helm and placing oneself in antagonism to the Almighty. In this second chapter St. Paul goes on to mention in order the subjects which led to the writing of the letter; and the very first exhortation which he has to give is that respecting Christian worship and the duty of intercessory prayer and thanksgiving.

There are two things very worthy of remark in the treatment of the subject of worship in the Pastoral Epistles. First, these letters bring before us a more developed form of worship than we find indicated in the earlier writings of St. Paul. It is still very primitive, but it has grown. And this is exactly what we ought to expect, especially when we remember how rapidly the Christian Church developed its powers during the first century and a half. Secondly, the indications of this more developed form of worship occur only in the letters to Timothy, which deal with the condition of things in the Church of Ephesus, a Church which had already been founded for a considerable time, and was in a comparatively advanced stage of organisation. Hence we are not surprised to find in these two Epistles fragments of what appear to be primitive liturgical forms. In the first Epistle we have two grand doxologies, which may be the outcome of the Apostle's devotion at the moment, but are quite as likely to be quotations of formulas well known to Timothy (i. 17; vi. 15, 16). Between these two we have what looks like a portion of a hymn in praise of Jesus Christ, suitable for singing antiphonally (iii. 16; comp. Pliny, "Epp." x. 96): and also what may be a baptismal exhortation (vi. 12). In the Second Epistle we have traces of another liturgical formula (ii. 11-13).

St. Paul of course does not mean, as the A. V. might lead us to suppose, that in all Christian worship intercession ought to come first; still less that intercession is the first duty of a Christian. But he does place it first among those subjects about which he has to give directions in this Epistle. He makes sure that it shall not be forgotten by himself in writing to his delegate at Ephesus; and he wishes to make sure that it shall not be forgotten by Timothy in his ministration. To offer prayers and thanksgivings on behalf of all men is a duty of such high importance that the Apostle places it first among the topics of his pastoral charge.

Was it a duty which Timothy and the congregation committed to his care had been neglecting, or were in serious danger of neglecting? It may well have been so. In the difficulties of

the overseer's own personal position, and in the varied dangers to which his little flock were so unceasingly exposed, the claims of others upon their united prayer and praise may sometimes have been forgotten. When the Apostle had left Timothy to take his place for a time in Ephesus he had hoped to return very soon, and consequently had given him only brief and somewhat hasty directions as to his course of action during his absence. He had been prevented from returning; and there was a probability that Timothy would have to be his representative for an indefinite period. Meanwhile the difficulties of Timothy's position had not diminished. Many of his flock were much older men than himself, and some of them had been elders in the Church of Ephesus long before the Apostle's beloved disciple was placed in charge of them. Some of the leaders in the congregation had become tainted with the Gnostic errors with which the intellectual atmosphere of Ephesus was charged, and were endeavouring to make compromise and confusion between heathen lawlessness and Christian liberty. Besides which, there was the bitter hostility of the Jews, who regarded both Paul and Timothy as renegades from the faith of their ancestors, and who never lost an opportunity of thwarting and reviling them. Above all there was the ever-present danger of heathenism, which confronted the Christians every time they left the shelter of their own houses. In the city which counted it as its chief glory that it was the "Temple-keeper of the great Artemis" (Acts xix. 35), every street through which the Christians walked, and every heathen house which they entered, was full of pagan abominations; to say nothing of the magnificent temples, beautiful groves, and seductive idolatrous rites, which were among the main features that attracted such motley crowds to Ephesus. Amid difficulties and perils such as these, it would not be wonderful if Timothy and those committed to his care had been somewhat oblivious of the fact that "behind the mountains also there are people;" that beyond the narrow limits of their contracted horizon there were interests as weighty as their own—Christians who were as dear to God as themselves, whose needs were as great as their own, and to whom the Lord had been equally gracious; and moreover countless hosts of heathen, who also were God's children, needing His help and receiving His blessings; for all of whom, as well as for themselves, the Church in Ephesus was bound to offer prayer and thanksgiving.

But there is no need to assume that Timothy, and those committed to his care, had been specially neglectful of this duty. To keep clearly in view our responsibilities towards the whole human race, or even towards the whole Church, is so difficult a thing for all of us, that the prominent place which St. Paul gives to the obligation to offer prayers and thanksgivings for all men is quite intelligible, without the supposition that the disciple whom he addresses was more in need of such a charge than other ministers in the Churches under St. Paul's care.

The Apostle uses three different words for prayer, the second of which is a general term and covers all kinds of prayer to God, and the first a still more general term, including petitions addressed to man. Either of the first two would embrace the third, which indicates a bold and earnest approach to the Almighty to implore some great benefit. None of the three words necessarily means intercession in the sense of prayer on behalf of others. This idea comes from the context. St. Paul says plainly that it is prayers and thanksgivings "for all men" that he desires to have made: and in all probability he did not carefully distinguish in his mind the shades of meaning which are proper to the three terms which he uses. Whatever various kinds of supplication there may be which are offered by man at the throne of grace, he urges that the whole human race are to have the benefit of them. Obviously, as Chrysostom long ago pointed out, we cannot limit the Apostle's "all men" to all believers. Directly he enters into detail he mentions "kings and all that are in high place;" and in St. Paul's day not a single king, and we may almost say not a single person in high place, was a believer. The scope of a Christian's desires and gratitude, when he appears before the Lord, must have no narrower limit than that which embraces the whole human race. This important principle, the Apostle charges his representative, must be exhibited in the public worship of the Church in Ephesus.

The solidarity of the whole body of Christians, however distant from one another in space and time, however different from one another in nationality, in discipline, and even in creed, is a magnificent fact, of which we all of us need from time to time to be reminded, and which, even when we are reminded of it, we find it somewhat difficult to grasp. Members of sects that we never heard of, dwelling in remote regions of which we do not even know the names, are nevertheless united to us by the eternal ties of a common baptism and a common belief in God and in Jesus Christ. The eastern sectarian in the wilds of Asia, and the western sectarian in the backwoods of North America, are members of Christ and our brethren; and as such have spiritual interests identical with our own, for which it is not only our duty, but our advantage to pray. "Whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it." The ties which bind Christians to one another are at once so subtle and so real, that it is impossible for one Christian to remain unaffected by the progress or retrogression of any other. Therefore, not only does the law of Christian charity require us to aid all our fellow-Christians by praying for them, but the law of self-interest leads us to do so also; for their advance will assuredly help us forward, and their relapse will assuredly keep us back. All this is plain matter of fact, revealed to us by Christ and His apostles, and confirmed by our own experience, so far as our feeble powers of observation are able to supply a test. Nevertheless, it is a fact of such enormous proportions (even without taking into account our close relationship with those who have passed away from this world), that even with our best efforts we fail to realise it in its immensity.

What shall we say, then, about the difficulty of realising the solidarity of the whole human race? For they also are God's offspring, and as such are of one family with ourselves. If it is hard to remember that the welfare of the humblest member of a remote and obscure community in Christendom intimately concerns ourselves, how shall we keep in view the fact that we have both interests

and obligations in reference to the wildest and most degraded heathens in the heart of Africa or in the islands of the Pacific? Here is a fact on a far more stupendous scale; for in the population of the globe, those who are not even in name Christians, outnumber us by at least three to one. And yet let us never forget that our interest in these countless multitudes, whom we have never seen and never shall see in this life, is not a mere graceful sentiment or empty flourish of rhetoric, but a sober and solid fact. The hackneyed phrase, "a man and a brother," represents a vital truth. Every human being is one of our brethren, and, whether we like the responsibility or not, we are still our "brother's keeper." In our keeping, to a very real extent, lie the supreme issues of his spiritual life, and we have to look to it that we discharge our trust faithfully. We read with horror, and it may be with compassion, of the monstrous outrages committed by savage chiefs upon their subjects, their wives, or their enemies. We forget that the guilt of these things may lie partly at our door, because we have not done our part in helping forward civilising influences which would have prevented such horrors, above all because we have not prayed as we ought for those who commit them. There are few of us who have not some opportunities of giving assistance in various ways to missionary enterprise and humanising efforts. But all of us can at least pray for God's blessing upon such things, and for His mercy upon those who are in need of it. Of those who, having nothing else to give, give their struggles after holiness and their prayers for their fellow-men, the blessed commendation stands written, "They have done what they could."

"For kings and all that are in high place." It is quite a mistake to suppose that "kings" here means the Roman Emperors. This has been asserted, and from this misinterpretation has been deduced the erroneous conclusion that the letter must have been written at a time when it was customary for the Emperor to associate another prince with him in the empire, with a view to securing the succession. As Hadrian was the first to do this, and that near to the close of his reign, this letter (it is urged) cannot be earlier than A. D. 138. But this interpretation is impossible, for "kings" in the Greek has no article. Had the writer meant the two reigning Emperors, whether Hadrian and Antoninus, or M. Aurelius and Verus, he would inevitably have written "for the kings and for all in high place." The expression "for kings," obviously means "for monarchs of all descriptions," including the Roman Emperor, but including many other potentates also. Such persons, as having the heaviest responsibilities and the greatest power of doing good and evil, have an especial claim upon the prayers of Christians. It gives us a striking illustration of the transforming powers of Christianity when we think of St. Paul giving urgent directions that among the persons to be remembered first in the intercessions of the Church are Nero and the men whom he put "in high place," such as Otho and Vitellius, who afterwards became Emperor: and this, too, after Nero's peculiarly cruel and wanton persecution of the Christians A. D. 64. How firmly this beautiful practice became established among Christians is shown from their writings in the second and third centuries. Tertullian, who lived through the reigns of such monsters as Commodus and Elagabalus, who remembered the persecution under M. Aurelius, and witnessed that under Septimius Severus, can nevertheless write thus of the Emperor of Rome: "A Christian is the enemy of no one, least of all of the Emperor, whom he knows to have been appointed by his God, and whom he therefore of necessity loves, and reverences, and honours, and desires his well-being, with that of the whole Roman Empire, so long as the world shall stand; for it shall last as long. To the Emperor, therefore, we render such homage as is lawful for us and good for him, as the human being who comes next to God, and is what he is by God's decree, and to God alone is inferior. . . . And so we sacrifice also for the well-being of the Emperor; but to our God and his; but in the way that God has ordained, with a prayer that is pure. For God, the Creator of the universe, has no need of odours or of blood." In another passage Tertullian anticipates the objection that Christians pray for the Emperor, in order to curry favour with the Roman government and thus escape persecution. He says that the heathen have only to look into the Scriptures, which to Christians are the voice of God, and see that to pray for their enemies and to pray for those in authority is a fundamental rule with Christians. And he quotes the passage before us. But he appears to misunderstand the concluding words of the Apostle's injunction,—"that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." Tertullian understands this as a reason for praying for kings and rulers; because they are the preservers of the public peace, and any disturbance in the empire will necessarily affect the Christians as well as other subjects,—which is giving a rather narrow and selfish motive for this great duty. "That we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity," is the object and consequence, not of our praying for kings and rulers in particular, but of our offering prayers and thanksgivings on behalf of all men.

When this most pressing obligation is duly discharged, then, and only then, can we hope with tranquil consciences to be able to live Christian lives in retirement from the rivalries and jealousies and squabbles of the world. Only in the attitude of mind which makes us pray and give thanks for our fellowmen is the tranquillity of a godly life possible. The enemies of Christian peace and quietness are anxiety and strife. Are we anxious about the well-being of those near and dear to us, or of those whose interests are bound up with our own? Let us pray for them. Have we grave misgivings respecting the course which events are taking in Church, or in State, or in any of the smaller societies to which we belong? Let us offer supplications and intercessions on behalf of all concerned in them. Prayer offered in faith to the throne of grace will calm our anxiety, because it will assure us that all is in God's hand, and that in His own good time He will bring good out of the evil. Are we at strife with our neighbours, and is this a constant source of disturbance? Let us pray for them. Fervent and frequent prayers for those who are hostile to us will certainly secure this much,—that we ourselves become more wary about giving provocation; and this will go a long way towards bringing the attainment of our desire for the entire cessation of the strife.

Is there any one to whom we have taken a strong aversion, whose very presence is a trial to us, whose every gesture and every tone irritates us, and the sight of whose handwriting makes us shiver, because of its disturbing associations? Let us pray for him. Sooner or later dislike must give way to prayer. It is impossible to go on taking a real interest in the welfare of another, and at the same time to go on detesting him. And if our prayers for his welfare are genuine, a real interest in it there must be. Is there any one of whom we are jealous? Of whose popularity, so dangerous to our own, we are envious? Whose success—quite undeserved success, as it seems to us—disgusts and frightens us? Whose mishaps and failures, nay even whose faults and misdeeds, give us pleasure and satisfaction? Let us thank God for the favour which He bestows upon this man. Let us praise our heavenly Father for having in His wisdom and His justice given to another of His children what He denies to us; and let us pray Him to keep this other from abusing His gifts.

Yes, let us never forget that not only prayers, but thanksgivings, are to be offered for all men. He who is so good to the whole Church, of which we are members, and to the great human family to which we belong, certainly has a claim upon the gratitude of every human being, and especially of every Christian. His bounty is not given by measure or by merit. He maketh His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust: and shall we pick and choose as to what we will thank Him for, and what not? The sister who loves her erring or her half-witted brother is grateful to her father for the care which he bestows upon his graceless and his useless son. And shall we not give thanks to our heavenly Father for the benefits which He bestows on the countless multitudes whose interests are so closely interwoven with our own? Benefits bestowed upon any human being are an answer to our prayers, and as such we are bound to give thanks for them. How much more grateful shall we be, when we are able to look on them as benefits bestowed upon those whom we love!

This is the cause of so much of our failure in prayer. We do not couple our prayers with thanksgiving; or at any rate our thanksgivings are far less hearty than our prayers. We give thanks for benefits received by ourselves: we forget to give thanks "for all men." Above all, we forget that the truest gratitude is shown, not in words or feelings, but in conduct. We should send good deeds after good words to heaven. Not that our ingratitude provokes God to withhold His gifts; but that it does render us less capable of receiving them. For the sake of others no less than for ourselves let us remember the Apostle's charge that "thanksgivings be made for all men." We cannot give plenty and prosperity to the nations of the earth. We cannot bestow on them peace and tranquillity. We cannot bring them out of darkness to God's glorious light. We cannot raise them from impurity to holiness. We can only do a little, a very little towards these great ends. But one thing we can do. We can at least thank Him who has already bestowed some, and is preparing to bestow others, of these blessings. We can praise Him for the end towards which he will have all things work.—"He willeth that all men should be saved" (ver. 4), "that God may be all in all."

CHAPTER IX.

BEHAVIOUR IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: MEN'S ATTITUDE OF BODY AND MIND: WOMEN'S ATTIRE AND ORNAMENT.

1 Timothy ii. 8-12.

In the preceding verses of this chapter, St. Paul has been insisting on the duty of unselfishness in our devotions. Our prayers and thanksgivings are not to be bounded in their scope by our own personal interests, but are to include the whole human race; and for this obvious and sufficient reason,—that in using such devotions we know that our desires are in harmony with the mind of God, "who willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Having thus laid down the principles which are to guide Christian congregations in the subject-matter of their prayers and thanksgivings, he passes on now to give some directions respecting the behaviour of men and women, when they meet together for common worship of the one God and the one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus.

There is no reasonable doubt (although the point has been disputed) that St. Paul is here speaking of public worship in the congregation; the whole context implies it. Some of the directions would be scarcely intelligible, if we were to suppose that the Apostle is thinking of private devotions, or even of family prayer in Christian households. And we are not to suppose that he is indirectly finding fault with other forms of worship, Jewish or heathen. He is merely laying down certain principles which are to guide Christians, whether at Ephesus or elsewhere, in the conduct of public service. Thus there is no special emphasis on "in every place," as if the meaning were, "Our ways are not like those of the Jews; for they were not allowed to sacrifice and perform their services anywhere, but assembling from all parts of the world were bound to perform all their worship in the temple. For as Christ commanded us to pray for all men, because He died for all men, so it is good to pray everywhere." Such an antithesis between Jewish and Christian worship, even if it were true, would not be in place here. Every place is a place of private prayer to both Jew and Christian alike: but not every place is a place of public prayer to the Christian any more than to the Jew. Moreover, the Greek shows plainly that the emphasis is not on "in every place," but on "pray." Wherever there may be a customary "house of prayer," whether in Ephesus or anywhere else, the Apostle desires that prayers should be offered publicly by the men in the congregation. After "pray," the emphasis falls on "the men," public prayer is to be made, and it is to be conducted by the men and not by the women in the congregation.

It is evident from this passage, as from 1 Cor. xiv., that in this primitive Christian worship great freedom was allowed. There is no Bishop, President, or Elder, to whom the right of leading the service or uttering the prayers and thanksgivings is reserved. This duty and privilege is shared by all the males alike. In the re-

cently discovered "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" nothing is said as to who is to offer the prayers, of which certain forms are given. It is merely stated that in addition to these forms *extempore* prayer may be offered by "the prophets." And Justin Martyr mentions that a similar privilege was allowed to "the president" of the congregation according to his ability. Thus we seem to trace a gradual increase of strictness, a development of ecclesiastical order, very natural under the circumstances. First, all the men in the congregation are allowed to conduct public worship, as here and in 1 Corinthians. Then, the right of adding to the prescribed forms is restricted to the prophets, as in the "Didaché." Next, this right is reserved to the presiding minister, as in Justin Martyr. And lastly, free prayer is abolished altogether. We need not assume that precisely this development took place in all the Churches; but that something analogous took place in nearly all. Nor need we assume that the development was simultaneous: while one Church was at one stage of the process, another was more advanced, and a third less so. Again, we may conjecture that forms of prayer gradually increased in number, and in extent, and in stringency. But in the directions here given to Timothy we are at the beginning of the development.

"Lifting up holy hands. Here, again, we need not suspect any polemical purpose. St. Paul is not insinuating that, when Gnostics or heathen lift up their hands in prayer, their hands are not holy. Just as every Christian is ideally a saint, so every hand that is lifted up in prayer is holy. In thus stating the ideal, the Apostle inculcates the realisation of it. There is a monstrous incongruity in one who comes red-handed from the commission of a sin, lifting up the very members which witness against him, in order to implore a blessing from the God whom he has outraged. The same idea is expressed in more general terms by St. Peter: "Like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. i. 15, 16). In a passage more closely parallel to this, Clement of Rome says, "Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, with love towards our gentle and compassionate Father who made us an elect portion unto Himself" ("Cor." xxix). And Tertullian urges that "a defiled spirit cannot be recognised by the Holy Spirit" ("De Orat.," xiii.). Nowhere else in the New Testament do we read of this attitude of lifting up the hands during prayer. But to this day it is common in the East. Solomon at the dedication of the temple "stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven" (1 Kings viii. 22); and the Psalmist repeatedly speaks of "lifting up the hands" in worship (xxviii. 2; lxiii. 4; cxxxiv. 2). Clement of Alexandria seems to have regarded it as the ideal attitude in prayer, as symbolising the desire of the body to abstract itself from the earth, following the eagerness of the spirit in yearning for heavenly things. Tertullian, on the other hand, suggests that the arms are spread out in prayer in memory of the crucifixion, and directs that they should be extended, but only slightly raised, an attitude which is more in harmony with a humble spirit: and in another place he says that the Christian by his very posture in prayer is ready for every infliction. He asserts that the Jews in his day did not raise the hands in prayer, and characteristically gives as a reason that they were stained with the blood of the Prophets and of Christ. With evident reference to this passage, he says that Christian hands must be lifted up pure from falsehood, murder, and all other sins of which the hands can be the instruments. Ancient Christian monuments of the earliest age frequently represent the faithful as standing with raised hands to pray. Eusebius tells us that Constantine had himself represented in this attitude on his coins, "looking upwards, stretching up toward God, like one praying." Of course this does not mean that kneeling was unusual or irregular; there is plenty of evidence to the contrary. But the attitude here commended by St. Paul was very ancient when he wrote, and has continued in some parts of the world ever since. Like so many other things in natural religion and in Judaism, it received a new and intensified meaning when it was adopted among the usages of the Christian Church.

"Without wrath and disputing:" that is, in the spirit of Christian peace and trust. Ill-will and misgiving respecting one another are incompatible with united prayer to our common Father. The atmosphere of controversy is not congenial to devotion. Christ Himself has told us to be reconciled to our brother before presuming to offer our gift on the altar. In a similar spirit St. Paul directs that those who are to conduct public service in the sanctuary must do so without angry feelings or mutual distrust. In the Pastoral Epistles warnings against quarrelsome conduct are frequent; and the experience of every one of us tells us how necessary they are. The bishop is charged to be "no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious." The deacons must not be "double-tongued." Women must not be "slanderers." Young widows have to be on their guard against being "tattlers and busybodies." Timothy is charged to "follow after . . . love, patience, meekness," and is reminded that "the Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves." Titus again is told that a bishop must be "not self-willed, not soon angry," "no brawler, no striker," that the aged women must not be "slanderers," that all men are to be put in mind "to speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men." There is no need to assume that that age, or that those Churches, had any special need of warnings of this kind. All ages and all Churches need them. To keep one's tongue and one's temper in due order is to all of us one of the most constant and necessary duties of the Christian life; and the neglect cannot fail to be disastrous to the reality and efficacy of our devotions. Those who have ill-will and strife in their hearts cannot unite to much purpose in common thanksgiving and prayer.

And just as the men have to take care that their attitude of body and mind is such as befits the dignity of public worship, in like manner the women also have to take care that their presence in the congregation does not appear incongruous. They must come in seemly attire and with seemly behaviour. Everything which might divert attention from the service to them-

selves must be avoided. Modesty and simplicity must at all times be the characteristics of a Christian woman's dress and bearing; but at no time is this more necessary than in the public services of the Church. Excessive adornment, out of place at all times, is grievously offensive there. It gives a flat contradiction to the profession of humanity which is involved in taking part in common worship, and to that natural sobriety which is a woman's fairest ornament and best protection. Both reverence and self-reverence are injured by it. Moreover, it may easily be a cause of offence to others, by provoking jealousy or admiration of the creature, where all ought to be absorbed in the worship of the Creator.

Here again St. Paul is putting his finger upon dangers and evils which are not peculiar to any age or any Church. He had spoken of the same thing years before, to the women of Corinth, and St. Peter utters similar warnings to Christian women throughout all time. Clement of Alexandria abounds in protests against the extravagance in dress so common in his own day. In one place he says; "Apelles the painter, seeing one of his pupils painting a figure thickly with gold colour to represent Helen, said to him; 'My lad, you were unable to paint her beautiful, and so you have made her rich.' Such Helens are the ladies of the present day; not really beautiful, but richly got up. To these the Spirit prophesies by Zephaniah: And their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's anger." Tertullian is not less emphatic. He says that most Christian women dress like heathen, as if modesty required nothing more than stopping short of actual impurity. "What is the use," he asks, "of showing a decent and Christian simplicity in your face, while you load the rest of your body with the dangling absurdities of pomps and vanities?" Chrysostom also, in commenting on this very passage, asks the congregation at Antioch: "And what then is modest apparel? Such as covers them completely and decently, and not with superfluous ornaments; for the one is decent and the other is not. What? Do you approach God to pray with broidered hair and ornaments of gold? Are you come to a ball? to a marriage-feast? to a carnival? There such costly things might have been seasonable: here not one of them is wanted. You are come to pray, to ask pardon for your sins, to plead for your offences, beseeching the Lord, and hoping to render Him propitious to you. Away with such hypocrisy! God is not mocked. This is the attire of actors and dancers, who live upon the stage. Nothing of this kind becomes a modest woman, who should be adorned with shamefastness and sobriety. . . . And if St. Paul" (he continues) "would remove those things which are merely the marks of wealth, as gold, pearls, and costly array; how much more those things which imply studied adornment, as painting, colouring the eyes, a mincing walk, an affected voice, a languishing look? For he glances at all these things in speaking of modest apparel and shamefastness."

But there is no need to go to Corinth in the first century, or Alexandria and Carthage in the second and third, or Antioch in the fourth, in order to show that the Apostle was giving no unnecessary warning in admonishing Timothy respecting the dress and behaviour of Christian women, especially in the public services of the congregation. In our own age and our own Church we can find abundant illustration. Might not any preacher in any fashionable congregation echo with a good deal of point the questions of Chrysostom? "Have you come to a dance or a levée?' Have you mistaken this building for a theatre?" And what would be the language of a Chrysostom or a Paul if he were to enter a theatre nowadays and see the attire, I will not say of the actresses, but of the audience? There are some rough epithets, not often heard in polite society, which express in plain language the condition of those women who by their manner of life and conversation have forfeited their characters. Preachers in earlier ages were accustomed to speak very plainly about such things: and what the Apostle and Chrysostom have written in their epistles and homilies does not leave us in much doubt as to what would have been their manner of speaking of them.

But what is urged here is sufficient. "You are Christian women," says St. Paul, "and the profession which you have adopted is reverence towards God (*θεοσέβειαν*). This profession you have made known to the world. It is necessary, therefore, that those externals of which the world takes cognisance should not give the lie to your profession. And how is unseemly attire, paraded at the very time of public worship, compatible with the reverence which you have professed? Reverence God by reverencing yourselves; by guarding with jealous care the dignity of those bodies with which He has endowed you. Reverence God by coming before Him clothed both in body and soul in fitting attire. Let your bodies be freed from meretricious decoration. Let your souls be adorned with abundance of good works."

CHAPTER X.

ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY; VARIOUS CERTAINTIES AND PROBABILITIES DISTINGUISHED.

1 Timothy iii. 1-10.

This passage is one of the most important in the New Testament respecting the Christian ministry; and in the Pastoral Epistles it does not stand alone. Of the two classes of ministers mentioned here, one is again touched upon in the Epistle to Titus (i. 5-9), and the qualifications for this office, which is evidently the superior of the two, are stated in terms not very different from those which are used in the passage before us. Therefore a series of expositions upon the Pastoral Epistles would be culpably incomplete which did not attempt to arrive at some conclusions respecting the question of the primitive Christian ministry; a question which at the present time is being investigated with immense industry and interest, and with some clear and substantial results. The time is probably far distant when the last word will have been said upon the subject; for it is one on which considerable difference of opinion is not only possible but reasonable: and those persons would seem to be least worthy of consideration, who are most confident that they are in possession of the whole truth on the subject. One of the first requisites in the examination of

questions of fact is a power of accurately distinguishing what is certain from what is not certain: and the person who is confident that he has attained to certainty, when the evidence in his possession does not at all warrant certainty, is not a trustworthy guide.

It would be impossible in a discussion of moderate length to touch upon all the points which have been raised in connection with this problem; but some service will have been rendered if a few of the more important features of the question are pointed out and classified under the two heads just indicated, as certain or not certain. In any scientific enquiry, whether historical or experimental, this classification is a useful one, and very often leads to the enlargement of the class of certainties. When the group of certainties has been properly investigated, and when the various items have been placed in their proper relations to one another and to the whole of which they are only constituent parts, the result is likely to be a transfer of other items from the domain of what is only probable or possible to the domain of what is certain.

At the outset it is necessary to place a word of caution as to what is meant, in a question of this kind, by certainty. There are no limits to scepticism, as the history of speculative philosophy has abundantly shown. It is possible to question one's own existence, and still more possible to question the irresistible evidence of one's senses or the irresistible conclusions of one's reason. *A fortiori* it is possible to throw doubt upon any historical fact. We can, if we like, classify the assassinations of Julius Cæsar and of Cicero, and the genuineness of the Æneid and of the Epistles to the Corinthians, among things that are not certain. They cannot be demonstrated like a proposition in Euclid or an experiment in chemistry or physics. But a sceptical criticism of this kind makes history impossible; for it demands as a condition of certainty a kind of evidence, and an amount of evidence, which from the nature of the case is unattainable. Juries are directed by the courts to treat evidence as adequate, which they would be willing to recognise as such in matters of very serious moment to themselves. There is a certain amount of evidence which to a person of trained and well-balanced mind makes a thing "practically certain:" *i. e.*, with this amount of evidence before him he would confidently act on the assumption that the thing was true.

In the question before us there are four or five things which may with great reason be treated as practically certain.

1. The solution of the question as to the origin of the Christian ministry has no practical bearing upon the lives of Christians. For us the problem is one of historical interest without moral import. As students of Church History we are bound to investigate the *origines* of the ministry which has been one of the chief factors in that history: but our loyalty as members of the Church will not be affected by the result of our investigations. Our duty towards the constitution consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, which existed unchallenged from the close of the second century to the close of the Middle Ages, and which has existed down to the present day in all the three great branches of the Catholic Church, Roman, Oriental, and Anglican, is no way affected by the question whether the constitution of the Church during the century which separates the writings of St. John from the writings of his disciple's disciple, Irenæus, was as a rule episcopal, collegiate, or presbyterian. For a churchman who accepts the episcopal form of government as essential to the well-being of a Church, the enormous prescription which that form has acquired during at least seventeen centuries, is such ample justification, that he can afford to be serene as to the outcome of enquiries respecting the constitution of the various infant Churches from A. D. 85 to A. D. 185. It makes no practical difference either to add, or not to add, to an authority which is already ample. To prove that the episcopal form of government was founded by the Apostles may have been a matter of great practical importance in the middle of the second century. But, before that century had closed, the practical question, if there ever was one, had settled itself. God's providence ordained that the universal form of Church government should be the episcopal form and should continue to be such; and for us it adds little to its authority to know that the way in which it became universal was through the instrumentality and influence of Apostles. On the other hand, to prove that episcopacy was established independently of Apostolic influence would detract very little from its accumulated authority.

2. A second point, which may be regarded as certain with regard to this question, is, that for the period which joins the age of Irenæus to the age of St. John, we have not sufficient evidence to arrive at anything like proof. The evidence has received important additions during the present century, and still more important additions are by no means impossible; but at present our materials are still inadequate. And the evidence is insufficient in two ways. First, although surprisingly large as compared with what might have been reasonably expected, yet in itself, the literature of this period is fragmentary and scanty. Secondly, the dates of some of the most important witnesses cannot as yet be accurately determined. In many cases to be able to fix the date of a document within twenty or thirty years is quite sufficient: but this is a case in which the difference of twenty years is a really serious difference; and there is fully that amount of uncertainty as to the date of some of the writings which are our principal sources of information; *e. g.*, the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles," the Epistles of Ignatius, the "Shepherd of Hermas," and the "Clementines." Here also our position may improve. Further research may enable us to date some of these documents accurately. But, for the present, uncertainty about precise dates and general scantiness of evidence compel us to admit that with regard to many of the points connected with this question nothing that can fairly be called proof is possible respecting the interval which separates the last quarter of the first century from the last quarter of the second.

This feature of the problem is sometimes represented by the useful metaphor that the history of the Church just at this period "passes through a tunnel" or "runs underground." We are in the light of day during most of the time covered by the New Testament; and we are again in the light of day directly we reach the time covered by the abundant writings of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others. But during the intervening period we are, not indeed in total darkness, but in a passage the obscurity of

which is only slightly relieved by an occasional lamp or light-hole. Leaving this tantalising interval, about which the one thing that is certain is that many certainties are not likely to be found in it, we pass on to look for our two next certainties in the periods which precede and follow it.

3. In the period covered by the New Testament it is certain that the Church had officers who discharged spiritual functions which were not discharged by ordinary Christians; in other words a distinction was made from the first between clergy and laity. Of this fact the Pastoral Epistles contain abundant evidence; and further evidence is scattered up and down the New Testament, from the earliest document in the volume to the last. In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is certainly the earliest Christian writing that has come down to us, we find St. Paul beseeching the Church of the Thessalonians "to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake" (v. 12, 13). The three functions here enumerated are evidently functions to be exercised by a few with regard to the many: they are not duties which every one is to discharge towards every one. In the Third Epistle of St. John, which is certainly one of the latest, and perhaps the very latest, of the writings contained in the New Testament, the incident about Diotrephes seems to show that not only ecclesiastical government, but ecclesiastical government by a single official, was already in existence in the Church in which Diotrephes "loved to have the pre-eminence" (9, 10). In between these two we have the exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account" (xiii. 17). And directly we go outside the New Testament and look at the Epistle of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth, commonly called the First Epistle of Clement, we find the same distinction between clergy and laity observed. In this letter, which almost certainly was written during the lifetime of St. John, we read that the Apostles, "preaching everywhere in country and town, appointed their firstfruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did in no new fashion; for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the Scripture in a certain place, I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith"—the last words being an inaccurate quotation of the LXX. of Isa. lx. 17. And a little further on Clement writes: "Our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife over the name of the bishop's office. For this cause, therefore, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the aforesaid persons, and afterwards they provided a continuance, that if these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministration. Those therefore who were appointed by them, or afterward by other men of repute with the consent of the whole Church, and have ministered unblamably to the flock of Christ in lowliness of mind, peacefully and with all modesty, and for long time have borne a good report with all—these men we consider to be unjustly thrust out from their ministration. For it will be no light sin for us, if we thrust out those who have offered the gifts of the bishop's office unblamably and holily. Blessed are those presbyters who have gone before, seeing that their departure was fruitful and ripe, for they have no fear lest any one should remove them from their appointed place. For we see that ye have displaced certain persons, though they were living honourably, from the ministration which they had kept blamelessly" (xlii., xliv.).

Three things come out very clearly from this passage, confirming what has been found in the New Testament. (1) There is a clear distinction made between clergy and laity. (2) This distinction is not a temporary arrangement, but is the basis of a permanent organisation. (3) A person who has been duly promoted to the ranks of the clergy as a presbyter or bishop (the two titles being here synonymous, as in the Epistle to Titus) holds that position for life. Unless he is guilty of some serious offence, to depose him is no light sin.

None of these passages, either in the New Testament or in Clement, tells us very clearly the precise nature of the functions which the clergy, as distinct from the laity, were to discharge; yet they indicate that these functions were of a spiritual rather than of a secular character, that they concerned men's souls rather than their bodies, and that they were connected with religious service (*λειτουργία*). But the one thing which is quite clear is this,—that the Church had, and was always intended to have, a body of officers distinct from the congregations to which they ministered and over which they ruled.

4. For our fourth certainty we resort to the time when the history of the Church returns once more to the full light of day, in the last quarter of the second century Then we find two things quite clearly established, which have continued in Christendom from that day to this. We find a regularly organised clergy, not only distinctly marked off from the laity, but distinctly marked off among themselves by well-defined gradations of rank. And, secondly, we find that each local Church is constitutionally governed by one chief officer, whose powers are large and seldom resisted, and who universally receives the title of bishop. To these two points we may add a third. There is no trace of any belief, or even suspicion, that the constitution of these local Churches had ever been anything else. On the contrary, the evidence (and it is considerable) points to the conclusion that Christians in the latter part of the second century—say A. D. 180 to 200—were fully persuaded that the episcopal form of government had prevailed in the different Churches from the Apostles' time to their own. Just as in the case of the Gospels, Irenæus and his contemporaries not only do not know of either more or less than the four which have come down to us, but cannot conceive of there ever being either more or less than these four: so in the case of Church Government, they not only represent episcopacy as everywhere prevalent in their time, but they have no idea that at any previous time any other form of government prevailed. And although Irenæus, like St. Paul and Clement of Rome, sometimes speaks of bishops under the title of presbyter, yet it is quite clear that there were at that time presbyters who were not bishops and who did not possess episcopal authority. Irenæus himself was such a presbyter, until the martyrdom of Pothinus in the persecution of A. D. 177 created a

vacancy in the see of Lyons, which Irenæus was then called upon to fill; he held the see for upwards of twenty years, from about A. D. 180 to 202. From Irenæus and from his contemporary Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, we learn not only the fact that episcopacy prevailed everywhere, but, in not a few cases, the name of the existing bishop; and in some cases the names of their predecessors are given up to the time of the Apostles. Thus, in the case of the Church of Rome, Linus the first bishop is connected with "the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul": and, in the case of Athens, Dionysius the Areopagite is said to have been appointed first bishop of that Church by the Apostle Paul. This may or may not be correct: but at least it shows that in the time of Irenæus and Dionysius of Corinth episcopacy was not only recognised as the universal form of Church government, but was also believed to have prevailed in the principal Churches from the very earliest times.

5. If we narrow our field and look, not at the whole Church, but at the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria, we may obtain yet another certainty from the obscure period which lies between the age of the Apostles and that of Dionysius and Irenæus. The investigations of Lightfoot, Zahn, and Harnack have placed the genuineness of the short Greek form of the Epistles of Ignatius beyond reasonable dispute. Their exact date cannot as yet be determined. The evidence is strong that Ignatius was martyred in the reign of Trajan: and, if that is accepted, the letters cannot be later than A. D. 117. But even if this evidence be rejected as not conclusive, and the letters be dated ten or twelve years later, their testimony will still be of the utmost importance. They prove that long before A. D. 150 episcopacy was the recognised form of government throughout the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria; and, as Ignatius speaks of "the bishops that are settled in the farthest parts of the earth (*κατὰ τὰ πέρατα ὁρισθέντες*)" they prove that, according to his belief, episcopacy was the recognised form everywhere (Ephes. iii.). This evidence is not a little strengthened by the fact that, as all sound critics on both sides are now agreed, the Epistles of Ignatius were evidently not written in order to magnify the episcopal office, or to preach up the episcopal system. The writer's main object is to deprecate schism and all that might tend to schism. And in his opinion the best way to avoid schism is to keep closely united to the bishop. Thus, the magnifying of the episcopal office comes about incidentally; because Ignatius takes for granted that everywhere there is a bishop in each Church, who is the duly appointed ruler of it, loyalty to whom will be a security against all schismatical tendencies.

These four or five points being regarded as established to an extent which may reasonably be called certainty, there remain certain other points about which certainty is not yet possible, some of which admit of a probable solution, while for others there is so little evidence that we have to fall back upon mere conjecture. Among these would be the distinctions of office, or gradations of rank, among the clergy in the first century or century and a half after the Ascension, the precise functions assigned to each office, and the manner of appointment. With regard to these questions three positions may be assumed with a considerable amount of probability.

1. There was a distinction made between itinerant or missionary clergy and stationary or localised clergy. Among the former we find apostles (who are a much larger body than the Twelve), prophets, and evangelists. Among the latter we have two orders, spoken of as bishops and deacons, as here and in the Epistle to the Philippians (i. 1) as well as in the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles," presbyter or elder being sometimes used as synonymous with bishop. This distinction between an itinerant and a stationary ministry appears in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (xii. 28), in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 11), and perhaps also in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. John. In the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" it is clearly marked.

2. There seems to have been a further distinction between those who did, and those who did not, possess supernatural prophetical gifts. The title of prophet was commonly, but perhaps not exclusively, given to those who possessed this gift: and the "Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles" shows a great respect for prophets. But the distinction naturally died out when these supernatural gifts ceased to be manifested. During the process of extinction serious difficulty arose as to the test of a genuine prophet. Some fanatical persons believed themselves to be prophets, and some dishonest persons pretended to be prophets when they were not such. The office appears to have been extinct when Ignatius wrote: by prophets he always means the prophets of the Old Testament. Montanism was probably a forlorn attempt to revive this much desired office after the Church as a whole had decided against it. Further discussion of the gift of prophecy in the New Testament will be found in a previous chapter (vi.).

3. The clergy were not elected by the congregation as its delegates or representatives, deputed to perform functions which originally could be discharged by any Christian. They were appointed by the Apostles and their successors or substitutes. Where the congregation selected or recommended candidates, as in the case of the Seven Deacons (Acts vi. 4-6), they did not themselves lay hands on them. The typical act of laying on of hands was always performed by those who were already ministers, whether apostles, prophets, or elders. Whatever else was still open to the laity, this act of ordaining was not. And there is good reason for believing that the celebration of the Eucharist also was from the first reserved to the clergy, and that all ministers, excepting prophets, were expected to use a prescribed form of words in celebrating it.

But, although much still remains untouched, this discussion must draw to a close. In the ideal Church there is no Lord's Day or holy seasons, for all days are the Lord's, and all seasons are holy; there are no places especially dedicated to God's worship, for the whole universe is His temple; there are no persons especially ordained to be His ministers, for all His people are priests and prophets. But in the Church as it exists in a sinful world, the attempt to make all times and all places holy ends in the desecration of all alike; and the theory that all Christians are priests becomes indistinguishable from the theory that none is such. In this matter let us not try to be wiser than God, Whose will may be discerned in His providential guiding of His Church throughout so many centuries. The attempt to reproduce Paradise or to anticipate heaven in a

state or society which does not possess the conditions of Paradise or heaven, can end in nothing but disastrous confusion.

In conclusion the following weighty words are gratefully quoted. They come with special force from one who does not himself belong to an Episcopalian Church.

"By our reception or denial of priesthood in the Church, our entire view of what the Church is must be affected and moulded. We shall either accept the idea of a visible and organised body, within which Christ rules by means of a ministry, sacraments, and ordinances to which He has attached a blessing, the fulness of which we have no right to look for except through the channels He has ordained (and it ought to be needless to say that this is the Presbyterian idea), or we shall rest satisfied with the thought of the Church as consisting of multitudes of individual souls known to God alone, as invisible, unorganised, with ordinances blessed because of the memories which they awaken, but to which no promise of present grace is tied, with, in short, no thought of a Body of Christ in the world, but only of a spiritual and heavenly principle ruling in the hearts and regulating the lives of men. Conceptions of the Church so widely different from each other cannot fail to affect in the most vital manner the Church's life, and relation to those around her. Yet both conceptions are the logical and necessary result of the acceptance or denial of the idea of a divinely appointed and still living priesthood among men."

CHAPTER XI.

THE APOSTLE'S RULE RESPECTING SECOND MARRIAGES; ITS MEANING AND PRESENT OBLIGATION.

1 Timothy iii. 2.

The Apostle here states, as one of the first qualifications to be looked for in a person who is to be ordained a bishop, that he must be "the husband of one wife." The precise meaning of this phrase will probably never cease to be discussed. But, although it must be admitted that the phrase is capable of bearing several meanings, yet it cannot be fairly contended that the meaning is seriously doubtful. The balance of probability is so largely in favour of one of the meanings, that the remainder may be reasonably set aside as having no valid ground for being supported in competition with it.

Three passages in which the phrase occurs have to be considered together, and these have to be compared with a fourth. (1) There is the passage before us about a bishop, (2) another in ver. 12 about deacons, and (3) another in Tit. i. 6 about elders or presbyters, whom St. Paul afterwards mentions under the title of bishop. In these three passages we have it plainly set forth that Timothy and Titus are to regard it as a necessary qualification in a bishop or elder or presbyter, and also in a deacon, that he should be a "man of one woman" or "husband of one wife" (*μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἀνήρ*). In the fourth passage (1 Tim. iv. 9) he gives as a necessary qualification of one who is to be placed on the roll of Church widows, that she must be a "woman of one man" or "wife of one husband" (*ἑνὸς ἀνδρος γυνή*). This fourth passage is of much importance in determining the meaning of the converse expression in the other three passages.

There are four main interpretations of the expression in question.

1. That which the phrase at once suggests to a modern mind,—that the person to be ordained bishop or deacon must have only one wife and not more; that he must not be a polygamist. According to this interpretation, therefore, we are to understand the Apostle to mean, that a Jew or barbarian with more wives than one might be admitted to baptism and become a member of the congregation, but ought not to be admitted to the ministry. This explanation, which at first sight looks simple and plausible, will not bear inspection. It is quite true that polygamy in St. Paul's day still existed among the Jews. Justin Martyr, in the "Dialogue with Trypho," says to the Jews, "It is better for you to follow God than your senseless and blind teachers, who even to this day allow you each to have four and five wives" (§ 134). But polygamy in the Roman Empire must have been rare. It was forbidden by Roman law, which did not allow a man to have more than one lawful wife at a time, and treated every simultaneous second marriage, not only as null and void, but infamous. Where it was practised it must have been practised secretly. It is probable that, when St. Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus, not a single polygamist had been converted to the Christian faith. Polygamists were exceedingly rare inside the Empire, and the Church had not yet spread beyond it. Indeed, our utter ignorance as to the way in which the primitive Church dealt with polygamists who wished to become Christians amounts to something like proof that such cases were extremely uncommon. How improbable, therefore, that St. Paul should think it worth while to charge both Timothy and Titus that converted polygamists must not be admitted to the office of bishop, when there is no likelihood that any one of them knew of a single instance of a polygamist who had become a Christian! On these grounds alone this interpretation of the phrase might be safely rejected.

But these grounds do not stand alone. There is the convincing evidence of the converse phrase, "wife of one husband." If men with more than one wife were very rare in the Roman Empire, what are we to think of women with more than one husband? Even among the barbarians outside the Empire, such a thing as a plurality of husbands was regarded as monstrous. It is incredible that St. Paul could have had any such case in his mind, when he mentioned the qualification "wife of one husband." Moreover, as the question before him was one relating to widows, this "wife of one husband" must be a person who at the time had no husband. The phrase, therefore, can only mean a woman who after the death of her husband has not married again. Consequently the converse expression, "husband of one wife," cannot have any reference to polygamy.

2. Far more worthy of consideration is the view that what is aimed at in both cases is not polygamy, but divorce. Divorce, as we know from abundant evidence, was very frequent both among the Jews and the Romans in the first century of the Christian era. Among the former it provoked the special condemnation of Christ; and one of the many influences which Christianity had upon Roman law was to diminish the facili-

ties for divorce. According to Jewish practice the husband could obtain a divorce for very trivial reasons; and in the time of St. Paul Jewish women sometimes took the initiative. According to Roman practice either husband or wife could obtain a divorce very easily. Abundant instances are on record, and that in the case of people of high character, such as Cicero. After the divorce either of the parties could marry again; and often enough both of them did so; therefore in the Roman Empire in St. Paul's day there must have been plenty of persons of both sexes who had been divorced once or twice and had married again. There is nothing improbable in the supposition that quite a sufficient number of such persons had been converted to Christianity to make it worth while to legislate respecting them. They might be admitted to baptism; but they must not be admitted to an official position in the Church. A regulation of this kind might be all the more necessary, because in a wealthy capital like Ephesus it would probably be among the upper and more influential classes that divorces would be most frequent; and from precisely these classes, when any of them had become Christians, officials would be likely to be chosen. This explanation, therefore, of the phrases "husband of one wife" and "wife of one husband" cannot be condemned, like the first, as utterly incredible. It has a fair amount of probability: but it remains to be seen whether another explanation (which really includes this one) has not a far greater amount.

3. We may pass over without much discussion the view that the phrases are a vague way of indicating misconduct of any kind in reference to marriage. No doubt such misconduct was rife among the heathen, and the Christian Church by no means escaped the taint, as the scandals in the Church of Corinth and the frequent warnings of the Apostles against sins of this kind show. But when St. Paul has to speak of such things he is not afraid to do so in language that cannot be misunderstood. We have seen this already in the first chapter of this Epistle; and the fifth chapters of 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians supply other examples. We may safely say that if St. Paul had meant to indicate persons who had entered into illicit unions before or after marriage, he would have used much less ambiguous language than the phrases under discussion.

4. There remains the view, which from the first has been the dominant one, that these passages all refer to second marriage after the first marriage has been dissolved by death. A widower who has married a second wife ought not to be admitted to the ministry; a widow who has married a second husband ought not to be placed on the roll of Church widows. This interpretation is reasonable in itself, is in harmony with the context and with what St. Paul says elsewhere about marriage, and is confirmed by the views taken of second marriages in the case of clergy by the early Church.

(*a*) The belief that St. Paul was opposed to the ordination of persons who had contracted a second marriage is reasonable in itself. A second marriage, although perfectly lawful and in some cases advisable, was so far a sign of weakness; and a double family would in many cases be a serious hindrance to work. The Church could not afford to enlist any but its strongest men among its officers; and its officers must not be hampered more than other men with domestic cares. Moreover, the heathen certainly felt a special respect for the *univira*, the woman who did not enter into a second marriage; and there is some reason for believing that second marriages were sometimes thought unfitting in the case of men, *e. g.*, in the case of certain priests. Be that as it may, we may safely conclude that, both by Christians and heathen, persons who had abstained from marrying again would so far be more respected than those who had not abstained.

(*b*) This interpretation is in harmony with the context. In the passage before us the qualification which immediately precedes the expression, "husband of one wife," is "without reproach"; in the Epistle to Titus it is "blameless." In each case the meaning seems to be that there must be nothing in the past or present life of the candidate, which could afterwards with any show of reason be urged against him as inconsistent with his office. He must be above and not below the average of men; and therefore he must not have been twice married.

(*c*) This agrees with what St. Paul says elsewhere about marriage. His statements are clear and consistent, and it is a mistake to suppose that there is any want of harmony between what is said in this Epistle and what is said to the Corinthian Church on this subject. The Apostle strongly upholds the lawfulness of marriage for all (1 Cor. vii. 28, 36; 1 Tim. iv. 3). For those who are equal to it, whether single or widowed, he considers that their remaining as they are is the more blessed condition (1 Cor. vii. 1, 7, 8, 32, 34, 40; 1 Tim. v. 7). But so few persons are equal to this that it is prudent for those who desire to marry to do so, and for those who desire to marry again to do so (1 Cor. vii. 2, 9, 39; 1 Tim. v. 14). These being his convictions is it not reasonable to suppose that in selecting ministers for the Church he would look for them in the class which had given proof of moral strength by remaining unmarried or by not marrying a second time? In an age of such boundless licentiousness continency won admiration and respect; and a person who had given clear evidence of such self-control would have his moral influence thereby increased. Few things impress barbarous and semi-barbarous people more than to see a man having full control over passions to which they themselves are slaves. In the terrific odds which the infant Church had to encounter, this was a point well worth turning to advantage.

And here we may note St. Paul's wisdom in giving no preference to those who had not married at all over those who had married only once. Had he done so, he would have played into the hands of those heretics who disparaged wedlock. And perhaps he had seen something of the evils which abounded among the celibate priests of heathenism. It is quite obvious that, although he in no way discourages celibacy among the clergy, yet he assumes that among them, as among the laity, marriage will be the rule and abstaining the exception; so much so, that he does not think of giving any special directions for the guidance of a celibate bishop or a celibate deacon.

5. Lastly, this interpretation of the phrases in question is strongly confirmed by the views of leading Christians on the subject in the first few centuries, and by the decrees of councils; these

being largely influenced by St. Paul's language, and therefore being a guide as to what his words were then supposed to mean.

Hermas, Clement of Alexandria, of course Tertullian, and among later Fathers, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, and Cyril, all write in disparagement of second marriages, not as sin, but as weakness. To marry again is to fall short of the high perfection set before us in the Gospel constitution. Athenagoras goes so far as to call a second marriage "respectable adultery," and to say that one who thus severs himself from his dead wife is an "adulterer in disguise." Respecting the clergy, Origen says plainly, "Neither a bishop, nor a presbyter, nor a deacon, nor a widow, can be twice married." The canons of councils are not less plain, either as to the discouragement of second marriages among the laity, or their incompatibility with what was then required of the clergy. The synods of Ancyra (Can. 19), of Neocæsarea (Can. 3 and 7), and of Laodicea (Can. 1) subjected lay persons who married more than once to a penalty. This penalty seems to have varied in different Churches; but in some cases it involved excommunication for a time. The Council of Nicæa, on the other hand, makes it a condition that members of the Puritan sect of Cathari are not to be received into the Church unless they promise in writing to communicate with those who have married a second time (Can. 8). The "Apostolic Constitutions" (vi. 17) and the so-called "Apostolic Canons" (17) absolutely forbid the promotion of one who has married twice, to be a bishop, presbyter, or deacon; and the "Apostolic Constitutions" forbid the marriage of one who is already in Holy Orders. He may marry once before he is ordained: but if he is single at his ordination he must remain so all his life. Of course, if his wife dies he is not to marry again. Even singers, readers, and door-keepers, although they may marry after they have been admitted to office, yet are in no case to marry a second time or to marry a widow. And the widow of a cleric was not allowed to marry a second time.

All these rigorous views and enactments leave little doubt as to how the early Church understood St. Paul's language: viz., that one who had exhibited the weakness of marrying a second time was not to be admitted to the ministry. From this they drew the inference that one who was already in orders must not be allowed to marry a second time. And from this they drew the further inference that entering into a marriage contract at all was inadmissible for one who was already a bishop, presbyter, or deacon. Marriage was not a bar to ordination, but ordination was a bar to marriage. Married men might become clergy, but the higher orders of clergy might not become married.

A little thought will show that neither of these inferences follows from St. Paul's rule; and we have good reason for doubting whether he would have sanctioned either of them. The Apostle rules that those who have shown want of moral strength in taking a second wife are not to be ordained deacons or presbyters. But he nowhere says or hints that, if they find in themselves a want of moral strength of this kind after their ordination, they are to be made to bear a burden to which they are unequal. On the contrary, the general principle, which he so clearly lays down, decides the case: "If they have not continency, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn." And if this holds good of clergy who have lost their first wives, it holds good at least as strongly of those who were unmarried at the time of their ordination. Those Churches, therefore, which, like our own, allow the clergy to marry, and even to marry a second time, after ordination, may rightly claim to have the Apostle on their side.

But there are Churches, and among them the Church of England, which disregard the Apostle's directions, in admitting those who have been more than once married to the diaconate, and even to the episcopate. What defence is to be made of an apparent laxity, which seems to amount to lawlessness? The answer is that there is nothing to show that St. Paul is giving rules which are to bind the Church for all time. It is quite possible that his directions are given "by reason of the present distress." We do not consider ourselves bound by the regulation, which has far higher authority than that of a single Apostle, respecting the eating of blood and of things strangled. The first council, at which most of the Apostles were present, forbade the eating of these things. It also forbade the eating of things offered to idols. St. Paul himself led the way in showing that this restriction is not always binding: and the whole Church has come to disregard the other. Why? Because in none of these case is the act sinful in itself. While the Jewish converts were likely to be scandalised by seeing their fellow-Christians eating blood, it was expedient to forbid it; and while heathen converts were likely to think lightly of idolatry, if they saw their fellow-Christians eating what had been offered in sacrifice to an idol, it was expedient to forbid it. When these dangers ceased, the reason for the enactment ceased; and the enactment was rightly disregarded. The same principle applies to the ordination of persons who have been twice married. Nowadays a man is not considered less strong than his fellows, because he has married a second time. To refuse to ordain such a person would be to lose a minister at a time when the need of additional ministers is great; and this loss would be without compensation.

And we have evidence that in the primitive Church the Apostle's rule about digamists was not considered absolute. In one of his Montanist treatises Tertullian taunts the Catholics in having even among their bishops men who had married twice, and who did not blush when the Pastoral Epistles were read; and Hippolytus, in his fierce attack on Callistus, Bishop of Rome, states that under him men who had been twice and thrice married were ordained bishops, priests, and deacons. And we know that a distinction was made in the Greek Church between those who had married twice as Christians, and those who had concluded the second marriage before baptism. The latter were not excluded from ordination. And some went so far as to say that if the first marriage took place before baptism, and the second afterwards, the man was to be considered as having been married only once. This freedom in interpreting the Apostle's rule not unnaturally led to its being, in some branches of the Church, disregarded. St. Paul says, "Do not ordain a man who has married more than once." If you may say, "This man, who has married more than once, shall be accounted as having married only once;" you may equally well say, "The Apostle's rule was only a temporary

one, and we have the right to judge of its suitableness to our times and to particular circumstances." We may feel confidence that in such a matter it was not St. Paul's wish to deprive Churches throughout all time of their liberty of judgment, and the Church of England is thus justified.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RELATION OF HUMAN CONDUCT TO THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

1 Timothy iii. 14-16.

St. Paul here makes a pause in the Epistle. He has brought to a close some of the principal directions which he has to give respecting the preservation of pure doctrine, the conduct of public worship, and the qualifications for the ministry: and before proceeding to other topics he halts in order to insist upon the importance of these things, by pointing out what is really involved in them. Their importance is one main reason for his writing at all. Although he hopes to be with Timothy again even sooner than might be expected, he nevertheless will not allow matters of this gravity to wait for his return to Ephesus. For, after all, this hope may be frustrated, and it may be a long time before the two friends meet again face to face. The way in which Christians ought to behave themselves in the house of God is not a matter which can wait indefinitely, seeing that this house of God is no lifeless shrine of a lifeless image, which knows nothing and cares nothing about what goes on in its temple; but a congregation of immortal souls and of bodies that are temples of the living God, Who will destroy him who destroys His temple (1 Cor. iii. 17). God's house must have regulations to preserve it from unseeming disorder. The congregation which belongs to the living God must have a constitution to preserve it from faction and anarchy. All the more so, seeing that to it has been assigned a post of great responsibility. Truth in itself is self-evident and self-sustained: it needs no external support or foundation. But truth as it is manifested to the world needs the best support and the firmest basis that can be found for it. And it is the duty and privilege of the Church to supply these. God's household is not only a community which in a solemn and special way belongs to the living God: it is also the "pillar and ground of the truth." These considerations show how vital is the question, In what way ought one to behave oneself in this community?

For the truth, to the support and establishment of which every Christian by his behaviour in the Church is bound to contribute, is indisputably something great and profound. By the admission of all, the mystery of the Christian faith is a deep and weighty one; and the responsibility of helping or hindering its establishment is proportionately deep and weighty. Other things may be matter of dispute, but this not. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness."

Why does St. Paul speak of the truth as "the mystery of Godliness"? In order to express both the Divine and the human aspects of the Christian faith. On the Divine side the Gospel is a mystery, a disclosed secret. It is a body of truth originally hidden from man's knowledge, to which man by his own unaided reason and abilities would never be able to find the way. In one word it is a revelation: a communication by God to men of Truth which they could not have discovered for themselves. "Mystery" is one of those words which Christianity has borrowed from paganism, but has consecrated to new uses by gloriously transfiguring its meaning. The heathen mystery was something always kept hidden from the bulk of mankind; a secret to which only a privileged few were admitted. It encouraged, in the very centre of religion itself, selfishness and exclusiveness. The Christian mystery, on the other hand, is something once hidden, but now made known, not to a select few, but to all. The term, therefore, involves a splendid paradox: it is a secret revealed to every one. In St. Paul's own words to the Romans (xvi. 25), "the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations." He rarely uses the word mystery without combining with it some other word signifying to reveal, manifest, or make known.

But the Christian faith is not only a mystery, but a "mystery of godliness." It not only tells of the bounty of Almighty God in revealing His eternal counsels to man, but it also tells of man's obligations in consequence of being initiated. It is a mystery, not "of lawlessness" (2 Thess. ii. 7), but "of godliness." Those who accept it "profess godliness"; profess reverence to the God who has made it known to them. It teaches plainly on what principle we are to regulate "how men ought to behave themselves in the household of God." The Gospel is a mystery of piety, a mystery of reverence and of religious life. Holy itself, and proceeding from the Holy One, it bids its recipients be holy, even as He is Holy Who gives it.

"Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory."

After the text about the three Heavenly Witnesses in the First Epistle of St. John, no disputed reading in the New Testament has given rise to more controversy than the passage before us. Let us hope that the day is not far distant when there will be no more disputing about either text. The truth, though still doubted, especially in reference to the passage before us, is not really doubtful. In both cases the reading of the A. V. is indefensible. It is certain that St. John never wrote the words about the "three that bear witness in heaven": and it is certain that St. Paul did not write, "God was manifest in the flesh," but "Who was manifested in the flesh." The reading "God was manifested in the flesh" appears in no Christian writer until late in the fourth century, and in no translation of the Scriptures earlier than the seventh or eighth century. And it is not found in any of the five great primary MSS., except as a correction made by a later scribe, who knew of the reading "God was manifested," and either preferred it to the other, or at least wished to preserve it as an alternative reading, or as an interpretation. Even so cautious and conservative a commentator as

the late Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln declares that "the preponderance of testimony is overwhelming" against the reading "God was manifested in the flesh." In an old Greek MS., it would require only two small strokes to turn "Who" into "God"; and this alteration would be a tempting one, seeing that the masculine "Who" after the neuter "mystery," looks harsh and unnatural.

But here we come upon a highly interesting consideration. The words that follow look like a quotation from some primitive Christian hymn or confession. The rhythmical movement and the parallelism of the six balanced clauses, of which each triplet forms a climax, points to some such fact as this. It is possible that we have here a fragment of one of the very hymns which, as Pliny the Younger tells the Emperor Trajan, the Christians were accustomed to sing antiphonally at daybreak to Christ as a God. Such a passage as this might well be sung from side to side, line by line, or triplet by triplet, as choirs still chant the Psalms in our Churches.

"Who was manifested in the flesh,
"Justified in the spirit,
"Seen of angels,
"Preached among the nations,
"Believed on in the world,
"Received up in glory."

Let us assume that this very reasonable and attractive conjecture is correct, and that St. Paul is here quoting from some well-known form of words. Then the "Who" with which the quotation begins will refer to something in the preceding lines which are not quoted. How natural, then, that St. Paul should leave the "Who" unchanged, although it does not fit on grammatically to his own sentence. But in any case there is no doubt as to the antecedent of the "Who." "The Mystery of godliness" has for its centre and basis the life of a Divine Person; and the great crisis in the long process by which the mystery was revealed was reached when this Divine Person "was manifested in the flesh." That in making this statement or quotation the Apostle has in his mind the Gnostics who "teach a different doctrine" (i. 3), is quite possible, but it is by no means certain. The "manifestation" of Christ in the flesh is a favourite topic with him, as with St. John, and is one of the points in which the two Apostles not only teach the same doctrine, but teach it in the same language. The fact that he had used the word "mystery" would be quite enough to make him speak of "manifestation," even if there had been no false teachers who denied or explained away the fact of the Incarnation of the Divine Son. The two words fit into one another exactly. "Mystery," in Christian theology, implies something which once was concealed, but has now been made known; "manifest" implies making known what had once been concealed. An historical appearance of One Who had previously existed, but had been kept from the knowledge of the world, is what is meant by, "Who was manifested in the flesh."

"Justified in the spirit." Spirit here cannot mean the Holy Spirit, as the A. V. would lead us to suppose. "In spirit" in this clause is in obvious contrast to "in flesh" in the previous clause. And if "flesh" means the material part of Christ's nature, "spirit" means the immaterial part of His nature, and the higher portion of it. His flesh was the sphere of His manifestation: His spirit was the sphere of His justification. Thus much seems to be clear. But what are we to understand by His justification? And how did it take place in His Spirit? These are questions to which a great variety of answers have been given; and it would be rash to assert of any one of them that it is so satisfactory as to be conclusive.

Christ's human nature consisted, as ours does, of three elements, body, soul, and spirit. The body is the flesh spoken of in the first clause. The soul (*ψυχή*), as distinct from the spirit (*πνεῦμα*), is the seat of the natural affections and desires. It was Christ's soul that was troubled at the thought of impending suffering. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38; Mark xiv. 34). "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour" (John xii. 27). The spirit is the seat of the religious emotions: it is the highest, innermost part of man's nature; the sanctuary of the temple. It was in His spirit that Christ was affected when the presence of moral evil distressed Him. He was moved with indignation in His spirit when He saw the hypocritical Jews mingling their sentimental lamentations with the heartfelt lamentations of Martha and Mary at the grave of Lazarus (John xi. 33). It was in His spirit also that He was troubled when, as Judas sat at table with Him and possibly next to Him, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me" (John xiii. 21). This spiritual part of His nature, which was the sphere of His most intense suffering, was also the sphere of His most intense joy and satisfaction. As moral evil distressed His spirit, so moral innocence delighted it.

In a way that none of us can measure, Jesus Christ knew the joy of a good conscience. The challenge which he made to the Jews, "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" was one which He could make to His own conscience. It had nothing against Him and could never accuse Him. He was justified when it spake, and clear when it judged (Rom. iii. 4; Psalms li. 4). Perfect Man though He was, and manifested in weak and suffering flesh, He was nevertheless "justified in the spirit."

"Seen of angels." It is impossible to determine the precise occasion to which this refers. Ever since the Incarnation Christ has been visible to the angels; but something more special than the fact of the Incarnation seems to be alluded to here. The wording in the Greek is exactly the same as in "He appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then He appeared to James; then to all the Apostles; last of all, as to one born out of due time, He appeared to me also" (1 Cor. xv. 5-8). Here, therefore, we might translate "appeared to angels." What appearance, or appearances, of the Incarnate Word to the angelic host can be intended?

The question cannot be answered with any certainty; but with some confidence we can venture to say what can *not* be intended. "Appeared to angels" can scarcely refer to the angelic appearances which are recorded in connection with the Nativity, Temptation, Agony, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. On those occasions angels appeared to Christ and to

others, not He to angels. With still greater confidence we may reject the suggestion that "angels" here means either the Apostles, as the angels or messengers of Christ, or evil spirits, as the angels of Satan. It may be doubted whether anything at all parallel to either explanation can be found in Scripture. Moreover, "appeared to evil spirits" is an interpretation which makes the passage more difficult than it was before. The manifestation of Christ to the angelic host either at the Incarnation or at the return to glory is a far more reasonable meaning to assign to the words.

The first three clauses of this primitive hymn may thus be summed up. The mystery of godliness has been revealed to mankind, and revealed in a historical Person, Who, while manifested in human flesh, was in His inmost spirit declared free from all sin. And this manifestation of a perfectly righteous Man was not confined to the human race. The angels also witnessed it and can bear testimony to its reality.

The remaining triplet is more simple: the meaning of each one of its clauses is clear. The same Christ, who was seen of angels, was also preached among the nations of the earth and believed on in the world: yet He Himself was taken up from the earth and received once more in glory. The propagation of the faith in an ascended Christ is here plainly and even enthusiastically stated. To all the nations, to the whole world, this glorified Saviour belongs. All this adds emphasis to the question "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God" in which such truths are taught and upheld.

It is remarkable how many arrangements of these six clauses are possible, all making excellent sense. We may make them into two triplets of independent lines: or we may couple the two first lines of each triplet together and then make the third lines correspond to one another. In either case each group begins with earth and ends with heaven. Or again, we may make the six lines into three couplets. In the first couplet flesh and spirit are contrasted and combined; in the second, angels and men; in the third, earth and heaven.

Yes, beyond dispute the mystery of godliness is a great one. The revelation of the Eternal Son, which imposes upon those who accept it a holiness of which His sinlessness must be the model, is something awful and profound. But He, who along with every temptation which He allows "makes also the way of escape," does not impose a pattern for imitation without at the same time granting the grace necessary for struggling towards it. To reach it is impossible—at any rate in this life. But the consciousness that we cannot reach perfection is no excuse for aiming at imperfection. The sinlessness of Christ is immeasurably beyond us here; and it may be that even in eternity the loss caused by our sins in this life will never be entirely cancelled. But to those who have taken up their cross daily and followed their Master, and who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, will be granted hereafter to stand sinless "before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple." Having followed Christ on earth they will follow Him still more in heaven. Having shared His sufferings here, they will share His reward there. They, too, will be "seen of angels" and "received up in glory."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMPARATIVE VALUE OF BODILY EXERCISE AND OF GODLINESS.

1 Timothy iv. 7, 8.

It is almost impossible to decide what St. Paul here means by "bodily exercise." Not that either the phrase or the passage in which it occurs is either difficult or obscure. But the phrase may mean either of two things, both of which make excellent sense in themselves, and both of which fit the context.

At the beginning of this chapter the Apostle warns Timothy against apostates who shall "give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils . . . forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats." St. Paul has in his mind those moral teachers who made bodily mortifications the road, not to self-discipline, but to self-effacement; and who taught that such things were necessary, not because our bodies are prone to evil, but because they exist at all. To have a body, they held, was a degradation: and such a possession was a curse, a burden, and a shame. Instead of believing, as every Christian must, that a human body is a very sacred thing, to be jealously guarded from all that may harm or pollute it, these philosophers held that it was worse than worthless, fit for nothing but to be trampled upon and abused. That it may be sanctified here and be glorified hereafter,—that it may be the temple of God's Holy Spirit now and be admitted to share the blessedness of Christ's ascended humanity in the world to come,—they could not and would not believe. It must be made to feel its own vileness. It must be checked, and thwarted, and tormented into subjection, until the blessed time should come when death should release the unhappy soul that was linked to it from its loathsome and intolerable companion.

It cannot, of course, for a moment be supposed that St. Paul would admit that "bodily exercise" of this suicidal kind was "profitable" even "for a little." On the contrary, as we have seen already, he condemns the whole system in the very strongest terms. It is a blasphemy against God's goodness and a libel on human nature. But some persons have thought that the Apostle may be alluding to practices which, externally at any rate, had much resemblance to the practices which he so emphatically condemns. He may have in his mind those fasts, and vigils, and other forms of bodily mortification, which within prudent limits and when sanctified by humility and prayer, are a useful, if not a necessary discipline for most of us. And it has been thought that Timothy himself may have been going to unwise lengths in such ascetic practices: for in this very letter we find his affectionate master charging him, "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

This, then, is one possible meaning of the Apostle's words in the passage before us. Discipline of the body by means of a severe rule of life is profitable for something: but it is not everything. It is not even the chief thing, or anything approaching to the chief thing. The chief thing is godliness. To the value of bodily exercise of this kind there are limits, and rather

narrow limits: it "is profitable for a little." To the value of godliness there are no limits: it is "profitable for all things." Mortifications of the body may preserve us from sins of the flesh: but they are no certain protection even against these. They are no protection at all—sometimes they are the very reverse of protection—against sins of self-complacency and spiritual pride. Asceticism may exist without godliness; and godliness may exist without asceticism. Bodily mortifications may be useful; but they may also be harmful to both soul and body. Godliness must always be useful to both; can never be harmful to either.

But it is quite possible to understand the expression "bodily exercise," in the sense in which the phrase is most commonly used in ordinary conversation among ourselves. In the text which we are considering it may mean that exercise of the body which we are accustomed to take, some of us of necessity, because the work by which we earn our daily bread involves a great deal of physical exertion; some of us for health's sake, because our work involves a great deal of sitting still; some of us for pleasure, because bodily exercise of various kinds is delightful to us. This interpretation of the Apostle's statement, like the other interpretation, makes good sense of itself, and fits the context. And whereas that was in harmony with the opening words of the chapter, this fits the immediate context.

St. Paul has just said "Exercise thyself unto godliness." In using the expression "Exercise thyself" (*γύμναζε σεαυτόν*) he was of course borrowing, as he so constantly does borrow, from the language which was used respecting gymnastic contests in the public games. The Christian is an athlete, who must train himself and exercise himself for a lifelong contest. He has to wrestle and fight with the powers of evil, that he may win a crown of glory that fadeth not away. How natural, then, that the Apostle, having just spoken of spiritual exercise for the attainment of godliness, should go on to glance at bodily exercise, in order to point out the superiority of the one over the other. The figurative would easily suggest the literal sense; and it is therefore quite lawful to take the words "bodily exercise" in their most literal sense. Perhaps we may go further and say, that this is just one of those cases in which, because the literal meaning makes excellent sense, the literal meaning is to be preferred. Let us then take St. Paul's words quite literally and see what meaning they will yield.

"Bodily exercise is profitable for a little." It is by no means a useless thing. In its proper place it has a real value. Taken in moderation it tends to preserve health and increase strength. It may sometimes be the means of gaining for ourselves and for the circle to which we belong praise and distinction. It makes us more capable of aiding ourselves and others in times of physical danger. It may even be the means of enabling us to save life. By taking us out of ourselves and turning our thoughts into new channels, it is an instrument of mental refreshment, and enables us to return to the main business of our lives with increased intellectual vigour. And beyond all this, if kept within bounds, it has a real moral value. It sometimes keeps us out of mischief by giving us innocent instead of harmful recreation. And bodily training and practice, if loyally carried out, involve moral gains of another kind. Dangerous appetites have to be kept in check, personal wishes have to be sacrificed, good temper has to be cultivated, if success is to be secured for ourselves or the side to which we belong. All this is "profitable" in a very real degree. But the limits to all these good results are evident; and they are somewhat narrow. They are confined to this life, and for the most part to the lower side of it; and they are by no means certain. Only indirectly does bodily exercise yield help to the intellectual and spiritual parts of our nature; and as regards both of them it may easily do more harm than good. Like excessive meat and drink, it may brutalise instead of invigorating. Have we not all of us seen men whose extravagant devotion to bodily exercise has extinguished almost all intellectual interests, and apparently all spiritual interests also?

But there are no such drawbacks to the exercise of godliness. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise" not only "of the life which now is, but of that which is to come." Its value is not confined to the things of this world, although it enriches and glorifies them all. And, unlike bodily exercise, its good results are certain. There is no possibility of excess. We may be unwise in our pursuit of godliness, as in our pursuit of bodily strength and activity; but we cannot have too much exercise in godliness, as we easily can in athletics. Indeed, we cannot with any safety lay aside the one, as we not only can, but must, frequently lay aside the other. And we need to bear this simple truth in mind. Most of us are willing to admit that godliness is an excellent thing for attaining to a peaceful death; but we show little evidence that we are convinced of its being necessary for spending a happy life. We look upon it as a very suitable thing for the weak, the poor, the sickly, the sorrowful, and perhaps also for sentimental persons who have plenty of leisure time at their disposal. We fail to see that there is much need for it, or indeed much room for it, in the lives of busy, capable, energetic, and practical men of the world. In other words, we are not at all convinced of the truth of the Apostle's words, that "Godliness is profitable for all things," and we do not act as if they had very much interest for us. They express a truth which is only too likely to be crowded out of sight and out of mind in this bustling age. Let us be as practical as our dispositions lead us and our surroundings require us to be; but let us not forget that godliness is really the most practical of all things. It lays hold on a man's whole nature. It purifies his body, it illumines and sanctifies his intellect; it braces his will. It penetrates into every department of life, whether business or amusement, social intercourse or private meditation. Ask the physicians, ask employers of labour, ask teachers in schools and universities, ask statesmen and philosophers, what their experience teaches them respecting the average merits of the virtuous and the vicious. They will tell you that the godly person has the healthiest body, is the most faithful servant, the most painstaking student, the best citizen, the happiest man. A man who is formed, reformed, and informed by religion will do far more effectual work in the world than the same man without religion. He works with less friction, because his care is cast upon his heavenly Father; and with more confidence, because

his trust is placed on One much more sure than himself. Moreover, in the long run he is trusted and respected. Even those who not only abjure religion in themselves, but ridicule it in others, cannot get rid of their own experience. They find that the godly man can be depended upon, where the merely clever man cannot; and they act in accordance with this experience. Nor does the profitableness of godliness end with the possession of blessings so inestimable as these. It holds out rich promises respecting future happiness, and it gives an earnest and guarantee for it. It gives a man the blessing of a good conscience, which is one of our chief foretastes of the blessedness which awaits us in the world to come.

Let us once for all get rid of the common, but false notion that there is anything unpractical, anything weak or unmanly, in the life of holiness to which Christ has called us, and of which He has given us an example: and by the lives which we lead let us prove to others that this vulgar notion is a false one. Nothing has done more harm to the cause of Christianity than the misconceptions which the world has formed as to what Christianity is and what it involves. And these misconceptions are largely caused by the unworthy lives which professing Christians lead. And this unworthiness is of two kinds. There is first the utter worldliness, and often the downright wickedness, of many who are not only baptised Christians, but who habitually keep up some of the external marks of an ordinary Christian life, such as going to church, having family prayers, attending religious meetings, and the like. And perhaps the worst form of this is that in which religion is made a trade, and an appearance of godliness is assumed in order to make money out of a reputation for sanctity. Secondly, there is the seriously mistaken way in which many earnest persons set to work in order to attain to true godliness. By their own course of life they lead people to suppose that a religious life, the life of an earnest Christian, is a dismal thing and an unpractical thing. They wear a depressed and joyless look; they not only abstain from, but leave it to be supposed that they condemn, many things which give zest and brightness to life, and which the Gospel does not condemn. In their eagerness to show their conviction as to the transcendent importance of spiritual matters, they exhibit a carelessness and slovenliness in reference to the affairs of this life, which is exceedingly trying to all those who have to work with them. Thus they stand forward before the world as conspicuous evidence that godliness is not "profitable for all things." The world is only too ready to take note of evidence which points to a conclusion so in harmony with its own predilections. It is, and has been from the beginning, prejudiced against religion; and its adherents are quick to seize upon, and make the most of, anything which appears to justify these prejudices. "In a world such as this," they say, "so full of care and suffering, we cannot afford to part with anything which gives brightness and refreshment to life. A religion which tells us to abjure all these things, and live perpetually as if we were at the point of death or face to face with the Day of Judgment, may be all very well for monks and nuns, but is no religion for the mass of mankind. Moreover, this is a busy age. Most of us have much to do; and, if we are to live at all, what we have to do must be done quickly and thoroughly. That means that we must give our minds to it; and a religion which tells us that we must not give our minds to our business, but to other things which it says are of far greater importance, is no religion for people who have to make their way in the world and keep themselves and their children from penury. We flatly refuse to accept a gospel which is so manifestly out of harmony with the conditions of average human life."

This charge against Christianity is a very old one: we find it taken up and answered in some of the earliest defences of the gospel which have come down to us. The unhappy thing is, not that such charges should be made, but that the lives of Christian men and women should prove that there is at least a *prima facie* case for bringing such accusations. The early Christians had to confront the charge that they were joyless, useless members of society and unpatriotic citizens. They maintained that, on the contrary, they were the happiest and most contented of men, devoted to the well-being of others, and ready to die for their country. They kept aloof from many things in which the heathen indulged, not because they were pleasures, but because they were sinful. And there were certain services which they could not, without grievous sin, render to the State. In all lawful matters no men were more ready than they were to be loyal and law-abiding citizens. In this, as in any other matter of moral conduct, they were quite willing to be compared with their accusers or any other class of men. On which side were to be found those who were bright and peaceful in their lives, who cherished their kindred, who took care of the stranger, who succoured their enemies, who shrank not from death?

A practical appeal of this kind is found to be in the long run far more telling than exposition and argument. It may be impossible to get men to listen to, or take interest in, statements as to the principles and requirements of the Christian religion. You may fail to convince them that its precepts and demands are neither superstitious nor unreasonable. But you can always show them what a life of godliness really is;—that it is full of joyousness, and that its joys are neither fitful nor uncertain; that it is no foe to what is bright and beautiful, and is neither morose in itself nor apt to frown at lightheartedness in others; that it does not interfere with the most strenuous attention to business and the most capable dispatch of it. Men refuse to listen to or to be moved by words; but they cannot help noticing and being influenced by facts which are all round them in their daily lives. So far as man can judge, the number of vicious, mean, and unworthy lives is far in excess of those which are pure and lofty. Each one of us can do something towards throwing the balance the other way. We can prove to all the world that godliness is not an unreality, and does not make those who strive after it unreal; that it is hostile neither to joyousness nor to capable activity; that, on the contrary, it enhances the brightness of all that is really beautiful in life, while it raises to a higher power all natural gifts and abilities; that the Apostle was saying no more than the simple truth when he declared that it is "profitable for all things."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASTOR'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS WOMEN—THE CHURCH WIDOW.

1 Timothy v. 3, 4, 9.

The subject of this fifth chapter is "The Behaviour of the Pastor towards the older and younger men and women in the congregation." Some have thought that it forms the main portion of the letter to which all the rest is more or less introductory or supplementary. But the structure of the letter cannot easily be brought into harmony with this view. It seems to be much nearer the truth to say that the unpremeditated way in which this subject is introduced cannot well be explained unless we assume that we are reading a genuine letter, and not a forged treatise. The connection of the different subjects touched upon is loose and not always very obvious. Points are mentioned in the order in which they occur to the writer's mind without careful arrangement. After the personal exhortations given at the close of chapter iv., which have a solemnity that might lead one to suppose that the Apostle was about to bring his words to a close, he makes a fresh start and treats of an entirely new subject which has occurred to him.

It is not difficult to guess what has suggested the new subject. The personal exhortations with which the previous section ends contain these words, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity." Timothy is not to allow the fact that he is younger than many of those over whom he is set to interfere with the proper discharge of his duties. He is to give no one a handle for charging him with want of gravity or propriety. Sobriety of conduct is to counterbalance any apparent lack of experience. But St. Paul remembers that there is another side to that. Although Timothy is to behave in such a way as never to remind his flock of his comparative youthfulness, yet he himself is always to bear in mind that he is still a young man. This is specially to be remembered in dealing with persons of either sex who are older than himself, and in his bearing towards young women. St. Paul begins with the treatment of older men and returns to this point again later on. Between these two passages about men he gives directions for Timothy's guidance respecting the women in his flock, and specially respecting widows. The subject occupies more than half the chapter and is of very great interest, as being our chief source of information respecting the treatment of widows in the early Church. Commentators are by no means unanimous in their interpretation of the details of the passage, but it is believed that the explanation which is now offered is in harmony with the original Greek, consistent with itself, and not contradicted by anything which is known from other sources.

It is quite evident that more than one kind of widow is spoken of: and one of the questions which the passage raises is—How many classes of widows are indicated? We can distinguish four kinds; and it seems probable that the Apostle means to give us four kinds.

1. There is "the widow indeed (*ἡ ὄντως χήρα*)." Her characteristic is that she is "desolate," *i. e.*, quite alone in the world. She has not only lost her husband, but she has neither children nor any other near relation to minister to her necessities. Her hope is set on God, to Whom her prayers ascend night and day. She is contrasted with two other classes of widow, both of whom are in worldly position better off than she is, for they are not desolate or destitute; yet one of these is far more miserable than the widow indeed, because the manner of life which she adopts is so unworthy of her.

2. There is the widow who "hath children or grandchildren." Natural affection will cause these to take care that their widowed parent does not come to want. If it does not, then they must learn that "to show piety towards their own family and to requite their parents" is a paramount duty, and that the congregation must not be burdened with the maintenance of their mother until they have first done all they can for her. To ignore this plain duty is to deny the first principles of Christianity, which is the gospel of love and duty, and to fall below the level of the unbelievers, most of whom recognised the duty of providing for helpless parents. Nothing is said of the character of the widow who has children or grandchildren to support her; but, like the widow indeed, she is contrasted with the third class of widow, and, therefore, we infer that her character is free from reproach.

3. There is the widow who "giveth herself to pleasure." Instead of continuing in prayers and supplications night and day, she continues in frivolity and luxury, or worse. Of her, as of the Church of Sardis, it may be said, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead" (Rev. iii. 1).

4. There is the "enrolled" widow; *i. e.*, one whose name has been entered on the Church rolls as such. She is a "widow indeed" and something more. She is not only a person who needs and deserves the support of the congregation, but has special rights and duties. She holds an office, and has a function to discharge. She is a widow, not merely as having lost her husband, but as having been admitted to the company of those bereaved women whom the Church has entrusted with a definite portion of Church work. This being so, something more must be looked to than the mere fact of her being alone in the world. She must be sixty years of age, must have had only one husband, have had experience in the bringing up of children, and be well known as devoted to good works. If she has these qualifications, she may be enrolled as a Church widow; but it does not follow that because she has them she will be appointed.

The work to which these elderly women had to devote themselves was twofold: (1) Prayer, especially intercession for those in trouble; (2) Works of mercy, especially ministering to the sick, guiding younger Christian women in lives of holiness, and winning over heathen women to the faith. These facts we learn from the frequent regulations respecting widows during the second, third, and fourth centuries. It was apparently during the second century that the order of widows flourished most.

This primitive order of Church widows must be distinguished from the equally primitive order of deaconesses, and from a later order of

widows, which grew up side by side with the earlier order, and continued long after the earlier order had ceased to exist. But it would be contrary to all probability, and to all that we know about Church offices in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic age, to suppose that the distinctions between different orders of women were as marked in the earliest periods as they afterwards became, or that they were precisely the same in all branches of the Church.

It has been sometimes maintained that the Church widow treated of in the passage before us is identical with the deaconess. The evidence that the two orders were distinct is so strong as almost to amount to demonstration.

1. It is quite possible that this very Epistle supplies enough evidence to make the identification very improbable. If the "women" mentioned in the section about deacons (iii. 11) are deaconesses, then the qualifications for this office are quite different from the qualifications for that of a widow, and are treated of in quite different sections of the letter. But even if deaconesses are not treated of at all in that passage, the limit of age seems quite out of place, if they are identical with the widows. In the case of the widows it was important to enrol for this special Church work none who were likely to wish to marry again. And as their duties consisted in a large measure in prayer, advanced age was no impediment, but rather the contrary. But the work of the deaconess was for the most part active work, and it would be unreasonable to admit no one to the office until the best part of her working life was quite over.

2. The difference in the work assigned to them points in the same direction. As already stated, the special work of the widow was intercessory prayer and ministering to the sick. The special work of the deaconess was guarding the women's door in the churches, seating the women in the congregation, and attending women at baptisms. Baptism being usually administered by immersion, and adult baptism being very frequent, there was much need of female attendants.

3. At her appointment the deaconess received the imposition of hands, the widow did not. The form of prayer for the ordination of a deaconess is given in the Apostolical Constitutions (viii. 19, 20), and is worthy of quotation. "Concerning a deaconess, I Bartholomew make this constitution: O Bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery and of the deacons and deaconesses, and shalt say; O eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman; Who didst replenish with the Spirit Miriam, Deborah, Anna, and Huldah; Who didst not disdain that Thy Only begotten Son should be born of a woman; Who also in the tabernacle of the testimony and in the temple didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy holy gates; —look down now also upon this Thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess. Grant her Thy Holy Spirit and cleanse her from all defilement of flesh and spirit, that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her, to Thy glory and the praise of Thy Christ, with Whom be glory and adoration to Thee and to the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen." Nothing of the kind is found for the appointment of a Church widow.

4. It is quite in harmony with the fact that the deaconesses were ordained, while the widows were not, that the widows are placed under the deaconesses. "The widows ought to be grave, obedient to their bishops, their presbyters, and their deacons; and besides these to the deaconesses, with piety, reverence, and fear."

5. The deaconess might be either an unmarried woman or a widow, and apparently the former was preferred. "Let the deaconess be a pure virgin; or at least a widow who has been but once married." But, although such things did occur, Tertullian protests that it is a monstrous irregularity to admit an unmarried woman to the order of widows. Now, if widows and deaconesses were identical, unmarried "widows" would have been quite common, for unmarried deaconesses were quite common. Yet he speaks of the one case of a "virgin widow" which had come under his notice as a marvel, and a monstrosity, and a contradiction in terms. It is true that Ignatius in his letter to the Church of Smyrna uses language which has been thought to support the identification: "I salute the households of my brethren with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows." But it is incredible that at Smyrna all the Church widows were unmarried; and it is equally improbable that Ignatius should send a salutation to the unmarried "widows" (if such there were), and ignore the rest. His language, however, may be quite easily explained without any such strange hypothesis. He may mean "I salute those who are called widows, but whom one might really regard as virgins." And in support of this interpretation Bishop Lightfoot quotes Clement of Alexandria, who says that the continent man, like the continent widow, becomes again a virgin; and Tertullian, who speaks of continent widows as being in God's sight maidens (*Deo sunt puellæ*), and as for a second time virgins. But, whatever Ignatius may have meant by "the virgins who are called widows," we may safely conclude that neither in his time, any more than that of St. Paul, were the widows identical with the deaconesses.

The later order of widows which grew up side by side with the Apostolic order, and in the end supplanted, or at any rate survived, the older order, came into existence about the third century. It consisted of persons who had lost their husbands and made a vow never to marry again. From the middle of the second century or a little later we find a strong feeling against second marriages springing up, and this feeling was very possibly intensified when the Gospel came in contact with the German tribes, among whom the feeling already existed independently of Christianity. In this new order of widows who had taken the vow of continence there was no restriction of age, nor was it necessary that they should be persons in need of the alms of the congregation. In the Apostolic order the fundamental idea seems to have been that destitute widows ought to be supported by the Church, and that in return for this, those of them who were qualified should do some special Church work. In the later order the fundamental idea was that it was a good thing for a widow to remain unmarried, and that a vow to do so would help her to persevere.

In commanding Timothy to "honour widows that are widows indeed" the Apostle states a principle which has had a wide and permanent influence, not only on ecclesiastical discipline,

but upon European legislation. Speaking of the growth of the modern idea of a will, by which a man can regulate the descent of his property inside and outside his family, Sir Henry Maine remarks, that "the exercise of the Testamentary power was seldom allowed to interfere with the right of the widow to a definite share, and of the children to certain fixed proportions of the devolving inheritance. The shares of the children, as their amount shows, were determined by the authority of Roman law. The provision for the widow was attributable to the exertions of the Church, which never relaxed its solicitude for the interest of wives surviving their husbands—winning, perhaps, one of the most arduous of its triumphs when, after exacting for two or three centuries an express promise from the husband at marriage to endow his wife, it at length succeeded in engrafting the principle of Dower on the Customary Law of all Western Europe." This is one of the numerous instances in which the Gospel, by insisting upon the importance of some humane principle, has contributed to the progress and security of the best elements in civilisation.

Not only the humanity, but the tact and common sense of the Apostle are conspicuous throughout the whole passage, whether we regard the general directions respecting the bearing of the young pastor towards the different sections of his flock, old and young, male and female, or the special rules respecting widows. The sum and substance of it appears to be that the pastor is to have abundance of zeal and to encourage it in others, but he is to take great care that, neither in himself nor in those whom he has to guide, zeal outruns discretion. Well-deserved rebukes may do far more harm than good, if they are administered without respect to the position of those who need them. And in all his ministrations the spiritual overseer must beware of giving a handle to damaging criticism. He must not let his good be evil spoken of. So also with regard to the widows. No hard-and-fast rule can be safely laid down. Almost everything depends upon circumstances. On the whole, the case of widows is analogous to that of unmarried women. For those who have strength to forego the married state, in order to devote more time and energy to the direct service of God, it is better to remain unmarried, if single, and if widows, not to marry again. But there is no peculiar blessedness in the unmarried state, if the motive for avoiding matrimony is a selfish one, *e. g.*, to avoid domestic cares and duties and have leisure for personal enjoyment. Among younger women the higher motive is less likely to be present, or at any rate to be permanent. They are so likely sooner or later to desire to marry, that it will be wisest not to discourage them to do so. On the contrary, let it be regarded as the normal thing that a young woman should marry, and that a young widow should marry again. It is not the best thing for them, but it is the safest. Although the highest work for Christ can best be done by those who by remaining single have kept their domestic ties at a minimum, yet young women are more likely to do useful work in society, and are less likely to come to harm, if they marry and have children. Of older women this is not true. Age itself is a considerable guarantee: and a woman of sixty, who is willing to give such a pledge, may be encouraged to enter upon a life of perpetual widowhood. But there must be other qualifications as well, if she wishes to be enrolled among those who not only are entitled by their destitute condition to receive maintenance from the Church, but by reason of their fitness are commissioned to undertake Church work. And these qualifications must be carefully investigated. It would be far better to reject some, who might after all have been useful, than to run the risk of admitting any who would exhibit the scandal of having been supported by the Church and specially devoted to Christian works of mercy, and of having after all returned to society as married women with ordinary pleasures and cares.

One object throughout these directions is the economy of Christian resources. The Church accepts the duty which it inculcates of "providing for its own." But it ought not to be burdened with the support of any but those who are really destitute. The near relations of necessitous persons must be taught to leave the Church free to relieve those who have no near relations to support them. Secondly, so far as is possible, those who are relieved by the alms of the congregation must be encouraged to make some return in undertaking Church work that is suitable to them. St. Paul has no idea of pauperising people. So long as they can, they must maintain themselves. When they have ceased to be able to do this, they must be supported by their children or grandchildren. If they have no one to help them, the Church must undertake their support; but both for their sake as well as for the interests of the community, it must, if possible, make the support granted to be a return for work done rather than mere alms. Widowhood must not be made a plea for being maintained in harmful idleness. But the point which the Apostle insists on most emphatically, stating it in different ways no less than three times in this short section (vv. 4, 8, 16) is this,—that widows as a rule ought to be supported by their own relations; only in exceptional cases, where there are no relations who can help, ought the Church to have to undertake this duty. We have here a warning against the mistake so often made at the present day of freeing people from their responsibilities by undertaking for them in mistaken charity the duties which they ought to discharge, and are capable of discharging, themselves.

We may, therefore, sum up the principles laid down thus:—

Discretion and tact are needed in dealing with the different sections of the congregation, and especially in relieving the widows. Care must be taken not to encourage either a rigour not likely to be maintained, or opportunities of idleness certain to lead to mischief. Help is to be generously afforded to the destitute; but the resources of the Church must be jealously guarded. They must not be wasted on the unworthy, or on those who have other means of help. And, so far as possible, the independence of those who are relieved must be protected by employing them in the service of the Church.

In conclusion it may be worth while to point out that this mention of an order of widows is no argument against the Pauline authorship of these Epistles, as if no such thing existed in his time. In Acts vi. 1 the widows appear as a distinct body in the Church at Jerusalem. In Acts ix. 39, 41, they appear almost as an order in the

Church at Joppa. They "show the coats and garments which Dorcas made" in a way which seems to imply that it was their business to distribute such things among the needy. Even if it means no more than that Dorcas made them for the relief of the widows themselves, still the step from a body of widows set apart for the reception of alms to an order of widows set apart for the duty of intercessory prayer and ministering to the sick is not a long one, and may easily have been made in St. Paul's lifetime.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PASTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN ORDAINING AND JUDGING PRESBYTERS—THE WORKS THAT GO BEFORE AND THAT FOLLOW US.

1 Timothy v. 22-25.

The section of which these verses form the conclusion, like the preceding section about behaviour towards the different classes of persons in the congregation, supplies us with evidence that we are dealing with a real letter, written to give necessary advice to a real person, and not a theological or controversial treatise, dressed up in the form of a letter in order to obtain the authority of St. Paul's name for its contents. Here, as before, the thoughts follow one another in an order which is quite natural, but which has little plan or arrangement. An earnest and affectionate friend, with certain points in his mind on which he was anxious to say something, might easily treat of them in this informal way just as they occurred to him, one thing suggesting another. But a forger, bent on getting his own views represented in the document, would not string them together in this loosely connected way: he would disclose more arrangement than we can find here. What forger, again, would think of inserting that advice about ceasing to be a water-drinker into a most solemn charge respecting the election and ordination of presbyters? And yet how thoroughly natural it is found to be in this very context when considered as coming from St. Paul to Timothy.

We shall go seriously astray if we start with the conviction that the word "elder" has the same meaning throughout this chapter. When in the first part of it St. Paul says "Rebuke not an elder, but exhort him as a father," it is quite clear that he is speaking simply of elderly men, and not of persons holding the office of an elder: for he goes on at once to speak of the treatment of younger men, and also of older and younger women. But when in the second half of the chapter he says "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," and "Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses," it is equally clear that he is speaking of official persons, and not merely of persons who are advanced in years. The way in which the thoughts suggested one another throughout this portion of the letter is not difficult to trace. "Let no man despise thy youth" suggested advice as to how the young overseer was to behave towards young and old of both sexes. This led to the treatment of widows, and this again to the manner of appointing official widows. Women holding an official position suggests the subject of men holding an official position in the Church. If the treatment of the one class needs wisdom and circumspection, not less does the treatment of the other. And, therefore, with even more solemnity than in the previous section about the widows, the Apostle gives his directions on this important subject also. "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality." And then he passes on to the words which form our text.

It has been seriously doubted whether the words "Lay hands hastily on no man" do refer to the ordination of the official elders or presbyters. It is urged that the preceding warning about the treatment of charges made against presbyters, and of persons who are guilty of habitual sin, point to disciplinary functions of some kind rather than to ordination. Accordingly some few commentators in modern times have treated the passage as referring to the laying on of hands at the readmission of penitents to communion. But of any such custom in the Apostolic age there is no trace. There is nothing improbable in the hypothesis, imposition of hands being a common symbolical act. But it is a mere hypothesis unsupported by evidence. Eusebius, in speaking of the controversy between Stephen of Rome and Cyprian of Carthage about the re-baptising of heretics, tells us that the admission of heretics to the Church by imposition of hands with prayer, but without second baptism, was the "old custom." But the admission of heretics is not quite the same as the readmission of penitents: and a custom might be "old" (παλαιὸν ἦθος) in the time of Eusebius, or even of Cyprian, without being Apostolic or coeval with the Apostles. Therefore this statement of Eusebius gives little support to the proposed interpretation of the passage; and we may confidently prefer the explanation of it which has prevailed at any rate since Chrysostom's time, that it refers to ordination. Of the laying on of hands at the appointment of ministers we have sufficient evidence in the New Testament, not only in these Epistles (1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6), but in the Acts (xiii. 3). Moreover this explanation fits the context at least as well as the supposed improvement.

1. The Apostle is speaking of the treatment of presbyters, not of the whole congregation. Imposition of hands at the admission of a heretic or readmission of a penitent would apply to any person, and not to presbyters in particular. Therefore it is more reasonable to assume that the laying on of hands which accompanied ordination is meant.

2. He has just been warning Timothy against prejudice or partiality in dealing with the elders. While prejudice might lead him to be hasty in condemning an accused presbyter, before he had satisfied himself that the evidence was adequate, partiality might lead him to be hasty in acquitting him. But there is a more serious partiality than this, and it is one of the main causes of such scandals as unworthy presbyters. There is the partiality which leads to a hasty ordination, before sufficient care has been taken to ensure that the qualifications so carefully laid down in chapter iii. are present in the person selected. Prevention is better than cure. Proper precautions taken beforehand will reduce the risk of true charges against an elder to a minimum. Here

again the traditional explanation fits the context admirably.

"Neither be partaker of other men's sins." It is usual to understand this warning as referring to the responsibility of those who ordain. If, through haste or carelessness you ordain an unfit person, you must share the guilt of the sins which he afterwards commits as an elder. The principle is a just one, but it may be doubted whether this is St. Paul's meaning. The particular form of negative used seems to be against it. He says "Nor yet (*μηδέ*) be partaker of other men's sins," implying that this is something different from hastiness in ordinary. He seems to be returning to the warnings about partiality to elders who are living in sin. The meaning, therefore, is—"Beware of a haste in ordaining which may lead to the admission of unworthy men to the ministry. And if, in spite of all your care, unworthy ministers come under your notice, beware of an indifference or partiality towards them which will make you a partaker in their sins." This interpretation fits on well to what follows. "Keep thyself pure"—with a strong emphasis on the pronoun. "Strictness in enquiring into the antecedents of candidates for ordination and in dealing with ministerial depravity will have a very poor effect, unless your own life is free from reproach." And, if we omit the parenthetical advice about taking wine, the thought is continued thus: "As a rule it is not difficult to arrive at a wise decision respecting the fitness of candidates, or the guilt of accused presbyters. Men's characters both for evil and good are commonly notorious. The vices of the wicked and the virtues of the good outrun any formal judgment about them, and are quite manifest before an enquiry is held. No doubt there are exceptions, and then the consequences of men's lives must be looked to before a just opinion can be formed. But, sooner or later (and generally sooner rather than later) men, and especially ministers, will be known for what they are."

It remains to ascertain the meaning of the curious parenthesis "Be no longer a drinker of water," and its connection with the rest of the passage.

It was probably suggested to St. Paul by the preceding words, "Beware of making yourself responsible for the sins of others. Keep your own life above suspicion." This charge reminds the Apostle that his beloved disciple has been using ill-advised means to do this very thing. Either in order to mark his abhorrence of the drunkenness which was one of the most conspicuous vices of the age, or in order to bring his own body more easily into subjection, Timothy had abandoned the use of wine altogether, in spite of his weak health. St. Paul, therefore, with characteristic affection, takes care that his charge is not misunderstood. In urging his representative to be strictly careful of his own conduct, he does not wish to be understood as encouraging him to give up whatever might be abused or made the basis of a slander, nor yet as approving his rigour in giving up the use of wine. On the contrary, he thinks it a mistake; and he takes this opportunity of telling him so, while it is in his mind. Christ's ministers have important duties to perform, and have no right to play tricks with their health. We may here repeat, with renewed confidence, that a touch of this kind would never have occurred to a forger. Hence, in order to account for such natural touches as these, those who maintain that these Epistles are a fabrication now resort to the hypothesis that the forger had some genuine letters of St. Paul and worked parts of them into his own productions. It seems to be far more reasonable to believe that St. Paul wrote the whole of them. (See above, p. 390 and below, p. 484 ff.).

Let us return to the statement with which the Apostle closes this section of his letter. "Some men's sins are evident, going before unto judgment; and some men also they follow after. In like manner also there are good works that are evident; and such as are otherwise cannot be hid."

We have seen already what relation these words have to the context. They refer to the discernment between good and bad candidates for the ministry, and between good and bad ministers, pointing out that in most cases such discernment is not difficult, because men's own conduct acts as a herald to their character, proclaiming it to all the world. The statement, though made with special reference to Timothy's responsibilities towards elders and those who wish to become such, is a general one, and is equally true of all mankind. Conduct in most cases is quite a clear index of character, and there is no need to have a formal investigation in order to ascertain whether a man is leading a wicked life or not. But the words have a still deeper significance—one which is quite foreign to the context, and therefore can hardly have been in St. Paul's mind when he wrote them, but which as being true and of importance, ought not to be passed over.

For a formal investigation into men's conduct before an ecclesiastical or other official, let us substitute the judgment-seat of Christ. Let the question be, not the worthiness of certain persons to be admitted to some office, but their worthiness to be admitted to eternal life. The general statement made by the Apostle remains as true as ever. There are some men who stand, as before God, so also before the world, as open, self-proclaimed sinners. Wherever they go, their sins go before them, flagrant, crying, notorious. And when they are summoned hence, their sins again precede them, waiting for them as accusers and witnesses before the Judge. The whole career of an open and deliberate sinner is the procession of a criminal to his doom. His sins go before, and their consequences follow after, and he moves on in the midst, careless of the one and ignorant of the other. He has laughed at his sins and chased remorse for them away. He has by turns cherished and driven out the remembrance of them; dwelt on them, when to think of them was a pleasant repetition of them; stifled the thought of them, when to think of them might have brought thoughts of penitence; and has behaved towards them as if he could not only bring them into being without guilt, but control them or annihilate them without difficulty. He has not controlled, he has not destroyed, he has not even evaded, one of them. Each of them, when brought into existence, became his master, going on before him to herald his guiltiness, and saddling him with consequences from which he could not escape. And when he went to his own place, it was his sins that had gone before him and prepared the place for him.

"And some men also they follow after." There are cases in which men's sins, though of course not less manifest to the Almighty, are

much less manifest to the world, and even to themselves, than in the case of flagrant, open sinners. The consequences of their sins are less conspicuous, less easily disentangled from the mass of unexplained misery of which the world is so full. Cause and effect cannot be put together with any precision; for sometimes the one, sometimes the other, sometimes even both, are out of sight. There is no anticipation of the final award to be given at the judgment-seat of Christ. Not until the guilty one is placed before the throne for trial, is it at all known whether the sentence will be unfavourable or not. Even the man himself has lived and died without being at all fully aware what the state of the case is. He has not habitually examined himself, to see whether he has been living in sin or not. He has taken no pains to remember, and repent of, and conquer, those sins of which he has been conscious. The consequences of his sins have seldom come so swiftly as to startle him and convince him of their enormity. When they have at last overtaken him, it has been possible to doubt or to forget that it was his sins which caused them. And consequently he has doubted, and he has forgotten. But for all that, "they follow after." They are never eluded, never shaken off. A cause must have its effect; and a sin must have its punishment, if not in this world, then certainly in the next. "Be sure your sin will find you out"—probably in this life, but at any rate at the day of judgment. As surely as death follows on a pierced heart or on a severed neck, so surely does punishment follow upon sin.

How is it that in the material world we never dream that cause and effect can be separated, and yet easily believe that in the moral world sin may remain for ever unpunished? Our relation to the material universe has been compared to a game of chess. "The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with a sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong shows delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated—without haste, but without remorse." We believe this implicitly of the material laws of the universe; that they cannot be evaded, cannot be transgressed with impunity, cannot be obeyed without profit. Moral laws are not one whit less sure. Whether we believe it or not (and it will but be the worse for us if we refuse to believe it), sin, both repented and unrepented, must have its penalty. We might as well fling a stone, or shoot a cannon-ball, or send a balloon into the air, and say, "You shall not come down again," as sin, and say "I shall never suffer for it." Repentance does not deprive sin of its natural effect. We greatly err in supposing that, if we repent in time, we escape the penalty. To refuse to repent is a second and a worse sin, which, added to the first sin, increases the penalty incalculably. To repent is to escape this terrible augmentation of the original punishment; but it is no escape from the punishment itself.

But there is a bright side to this inexorable law. If sin must have its own punishment, virtue must have its own reward. The one is as sure as the other; and in the long run the fact of virtue and the reward of virtue will be made clear to all the world, and especially to the virtuous man himself. "The works that are good are evident; and such as are not evident cannot be hid." No saint knows his own holiness; and many a humble seeker after holiness does good deeds without knowing how good they are. Still less are all saints known as such to the world, or all good deeds recognised as good by those who witness them. But, nevertheless, good works as a rule are evident, and if they are not so, they will become so hereafter. If not in this world, at any rate before Christ's judgment-seat, they will be appraised at their true value. It is as true of the righteous as of the wicked, that "their works do follow them." And, if there is no more terrible fate than to be confronted at the last day by a multitude of unknown and forgotten sins, so there can hardly be any lot more blessed than to be welcomed then by a multitude of unknown and forgotten deeds of love and piety. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me." "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NATURE OF ROMAN SLAVERY AND THE APOSTLE'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT—A MODERN PARALLEL.

1 Timothy vi. 1, 2.

There are four passages in which St. Paul deals directly with the relations between slaves and their masters:—in the Epistles to the Ephesians (vi. 5-9), to the Colossians iii. 22-iv. 1), to Philemon (8-21), and the passage before us. Here he looks at the question from the slave's point of view; in the letter to Philemon from that of the master: in the Epistle to the Colossians and to the Ephesians he addresses both. In all four places his attitude towards this monster abomination is one and the same; and it is a very remarkable one. He nowhere denounces slavery. He does not state that such an intolerable iniquity as man possessing his fellow-man must be done away as speedily as may be. He gives no encouragement to slaves to rebel or to run away. He gives no hint to masters that they ought to let their slaves go free. Nothing of the kind. He not only accepts slavery as a fact; he seems to treat it as a necessary fact, a fact likely to be as permanent as marriage and parentage, poverty and wealth.

This attitude becomes all the more marvellous, when we remember, not only what slavery necessarily is wherever it exists, but what slavery was both by custom and by law among the great slave-owners throughout the Roman Empire. Slavery is at all times degrading to both the parties in that unnatural relationship, however excellent may be the regulations by which it is protected, and however noble may be the characters of both master and slave. It is impossible for one human being to be absolute owner of another's person without both possessor and

possessed being morally the worse for it. Violations of nature's laws are never perpetrated with impunity; and when the laws violated are those which are concerned, not with unconscious forces and atoms, but with human souls and characters, the penalties of the violation are none the less sure or severe. But these evils, which are the inevitable consequences of the existence of slavery in any shape whatever, may be increased a hundredfold, if the slavery exists under no regulations, or under bad regulations, or again where both master and slave are, to start with, base and brutalised in character. And all this was the case in the early days of the Roman Empire. Slavery was to a great extent under no check at all, and the laws which did exist for regulating the relationship between owner and slave were for the most part of a character to intensify the evil; while the conditions under which both master and slave were educated were such as to render each of them ready to increase the moral degradation of the other. We are accustomed to regard with well-merited abhorrence and abomination the horrors of modern slavery as practised until recently in America, and as still practised in Egypt, Persia, Turkey, and Arabia. But it may be doubted whether all the horrors of modern slavery are to be compared with the horrors of the slavery of ancient Rome.

From a political point of view it may be admitted that the institution of slavery has in past ages played a useful part in the history of mankind. It has mitigated the cruelties of barbaric warfare. It was more merciful to enslave a prisoner than to sacrifice him to the gods, or to torture him to death, or to eat him. And the enslaved prisoner and the warrior who had captured him, at once became mutually useful to one another. The warrior protected his slave from attack, and the slave by his labour left the warrior free to protect him. Thus each did something for the benefit of the other and of the society in which they lived.

But when we look at the institution from a moral point of view, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that its effects have been wholly evil. (1) It has been fatal to one of the most wholesome of human beliefs, the belief in the dignity of labour. Labour was irksome, and therefore assigned to the slave, and consequently came to be regarded as degrading. Thus the freeman lost the ennobling discipline of toil; and to the slave toil was not ennobling, because every one treated it as a degradation. (2) It has been disastrous to the personal character of the master. The possession of absolute power is always dangerous to our nature. Greek writers are never tired of insisting upon this in connection with the rule of despots over citizens. Strangely enough they did not see that the principle remained the same whether the autocrat was ruler of a state or of a household. In either case he almost inevitably became a tyrant, incapable of self-control, and the constant victim of flattery. And in some ways the domestic tyrant was the worse of the two. There was no public opinion to keep him in check, and his tyranny could exercise itself in every detail of daily life. (3) It has been disastrous to the personal character of the slave. Accustomed to be looked upon as an inferior and scarcely human being, always at the beck and call of another, and that for the most menial services, the slave lost all self-respect. His natural weapon was deceit; and his chief, if not his only, pleasure was the gratification of his lowest appetites. The household slave not unfrequently divided his time between pandering to his master's passions and gratifying his own. (4) It has been ruinous to family life. If it did not trouble the relation between husband and wife, it poisoned the atmosphere in which they lived and in which their children were reared. The younger generation inevitably suffered. Even if they did not learn cruelty from their parents, and deceit and sensuality from the slaves, they lost delicacy of feeling by seeing human things treated like brute beasts, and by being constantly in the society of those whom they were taught to despise. Even Plato, in recommending that slaves should be treated justly and with a view to their moral improvement, says that they must always be punished for their faults, and not reproved like freemen, which only makes them conceited; and one should use no language to them but that of command.

These evils, which are inherent in the very nature of slavery, were intensified a hundredfold by Roman legislation, and by the condition of Roman society in the first century of the Christian era. Slavery, which began by being a mitigation of the barbarities of warfare, ended in becoming an augmentation of them. Although a single campaign would sometimes bring in many thousands of captives who were sold into slavery, yet war did not procure slaves fast enough for the demand, and was supplemented by systematic man-hunts. It has been estimated that in the Roman world of St. Paul's day the proportion of slaves to freemen was in the ratio of two, or even three, to one. It was the immense number of the slaves which led to some of the cruel customs and laws respecting them. In the country they often worked, and sometimes slept, in chains. Even in Rome under Augustus the house-porter was sometimes chained. And by a decree of the Senate, if the master was murdered by a slave, all the slaves of the household were put to death. The four hundred slaves of Pedanius Secundus were executed under this enactment in A. D. 61, in which year St. Paul was probably in Rome. Public protest was made; but the Senate decided that the law must take its course. The rabble of slaves could only be kept in check by fear. Again, if the master was accused of a crime, he could surrender his slaves to be tortured in order to prove his innocence.

But it would be a vile task to rehearse all the horrors and abominations to which the cruelty and lust of wealthy Roman men and women subjected their slaves. The bloody sports of the gladiatorial shows and the indecent products of the Roman stage were partly the effect and partly the cause of the frightful character of Roman slavery. The gladiators and the actors were slaves especially trained for these debasing exhibitions; and Roman nobles and Roman ladies, brutalised and polluted by witnessing them, went home to give vent among the slaves of their own households to the passions which the circus and the theatre had roused. And this was the system which St. Paul left unattacked and undenounced. He never in so many words expresses any authoritative condemnation or personal abhorrence of it. This is all the more remarkable when we remember St. Paul's enthusiastic and sympathetic temperament; and the fact is one more proof of the divine inspiration of Scripture.

That slavery, as he saw it, must often have excited the most intense indignation and distress in his heart we cannot doubt; and yet he was guided not to give his sanction to remedies which would certainly have been violent and possibly ineffectual. To have preached that the Christian master must let his slaves go free, would have been to preach that slaves had a right to freedom; and the slave would understand that to mean that, if freedom was not granted, he might take this right of his by force. Of all wars, a servile war is perhaps the most frightful; and we may be thankful that none of those who first preached the Gospel gave their sanction to any such movement. The sudden abolition of slavery in the first century would have meant the shipwreck of society. Neither master nor slave was fit for any such change. A long course of education was needed before so radical a reform could be successfully accomplished. It has been pointed out as one of the chief marks of the Divine character of the Gospel, that it never appeals to the spirit of political revolution. It does not denounce abuses; but it insists upon principles which will necessarily lead to their abolition.

This was precisely what St. Paul did in dealing with the gigantic cancer which was draining the forces, economical, political, and moral, of Roman society. He did not tell the slave that he was oppressed and outraged. He did not tell the master that to buy and sell human beings was a violation of the rights of man. But he inspired both of them with sentiments which rendered the permanence of the unrighteous relation between them impossible. To many a Roman it would have seemed nothing less than robbery and revolution to tell him "You have no right to own these persons; you must free your slaves." St. Paul, without attacking the rights of property or existing laws and customs, spoke a far higher word, and one which sooner or later must carry freedom with it, when he said, "You must love your slaves." All the moral abominations which had clustered round slavery,—idleness, deceit, cruelty, and lust,—he denounced unsparingly; but for their own sake, not because of their connection with this iniquitous institution. The social arrangements which allowed and encouraged slavery he did not denounce. He left it to the principles which he preached gradually to reform them. Slavery cannot continue when the brotherhood of all mankind, and the equality of all men in Christ, have been realised. And long before slavery is abolished it is made more humane, wherever Christian principles are brought to bear upon it. Even before Christianity in the person of Constantine ascended the imperial throne, it had influenced public opinion in the right direction. Seneca and Plutarch are much more humane in their views of slavery than earlier writers are; and under the Antonines the power of life and death over slaves was transferred from their masters to the magistrates. Constantine went much further, and Justinian further still, in ameliorating the condition of slaves and encouraging emancipation. Thus slowly but surely, this monstrous evil is being eradicated from society; and it is one of the many beauties of the Gospel in comparison with Islam, that whereas Mahometanism has consecrated slavery, and given it a permanent religious sanction, Christianity has steadfastly abolished it. It is among the chief glories of the present century that it has seen the abolition of slavery in the British empire, the emancipation of the serfs in Russia, and the emancipation of the negroes in the United States. And we may safely assert that these tardy removals of a great social evil would never have been accomplished but for the principles which St. Paul preached, at the very time that he was allowing Christian masters to retain their slaves, and bidding Christian slaves to honour and obey their heathen masters.

The Apostle's injunctions to slaves who have Christian masters is worthy of special attention: it indicates one of the evils which would certainly have become serious, had the Apostles set to work to preach emancipation. The slaves being in almost all cases quite unfitted for a life of freedom, wholesale emancipation would have flooded society with crowds of persons quite unable to make a decent use of their newly acquired liberty. The sudden change in their condition would have been too great for their self-control. Indeed we gather from what St. Paul says here, that the acceptance of the principles of Christianity in some cases threw them off their balance. He charges Christian slaves who have Christian masters not to despise them. Evidently this was a temptation which he foresaw, even if it was not a fault which he had sometimes observed. To be told that he and his master were brethren, and to find that his master accepted this view of their relationship, was more than the poor slave in some instances could bear. He had been educated to believe that he was an inferior order of being, having scarcely anything in common, excepting a human form and passions, with his master. And, whether he accepted this belief or not, he had found himself systematically treated as if it were indisputable. When, therefore, he was assured, as one of the first principles of his new faith, that he was not only human like his master, but in God's family was his master's equal and brother; above all, when he had a Christian master who not only shared this new faith, but acted upon it and treated him as a brother, then his head was in danger of being turned. The rebound from grovelling fear to terms of equality and affection was too much for him; and the old attitude of cringing terror was exchanged not for respectful loyalty, but for contempt. He began to despise the master who had ceased to make himself terrible. All this shows how dangerous sudden changes of social relationships are; and how warily we need to go to work in order to bring about a reform of those which most plainly need readjustment; and it adds greatly to our admiration of the wisdom of the Apostle and our gratitude to Him who inspired him with such wisdom, to see that in dealing with this difficult problem he does not allow his sympathies to outrun his judgment, and does not attempt to cure a long-standing evil, which had entwined its roots round the very foundations of society, by any rapid or violent process. All men are by natural right free. Granted. All men are by creation children of God, and by redemption brethren in Christ. Granted. But it is worse than useless to give freedom suddenly to those who from their birth have been deprived of it, and do not yet know what use to make of it; and to give the position of children and brethren all at once to outcasts who cannot understand what such privileges mean.

St. Paul tells the slave that freedom is a thing

to be desired; but still more that it is a thing to be deserved. "While you are still under the yoke prove yourselves worthy of it and capable of bearing it. In becoming Christians you have become Christ's freemen. Show that you can enjoy that liberty without abusing it. If it leads you to treat a heathen master with disdain, because he has it not, then you give him an opportunity of blaspheming God and your holy religion; for he can say, 'What a vile creed this must be, which makes servants haughty and disrespectful!' If it leads you to treat a Christian master with contemptuous familiarity, because he recognises you as a brother whom he must love, then you are turning upside down the obligation which a common faith imposes on you. That he is a fellow-Christian is a reason why you should treat him with more reverence, not less." This is ever the burden of his exhortation to slaves. He bids Timothy to insist upon it. He tells Titus to do the same (ii. 9, 10). Slaves were in special danger of misunderstanding what the liberty of the Gospel meant. It is not for a moment to be supposed that it cancels any existing obligations of a slave to his master. No hint is to be given them that they have a right to demand emancipation, or would be justified in running away. Let them learn to behave as the Lord's freemen. Let their masters learn to behave as the Lord's bond-servants. When these principles have worked themselves out, slavery will have ceased to be.

That day has not yet come, but the progress already made, especially during the present century, leads us to hope that it may be near. But the extinction of slavery will not deprive St. Paul's treatment of it of its practical interest and value. His inspired wisdom in dealing with this problem ought to be our guide in dealing with the scarcely less momentous problems which confront us at the present day. We have social difficulties to deal with, whose magnitude and character make them not unlike that of slavery in the first ages of Christianity. There are the relations between capital and labour, the prodigious inequalities in the distribution of wealth, the degradation which is involved in the crowding of population in the great centres of industry. In attempting to remedy such things, let us, while we catch enthusiasm from St. Paul's sympathetic zeal, not forget his patience and discretion. Monstrous evils are not, like giants in the old romances, to be slain at a blow. They are deeply rooted; and if we attempt to tear them up, we may pull up the foundations of society along with them. We must be content to work slowly and without violence. We have no right to preach revolution and plunder to those who are suffering from undeserved poverty, any more than St. Paul had to preach revolt to the slaves. Drastic remedies of that kind will cause much enmity, and perhaps bloodshed, in the carrying out, and will work no permanent cure in the end. It is incredible that the well-being of mankind can be promoted by stirring up ill-will and hatred between a suffering class and those who seem to have it in their power to relieve them. Charity, we know, never faileth; but neither Scripture nor experience has taught us that violence is a sure road to success. We need more faith in the principles of Christianity and in their power to promote happiness as well as godliness. What is required is not a sudden redistribution of wealth, or laws to prevent its accumulation, but a proper appreciation of its value. Rich and poor alike have yet to learn what is really worth having in this world. It is not wealth, but happiness. And happiness is to be found neither in gaining, nor in possessing, nor in spending money, but in being useful. To serve others, to spend and be spent for them,—that is the ideal to place before mankind; and just in proportion as it is reached, will the frightful inequalities between class and class, between man and man, cease to be. It is a lesson that takes much teaching and much learning. Meanwhile it seems a terrible thing to leave whole generations suffering from destitution, just as it was a terrible thing to leave whole generations groaning in slavery. But a general manumission would not have helped matters then; and a general distribution to the indigent would not help matters now. The remedy adopted then was a slow one, but it has been efficacious. The master was not told to emancipate his slave, and the slave was not told to run away from his master; but each was charged to behave to the other, the master in commanding and the slave in obeying, as Christian to Christian in the sight of God. Let us not doubt that the same remedy now, if faithfully applied, will be not less effectual. Do not tell the rich man that he must share his wealth with those who have nothing. Do not tell the poor man that he has a right to a share, and may seize it, if it is not given. But by precept and example show to both alike that the one thing worth living for is to promote the well-being of others. And let the experience of the past convince us that any remedy which involves a violent reconstruction of society is sure to be dangerous and may easily prove futile.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GAIN OF A LOVE OF GODLINESS, AND THE UNGODLINESS OF A LOVE OF GAIN.

1 Timothy vi. 5-7, 17-19.

It is evident that the subject of avarice is much in the Apostle's mind during the writing of the last portion of this Epistle. He comes upon it here in connection with the teachers of false doctrine, and speaks strongly on the subject. Then he writes what appears to be a solemn conclusion to the letter (vv. 11-16). And then, as if he was oppressed by the danger of large possessions as promoting an avaricious spirit, he charges Timothy to warn the wealthy against the folly and wickedness of selfish hoarding. He, as it were, reopens his letter in order to add this charge, and then writes a second conclusion. He cannot feel happy until he has driven home this lesson about the right way of making gain, and the right way of laying up treasure. It is such a common heresy, and such a fatal one, to believe that gold is wealth, and that wealth is the chief good.

"Wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth." That is how St. Paul describes the "dissidence of dissent," as it was known to him by grievous experience. There were men who had once been in possession of a sound mind, whereby to recognise and grasp the truth; and they had grasped the truth, and for a time retained it. But they had "given heed to seducing spirits," and had allowed themselves to

be robbed of both these treasures,—not only the truth, but the mental power of appreciating the truth. And what had they in the place of what they had lost? Incessant contentions among themselves. Having lost the truth, they had no longer any centre of agreement. Error is manifold and its paths are labyrinthine. When two minds desert the truth there is no reason why they should remain in harmony any more; and each has a right to believe that his own substitute for the truth is the only one worth considering. As proof that their soundness of mind is gone, and that they are far away from the truth, St. Paul states the fact that they "suppose that godliness is a way of gain."

It is well known that the scholars whose labours during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced at last the Authorised Version, were not masters of the force of the Greek article. Its uses had not yet been analysed in the thorough way in which they have been analysed in the present century. Perhaps the text before us is the most remarkable among the numerous errors which are the result of this imperfect knowledge. It seems so strange that those who perpetrated it were not puzzled by their own mistake, and that their perplexity did not put them right. What kind of people could they have been who "supposed that gain was godliness"? Did such an idea ever before enter the head of any person? And if it did, could he have retained it? People have devoted their whole souls to gain, and have worshipped it as if it were Divine. But no man ever yet believed, or acted as if he believed, that gain was godliness. To make money-getting a substitute for religion, in allowing it to become the one absorbing occupation of mind and body, is one thing: to believe it to be religion is quite another.

But what St. Paul says of the opinions of these perverted men is exactly the converse of this: not that they supposed "gain to be godliness," but that they supposed "godliness to be a means of gain." They considered godliness, or rather the "form of godliness" which was all that they really possessed, to be a profitable investment. Christianity to them was a "profession" in the mercantile sense, and a profession that paid: and they embarked upon it, just as they would upon any other speculation which offered equally good hopes of being remunerative.

The Apostle takes up this perverted and mean view of religion, and shows that in a higher sense it is perfectly true. Just as Caiaphas, while meaning to express a base and cold-blooded policy of expediency, had given utterance to a profound truth about Christ, so these false teachers had got hold of principles which could be formulated so as to express a profound truth about Christ's religion. There is a very real sense in which godliness (genuine godliness and not the mere externals of it) is even in this world a fruitful source of gain. Honesty, so long as it be not practised merely as a policy, is the best policy. "Righteousness exalteth a nation": it invariably pays in the long run. And so "Godliness with contentment is great gain." They suppose that godliness is a good investment:—in quite a different sense from that which they have in their minds, it really is so. And the reason of this is manifest.

It has already been shown that "godliness is profitable for all things." It makes a man a better master, a better servant, a better citizen, and both in mind and body a healthier and therefore a stronger man. Above all it makes him a happier man; for it gives him that which is the foundation of all happiness in this life, and the foretaste of happiness in the world to come,—a good conscience. A possession of such value as this cannot be otherwise than great gain: especially if it be united, as it probably will be united, with contentment. It is in the nature of the godly man to be content with what God has given him. But godliness and contentment are not identical; and therefore, in order to make his meaning quite clear, the Apostle says not merely "godliness," but "godliness with contentment." Either of these qualities far exceeds in value the profitable investment which the false teachers saw in the profession of godliness. They found that it paid; that it had a tendency to advance their wordly interests. But, after all, even mere worldly wealth does not consist in the abundance of the things which a man possesses. That man is well off who has as much as he wants; and that man is rich who has more than he wants. Wealth cannot be measured by any absolute standard. We cannot name an income to rise above which is riches, and to fall below which is poverty. Nor is it enough to take into account the unavoidable calls which are made upon the man's purse, in order to know whether he is well off or not: we must also know something of his desires. When all legitimate claims have been discharged, is he satisfied with what remains for his own use? Is he contented? If he is, then he is indeed well-to-do. If he is not, then the chief element of wealth is still lacking to him.

The Apostle goes on to enforce the truth of the statement that even in this world godliness with contentment is a most valuable possession, far superior to a large income: and to urge that, even from the point of view of earthly prosperity and happiness, those people make a fatal mistake who devote themselves to the accumulation of wealth, without placing any check upon their growing and tormenting desires, and without knowing how to make a good use of the wealth which they are accumulating. With a view to enforce all this he repeats two well-known and indisputable propositions: "We brought nothing into the world" and "We can carry nothing out." As to the words which connect these two propositions in the original Greek, there seems to be some primitive error which we cannot now correct with any certainty. We are not sure whether one proposition is given as a reason for accepting the other, and, if so, which is premise and which is conclusion. But this is of no moment. Each statement singly has been abundantly proved by the experience of mankind, and no one would be likely to dispute either. One of the earliest books in human literature has them as its opening moral. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," are Job's words in the day of his utter ruin; and they have been assented to by millions of hearts ever since.

"We brought nothing into the world." What right then have we to be discontented with what has since been given to us? "We can take nothing out." What folly, therefore, to spend all our time in amassing wealth, which at the time of our departure we shall be obliged to leave behind us! There is the case against avarice in a nutshell. Never contented. Never knowing what it is to rest and be thankful.

Always nervously anxious about the preservation of what has been gained, and laboriously toiling in order to augment it. What a contrast to the godly man, who has found true independence in a trustful dependence upon the God Whom he serves! Godliness with contentment is indeed great gain.

There is perhaps no more striking example of the incorrigible perversity of human nature than the fact that, in spite of all experience to the contrary, generation after generation continues to look upon mere wealth as the thing best worth striving after. Century after century we find men telling us, often with much emphasis and bitterness, that great possessions are an imposture, that they promise happiness and never give it. And yet those very men continue to devote their whole energies to the retention and increase of their possessions: or, if they do not, they hardly ever succeed in convincing others that happiness is not to be found in such things. If they could succeed, there would be far more contented, and therefore far more happy people in the world than can be found at present. It is chiefly the desire for greater temporal advantages than we have at present that makes us discontented. We should be a long way on the road to contentment, if we could thoroughly convince ourselves that what are commonly called temporal advantages—such as large possessions, rank, power, honours, and the like—are on the whole not advantages; that they more often detract from this world's joys than augment them, while they are always a serious danger, and sometimes a grievous impediment, in reference to the joys of the world to come.

What man of wealth and position does not feel day by day the worries and anxieties and obligations which his riches and rank impose upon him? Does he not often wish that he could retire to some cottage and there live quietly on a few hundreds a year, and sometimes even seriously think of doing it. But at other times he fancies that his unrest and disquiet are owing to his not having enough. If he could only have some thousands a year added to his present income, then he would cease to be anxious about the future; he could afford to lose some and still have sufficient. If he could only attain to a higher position in society, then he would feel secure from detraction or serious downfall; he would be able to treat with unconcerned neglect the criticisms which are now such a source of annoyance to him. And in most cases this latter view prevails. What determines his conduct is not the well-grounded suspicion that he already has more than is good for him; that it is his abundance which is destroying his peace of mind; but a baseless conviction that an increase of the gifts of this world will win for him the happiness that he has failed to secure. The experience of the past rarely destroys this fallacy. He knows that his enjoyment of life has not increased with his fortune. Perhaps he can see clearly that he was a happier man when he possessed much less. But, nevertheless, he still cherishes the belief that with a few things more he would be contented, and for those few things more he continues to slave. There is no man in this world that has not found out over and over again that success, even the most complete success, in the attainment of any worldly desire, however innocent or laudable, does not bring the permanent satisfaction which was anticipated. Sooner or later the feeling of satiety, and therefore of disappointment, must set in. And of all the countless thousands who have had this experience, how few there are who have been able to draw the right conclusion, and to act upon it!

And when we take into account the difficulties and dangers which a large increase in the things of this world places in the way of our advance towards moral and spiritual perfection, we have a still stronger case against the fallacy that increase of wealth brings an increase in well-being. The care of the things which we possess takes up thought and time, which could be far more happily employed on nobler objects; and it leads us gradually into the practical conviction that these nobler objects, which have so continually to be neglected in order to make room for other cares, are really of less importance. It is impossible to go on ignoring the claims which intellectual and spiritual exercises have upon our attention without becoming less alive to those claims. We become, not contented, but self-sufficient in the worst sense. We acquiesce in the low and narrow aims which a devotion to worldly advancement has imposed upon us. We habitually act as if there were no other life but this one; and consequently we cease to take much interest in the other life beyond the grave; while even as regards the things of this world our interests become confined to those objects which can gratify our absorbing desire for financial prosperity.

Nor does the mischief done to our best moral and spiritual interests end here; especially if we are what the world calls successful. The man who steadily devotes himself to the advancement of his worldly position, and who succeeds in a very marked way in raising himself, is likely to acquire in the process a kind of brutal self-confidence, very detrimental to his character. He started with nothing, and he now has a fortune. He was once a shop-boy, and he is now a country gentleman. And he has done it all by his own shrewdness, energy, and perseverance. The result is that he makes no account of Providence, and very little of the far greater merits of less conspicuously successful men. A contempt for men and things that would have given him a higher view of this life, and some idea of a better life, is the penalty which he pays for his disastrous prosperity.

But his case is one of the most hopeless, whose desire for worldly advantages has settled down into a mere love of money. The worldly man, whose leading ambition is to rise to a more prominent place in society, to outshine his neighbours in the appointments of his house and in the splendour of his entertainments, to be of importance on all public occasions, and the like, is morally in a far less desperate condition than the miser. There is no vice more deadening to every noble and tender feeling than avarice. It is capable of extinguishing all mercy, all pity, all natural affection. It can make the claims of the suffering and sorrowful, even when they are combined with those of an old friend, or a wife, or a child, fall on deaf ears. It can banish from the heart not only all love, but all shame and self-respect. What does the miser care for the execrations of outraged society, so long as he can keep his gold? There is no heartless or mean act, and very often no deed of fraud or violence, from which he will shrink in order to augment or preserve his hoards. Assuredly the Apostle is right when he calls the love of money

a "root of all kinds of evil." There is no iniquity to which it does not form one of the nearest roads. Every criminal who wants an accomplice can have the avaricious man as his helper, if he only bids high enough.

And note that, unlike almost every other vice, it never loses its hold: its deadly grip is never for an instant relaxed. The selfish man can at a crisis become self-sacrificing, at any rate for a time. The sensualist has his moments when his nobler nature gets the better of his passions, and he spares those whom he thought to make his victims. The drunkard can sometimes be lured by affection or innocent enjoyments to forego the gratification of his craving. And there are times when even pride, that watchful and subtle foe, sleeps at its post and suffers humble thoughts to enter. But the demon avarice never slumbers, and is never off its guard. When it has once taken full possession of a man's heart, neither love, nor pity, nor shame, can ever surprise it into an act of generosity. We all of us have our impulses; and however little we may act upon them, we are conscious that some of our impulses are generous. Some of the worst of us could lay claim to as much as that. But the miser's nature is poisoned at its very source. Even his impulses are tainted. Sights and sounds which make other hardened sinners at least wish to help, if only to relieve their own distress at such pitiful things, make him instinctively tighten his purse-strings. Gold is his god; and there is no god who exacts from his worshippers such undivided and unceasing devotion. Family, friends, country, comfort, health, and honour must all be sacrificed at its shrine. Certainly the lust for gold is one of those "foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition."

In wealthy Ephesus, with its abundant commerce, the desire to be rich was a common passion; and St. Paul feared—perhaps he knew—that in the Church in Ephesus the mischief was present and increasing. Hence this earnest reiteration of strong warnings against it. Hence the reopening of the letter in order to tell Timothy to charge the rich not to be self-confident and arrogant, not to trust in the wealth which may fail them, but in the God Who cannot do so; and to remind them that the only way to make riches secure is to give them to God and to His work. The wealthy heathen in Ephesus were accustomed to deposit their treasures with "the great goddess Diana," whose temple was both a sanctuary and a bank. Let Christian merchants deposit theirs with God by being "rich in good works;" so that when He called them to Himself, they might receive their own with usury, and "lay hold on the life which is life indeed."

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER.

TITUS i. 1, 4.

THE title "Pastoral Epistle" is as appropriate to the Epistle to Titus as to the First Epistle to Timothy. Although there is a good deal in the letter that is personal rather than pastoral, yet the pastoral element is the main one. The bulk of the letter is taken up with questions of Church doctrine and government, the treatment of the faithful members of the congregation and of the unruly and erring. The letter is addressed to Titus, not as a private individual, but as the delegate of the Apostle holding office in Crete. Hence, as in the First Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul styles himself an Apostle: and the official character of this letter is still further marked by the long and solemn superscription. It is evidently intended to be read by other persons besides the minister to whom it is addressed.

The question of the authenticity of the Epistle to Titus has already been in a great measure discussed in the first of these expositions. It was pointed out there that the external evidence for the genuineness in all three cases is very strong, beginning almost certainly with Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Polycarp; becoming clear and certain in Irenæus, and being abundant in Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. Of the very few people who rejected them, Tatian seems to have been almost alone in making a distinction between them. He accepted the Epistle to Titus, while rejecting the two to Timothy. We may rejoice that Tatian, Marcion, and others raised the question. It cannot be said that the Churches accepted this Epistle without consideration. Those who possessed evidence now no longer extant were convinced, in spite of the objections urged, that in this letter and its two companions we have genuine writings of St. Paul.

With regard to modern objections, it may be freely admitted that there is no room in St. Paul's life, as given in the Acts, for the journey to Crete, and the winter at Nicopolis required by the Epistle to Titus. But there is plenty of room for both of these outside the Acts, viz., between the first and second imprisonment of the Apostle. And, as we have already seen good reason for believing in the case of 1 Timothy, the condition of the Church indicated in this letter is such as was already in existence in St. Paul's time; and the language used in treating of it resembles that of the Apostle in a way which helps us to believe that we are reading his own words and not those of a skilful imitator. For this imitator must have been a strange person; very skilful in some things, very eccentric in others. Why does he give St. Paul and Titus a work in Crete of which there is no mention in the Acts? Why does he make the Apostle ask Titus to meet him in Nicopolis, a place never named in connection with St. Paul? Why bracket a well-known person, like Apollos, with an utterly unknown person, such as Zenas? It is not easy to believe in this imitator.

Yet another point of resemblance should be noted. Here, as in 1 Timothy, there is no careful arrangement of the material. The subjects are not put together in a studied order, as in a treatise with a distinct theological or controversial purpose. They follow one another in a natural manner, just as they occur to the writer. Persons with their hearts and heads full of things which they wish to say to a friend, do not sit down with an analysis before them to secure an orderly arrangement of what they wish to write. They start with one of the main topics, and then the treatment of this suggests something else: and they are not distressed if they repeat themselves, or if they have to return to a

subject which has been touched upon before and then dropped. This is just the kind of writing which meets us once more in the letter to Titus. It is thoroughly natural. It is not easy to believe that a forger in the second century could have thrown himself with such simplicity into the attitude which the letter presupposes.

It is not possible to determine whether this letter was written before or after the First to Timothy. But it was certainly written before the second to Timothy. Therefore, while one has no sufficient reason for taking it before the one, one has excellent reason for taking it before the other. The precise year and the precise place in which it was written, we must be content to leave unsettled. It may be doubted whether either the one or the other would throw much light on the contents of the letter. These are determined by what the Apostle remembers and expects concerning affairs in Crete, and not by his own surroundings. It is the official position of Titus in Crete which is chiefly before his mind.

Titus, as we learn from the opening words of the letter was, like Timothy, converted to Christianity by St. Paul. The Apostle calls him "his true child after a common faith." As regards his antecedents he was a marked contrast to Timothy. Whereas Timothy had been brought up as a Jew under the care of his Jewish mother Eunice, and had been circumcised by St. Paul's desire, Titus was wholly a Gentile, and "was not compelled to be circumcised," as St. Paul states in the passage in which he tells the Galatians (ii. 1-3) that he took Titus with him to Jerusalem on the occasion when he and Barnabas went thither seventeen years after St. Paul's conversion. Paul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem on that occasion to protect Gentile converts from the Judaisers, who wanted to make all such converts submit to circumcision. Titus and others went with them as representatives of the Gentile converts, and in their persons a formal protest was made against this imposition. It is quite possible that Titus was with St. Paul when he wrote to the Galatians; and if so this mention of him becomes all the more natural. We may fancy the Apostle saying to Titus, as he wrote the letter, "I shall remind them of your case, which is very much to the point." Whether Titus was personally known to the Galatian Church is not certain; but he is spoken of as one of whom they have at any rate heard.

Titus was almost certainly one of those who carried the First Epistle to the Corinthian Church, *i. e.*, the first of the two that have come down to us; and St. Paul awaited his report of the reception which the letter had met with at Corinth with the utmost anxiety. And he was quite certainly one of those who were entrusted with the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. St. Paul wrote the first letter at Ephesus about Easter, probably in the year 57. He left Ephesus about Pentecost, and went to Troas, where he hoped to meet Titus with news from Corinth. After waiting in vain he went on to Macedonia in grievous anxiety; and there Titus met him. He at once began the second letter, which apparently was written piece-meal during the journey; and when it was completed he sent Titus back to Corinth with it.

That Titus should twice have been sent as the messenger and representative of St. Paul to a Church in which difficulties of the gravest kind had arisen gives us a clear indication of the Apostle's estimate of his character. He must have been a person of firmness, discretion, and tact. There were the monstrous case of incest, the disputes between the rival factions, contentions in public worship and even at the Eucharist, litigation before the heathen, and wild ideas about the resurrection, not to mention other matters which were difficult enough, although of a less burning character. And in all these questions it was the vain, fitful, vivacious, and sensitive Corinthians who had to be managed and induced to take the Apostle's words (which sometimes were very sharp and severe) patiently. Nor was this all. Besides the difficulties in the Church of Corinth there was the collection for the poor Christians in Judea about which St. Paul was deeply interested, and which had not been progressing in Corinth as he wished. St. Paul was doubly anxious that it should be a success; first, because it proved to the Jewish converts that his interest in them was substantial, in spite of his opposition to some of their views; secondly, because it served to counteract the tendency to part asunder, which was manifesting itself between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. And in carrying out St. Paul's instructions about these matters Titus evidently had to suffer a good deal of opposition; and hence the Apostle writes a strong commendation of him, coupling him with himself in his mission and zeal. "Whether any inquire about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker to you-ward." "Thanks be to God, which putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For indeed he accepted our exhortation; but being himself very earnest, he went forth unto you of his own accord." With great delicacy the Apostle takes care that, in making it clear to the Corinthians that Titus has his full authority for what he does, no slight is cast upon Titus's own zeal and interest in the Corinthians. "He is my representative; but he comes of his own free will out of love to you. His visit to you is his own doing; but he has my entire sanction. He is neither a mechanical delegate, nor an unauthorised volunteer."

A curtain falls on the career of this valued a helpmate of the great Apostle, from the time when he carried the second letter to Corinth to the time when the letter to himself was written. The interval was probably some eight or ten years, about which we know only one thing, that during it, and probably in the second half of it, the Apostle and Titus had been together in Crete, and Titus had been left behind to consolidate the Church there. The Acts tell us nothing. Probably Titus is not mentioned in the book at all. The reading "Titus Justus" in xviii. 7, is possibly correct, but it is far from certain: and even if it were certain, we should still remain in doubt whether Titus and Titus Justus are the same person. And the attempts which have been made to identify Titus with other persons in the Acts, such as Silvanus or Timothy, are scarcely worth considering. Nor has the conjecture that Titus is the author of the Acts (as Krenkel, Jacobsen, and recently Hooykaas in the "Bible for Young People" have suggested) very much to recommend it. The hypothesis has two facts to support it: (1) the silence of the Acts respecting Titus, and (2) the fact that the writer must have been a companion of St. Paul. But these two facts are equally favourable to the tradition that St. Luke

was the author, a tradition for which the evidence is both very early and very abundant. Why should such a tradition yield to a mere conjecture?

One thing, however, we may accept as certain:—that the time when St. Paul was being carried a prisoner to Rome in an Alexandrian corn-ship which touched at Crete, was not the time when the Church in Crete was founded. What opportunity would a prisoner have of doing any such work during so short a stay? Cretans were among those who heard the Apostles at Pentecost preaching in their own tongue the wonderful works of God. Some of these may have returned home and formed the first beginnings of a Christian congregation: and among imperfect converts of this kind we might expect to find the errors of which St. Paul treats in this Epistle. But we can hardly suppose that there was much of Christian organisation until St. Paul and Titus came to the island after the Apostle's first Roman imprisonment. And the necessity of having some one with a calm head and a firm hand on the spot, forced the Apostle to leave his companion behind him. The man who had been so successful in aiding him respecting the difficulties at Corinth was just the man to be entrusted with a somewhat similar but rather more permanent post in Crete. The Cretans were less civilised, but in their own way scarcely less immoral, than the Corinthians; and in both cases the national failings caused serious trouble in the Church. In both cases ecclesiastical authority has to be firmly upheld against those who question and oppose it. In both cases social turbulence has to be kept in check. In both cases there is a tendency to wild theological and philosophical speculations, and (on the part of some) to a bigoted maintenance of Jewish ordinances and superstitions. Against all these Titus will have to contend with decision, and, if need be, with severity.

The letter, in which directions are given for the carrying out of all this, is evidence of the great confidence which the Apostle reposed in him. One of those who had worked also in Corinth, is either already with him in Crete, or may soon be expected,—Apollos, and with him Zenas. So that the Corinthian experience is doubly represented. Other helpers are coming, viz., Artemas and Tychicus; and, when they arrive, Titus will be free to rejoin the Apostle, and is to lose no time in doing so at Nicopolis.

One commission Titus has in Crete which very naturally was not given to him at Corinth. He is to perfect the organisation of the Christian Church in the island by appointing elders in every city. And it is this charge among others which connects this letter so closely with the first to Timothy, which very likely was written about the same time.

Whether Titus was set free from his heavy charge in Crete in time to join St. Paul at Nicopolis, we have no means of knowing. At the time when the second letter to Timothy was written, Titus had gone to Dalmatia; but we are left in doubt as to whether he had gone thither by St. Paul's desire, or (like Demas in going to Thessalonica) against it. Nor does it appear whether Titus had gone to Dalmatia from Nicopolis, which is not far distant, or had followed the Apostle from Nicopolis to Rome, and thence gone to Illyria. With the journey to Dalmatia our knowledge of him ends. Tradition takes him back to Crete as permanent bishop; and in the Middle Ages the Cretans seem to have regarded him as their patron saint.

The impression left upon our minds by the Acts is that St. Luke knew Timothy and did not know Titus: and hence frequently mentions the one and says nothing about the other. The impression left upon our mind by the mention of both in Paul's Epistles, and by the letters addressed to each, is that Titus, though less tenderly beloved by the Apostle, was the stronger man of the two. St. Paul seems to be less anxious about the conduct of Titus and about the way in which others will treat him. The directions as to his personal behaviour are much slighter than in the case of Timothy. He seems to credit him with less sensitiveness and more decision and tact; perhaps also with less liability to be carried away by fanatical views and practices than the other.

Titus shares with Timothy the glory of having given up everything in order to throw in his lot with St. Paul, and of being one of his most trusted and efficient helpers. What that meant the Epistles of St. Paul tell us:—ceaseless toil and anxiety, much shame and reproach, and not a little peril to life itself. He also shares with Timothy the glory of being willing, when the cause required such sacrifice, to separate from the master to whom he had surrendered himself, and to work on by himself in isolation and difficulty. The latter was possibly the more trying sacrifice of the two. To give up all his earthly prospects and all the sweetness of home life, in order to work for the spread of the Gospel side by side with St. Paul, was no doubt a sacrifice that must have cost those who made it a great deal. But it had its attractive side. Quite independently of the beauty and majesty of the cause itself, there was the delight of being associated with a leader so able, so sagacious, so invigorating, and so affectionate as the Apostle who "became all things to all men that he might by all means save some." Hard work became light, and difficulties became smooth, under the inspiriting sympathy of such a colleague. But it was quite another thing to have given up everything for the sake of such companionship and support, or at least in the full expectation of enjoying it, and then to have to undergo the hard work and confront the difficulties without it. The new dispensation in this respect repeats the old. Elisha leaves his home and his inheritance to follow Elijah, and then Elijah is taken from him. Timothy and Titus leave their homes and possessions to follow St. Paul, and then St. Paul sends them away from him. And to this arrangement they consented, Timothy, (as we know) with tears, Titus (we may be sure) with much regret. And what it cost the loving Apostle thus to part with them and to pain them we see from the tone of affectionate longing which pervades these letters.

The example set by both master and disciples is one which Christians, and especially Christian ministers, must from time to time need. Christ sent forth both the Twelve and the Seventy "two and two"; and what is true of mankind generally is true also of the ministry—"It is not good for man to be alone." But cases often arise in which not more than one man can be spared for each post; and then those who have been all in all to one another, in sympathy and counsel and co-operation, have to part. And it is one of the greatest sacrifices that can be required of them.

Paul and Timothy and Titus were willing to make this sacrifice; and it is one which Christ's servants throughout all ages are called upon at times to make. Many men are willing to face, especially in a good cause, what is repulsive to them, if they have the company of others in the trial, especially if they have the presence and support of those whose presence is in itself a refreshment, and their support a redoubling of strength. But to enter upon a long and trying task with the full expectation of such advantages, and then to be called upon to surrender them,—this is, indeed, a trial which might well make the weak-hearted turn back. But their devotion to their Lord's work, and their confidence in his sustaining power, enabled the Apostle and his two chief disciples to make the venture; and the marvellous success of the Church in the age which immediately succeeded them, shows how their sacrifice was blessed. And we may be sure that even in this world they had their reward. "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CHURCH IN CRETE AND ITS ORGANISATION—THE APOSTLE'S DIRECTIONS FOR APPOINTING ELDERS.

TITUS i. 5-7.

THIS passage tells us a great deal about the circumstances which led to the writing of the letter. They have been touched upon in the previous chapter, but may be treated more comprehensively here.

It is quite evident: (1) that the Gospel had been established in Crete for a considerable time when St. Paul wrote this to his delegate, Titus; (2) that during the Apostle's stay in the island he had been unable to complete the work which he had in view with regard to the full establishment of the Church there; and (3) that one of the chief things which remained undone, and which St. Paul had been compelled to leave to Titus to accomplish, was a properly organised ministry. There was a large and scattered flock; but for the most part it was without shepherds.

It is quite possible that the Gospel of Christ was at least known, if not by any one believed, in Crete before St. Paul visited the islands. Cretans were among those who heard the miraculous preaching of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; and some of these may have returned to their country, if not converts to Christianity, at any rate full of what they had seen and heard of "the mighty works of God," as shown forth in the words spoken on that day, and in their consequences. Certainly there were many Jews in the island; and these, though often the bitterest opponents of the Gospel, were nevertheless the readiest and best converts, when they did not oppose; for they already knew and worshipped the true God, and they were acquainted with the prophecies respecting the Messiah. We may therefore conclude that the way was already prepared for the preaching of Christ, even if He as yet had no worshippers in Crete, before St. Paul began to teach there.

There are three things which tend to show that Christianity had been spreading in Crete for at least some years when the Apostle wrote this letter to Titus. First, the latter is charged to "appoint elders in every city," or "city by city," as we might render the original expression (*κατὰ πόλιν*). This implies that among the multitude of cities, for which Crete even in Homer's day had been famous, not few had a Christian congregation in need of supervision; and it is not improbable that the congregation in some cases was a large one. For the interpretation is certainly an untenable one which forces into the Apostle's words a restriction which they do not contain, that each city is to have just one presbyter and no more. St. Paul tells Titus to take care that no city is left without a presbyter. Each Christian community is to have its proper ministry; it is not to be left to its own guidance. But how many elders each congregation is to have is a point to be decided by Titus according to the principles laid down for him by St. Paul. For we must not limit the "as I gave thee charge" to the mere fact of appointing elders. The Apostle had told him, not merely that elders must be appointed, but that they must be appointed in a particular way, and according to a prescribed system. The passage, therefore, tells us that there were a good many cities in which there were Christian congregations, and leaves us quite free to believe that some of these congregations were large enough to require several elders to minister to them and govern them. Secondly, the kind of person to be selected as overseer seems to imply that Christianity has been established for a considerable time among the Cretans. The "elder" or "bishop" (for in this passage, at any rate, the two names indicate one and the same officer) is to be the father of a family, with children who are believers and orderly persons.

The injunction implies that there are cases in which the father is a good Christian, but he has not succeeded in making his children good Christians. Either they have not become believers at all; or, although nominal Christians, they do not conduct themselves as such. They are profligate, riotous, and disobedient. This implies that the children are old enough to think for themselves and reject the Gospel in spite of their parent's conversion; or that they are old enough to rebel against its authority. And one does not use such strong words as "profligacy" or "riotous living" of quite young children. The prodigal son, of whom the same expression is used, was no mere child. Cases of this kind, therefore, in which the father had been converted to Christianity, but had been unable to make the influences of Christianity tell upon his own children, were common enough to make it worth St. Paul's while to give injunctions about them. And this implies a condition of things in which Christianity was no newly planted religion. The injunctions are intelligible enough. Such fathers are not to be selected by Titus as elders. A man who has so conspicuously failed in bringing his own household into harmony with the Gospel, is not the man to be promoted to rule the household of the Church. Even if his failure is his misfortune rather than his fault, the condition of his own family cannot fail to be a grave impedi-

ment to his usefulness as an overseer of the congregation. Thirdly, there is the fact that heresies already exist among the Cretan Christians. Titus, like Timothy, has to contend with teaching of a seriously erroneous kind. From this also we infer that the faith has long since been introduced into the island. The misbeliefs of the newly converted would be spoken of in far gentler terms. They are errors of ignorance, which will disappear as fuller instruction in the truth is received. They are not erroneous doctrines held and propagated in opposition to the truth. These latter require time for their development. From all these considerations, therefore, we conclude that St. Paul is writing to Titus as his delegate in a country in which the Gospel is no new thing. We are not to suppose that the Apostle left Titus in charge of Christians who had been converted a very short time before to the faith.

The incompleteness of the Apostle's own work in the island is spoken of in plain terms. Even in Churches in which he was able to remain for two or three years, he was obliged to leave very much unfinished; and we need not be surprised that such was the case in Crete, where he can hardly have stayed so long. It was this incompleteness in all his work, a defect quite unavoidable in work of such magnitude, that weighed so heavily upon the Apostle's mind. It was "that which pressed upon him daily,—anxiety for all the Churches." There was so much that had never been done at all; so much that required to be secured and established; so much that already needed correction. And while he was attending to the wants of one Church, another not less important, not less dear to him, was equally in need of his help and guidance. And here was the comfort of having such disciples as Timothy and Titus, who, like true friends, could be indeed a "second self" to him. They could be carrying on his work in places where he himself could not be. And thus there was no small consolation for the sorrow of parting from them and the loss of their helpful presence. They could still be more helpful elsewhere. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that were wanting."

There were many things that were wanting in Crete; but one of the chief things which pressed upon the Apostle's mind was the lack of a properly organised ministry, without which everything must soon fall into confusion and decay. Hence, as soon as he has concluded his salutation, the fulness and solemnity of which are one of the many evidences of the genuineness of the letter, he at once repeats to Titus the charge which he had previously given to him by word of mouth respecting this pressing need. A due supply of elders or overseers is of the first importance for "setting in order" those things which at present are in so unsatisfactory a state.

There are several points of interest in connection with St. Paul's directions to Titus respecting this need and the best way of meeting it.

First, it is Titus himself who is to appoint these elders throughout the cities in which congregations exist. It is not the congregations that are to elect the overseers, subject to the approval of the Apostle's delegate; still less that he is to ordain any one whom they may elect. The full responsibility of each appointment rests with him. Anything like popular election of the ministers is not only not suggested, it is by implication entirely excluded. But, secondly, in making each appointment Titus is to consider the congregation. He is to look carefully to the reputation which the man of his choice bears among his fellow-Christians:—"if any man is blameless . . . . having children who are not accused of riot . . . For the bishop must be blameless." A man in whom the congregation have no confidence, because of the bad repute which attaches to himself or his family, is not to be appointed. In this way the congregation have an indirect veto; for the man to whom they cannot give a good character may not be taken to be set over them. Thirdly, the appointment of Church officers is regarded as imperative: it is on no account to be omitted. And it is not merely an arrangement that is as a rule desirable: it is to be universal. Titus is to "appoint elders in every city." He is to go through the congregations "city by city," and take care that each has its elder or body of elders. Fourthly, as the name itself indicates, these elders are to be taken from the older men among the believers. As a rule they are to be heads of families, who have had experience of life in its manifold relations, and especially who have had experience of ruling a Christian household. That will be some guarantee for their capacity for ruling a Christian congregation. Lastly, it must be remembered that they are not merely delegates, either of Titus or of the congregation. The essence of their authority is not that they are the representatives of the body of Christian men and women over whom they are placed. It has a far higher origin. They are "God's stewards." It is His household that they direct and administer, and it is from Him that their powers are derived. They are His ministers, solemnly appointed to act in His Name. It is on His behalf that they have to speak, as His agents and ambassadors, labouring to advance the interests of His kingdom. They are "stewards of His mysteries," bringing out of what is committed to them "things new and old." As God's agents they have a work to do among their fellow-men, through themselves for Him. As God's ambassadors they have a message to deliver, good tidings to proclaim, ever the same, and yet ever new. As "God's stewards" they have treasures to guard with reverent care, treasures to augment by diligent cultivation, treasures to distribute with prudent liberality. There is the flock, sorely needing, but it may be not greatly craving, God's spiritual gifts. The longing has to be awakened: the longing, when awakened, has to be cherished and directed: the gifts which will satisfy it have to be dispensed. There is a demand; and there is a supply; a human demand and a Divine supply. It is the business of God's stewards to see that the one meets the other.

"God's steward" is the key to all that follows respecting the qualities to be looked for in an elder or overseer of the Church: and, as the order of the words in the Greek shows, the emphasis is on "God's" rather than on "steward." The point accentuated is, not that in the Church as in his own home he has a household to administer, but that the household to which he has to minister is God's. That being so, he as "God's steward" must prove himself worthy of the commission which he holds: "not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospi-

tality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, temperate; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers."

Such men, wherever he can find them,—and "if any man is blameless" is not meant to hint that among Cretans it may be impossible to find such,—Titus is to "appoint" as elders in every city." In the A. V. the phrase runs "ordain elders in every city." As we have seen already (chap. v.), there are several passages in which the Revisers have changed "ordain" into "appoint." Thus in Mark iii. 14, "He ordained twelve" becomes "He appointed twelve." In John xv. 16, "I have chosen you and ordained you" becomes "I chose you and appointed you." In 1 Tim. ii. 7, "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle" becomes "whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an apostle." In Heb. v. 1, and viii. 3, "Every high priest is ordained" becomes "every high priest is appointed. In these passages three different Greek words (*ποιέω*, *τίθημι*, *καθίστημι*) are used in the original; but not one of them has the special ecclesiastical meaning which we so frequently associate with the word "ordain"; not one of them implies, as "ordain" in such context almost of necessity implies, a rite of ordination, a special ceremonial, such as the laying on of hands. When in English we say, "He ordained twelve," "I am ordained an apostle," "Every high priest is ordained," the mind almost inevitably thinks of ordination in the common sense of the word; and this is foisting upon the language of the New Testament a meaning which the words there used do not rightly bear. They all three of them refer to the appointment to the office, and not to the rite or ceremony by which the person appointed is admitted to the office. The Revisers, therefore, have done wisely in banishing from all such texts a word which to English readers cannot fail to suggest ideas which are not contained at all in the original Greek.

If we ask in what way Titus admitted the men whom he selected to serve as presbyters to their office, the answer is scarcely a doubtful one. Almost certainly he would admit them, as Timothy himself was admitted, and as he is instructed to admit others, by the laying on of hands. But this is neither expressed nor implied in the injunction to "appoint elders in every city." The appointment is one thing, the ordination another; and even in cases in which we are sure that the appointment involved ordination, we are not justified in saying "ordain" where the Greek says "appoint." The Greek words used in the passages quoted might equally well be used of the appointment of a magistrate or a steward. And as we should avoid speaking of ordaining a magistrate or a steward, we ought to avoid using "ordain" to translate words which would be thoroughly in place in such a connection. The Greek words for "ordain" and "ordination," in the sense of imposition of hands in order to admit to an ecclesiastical office (*χειροθετεῖ*, *χειροθεσία*), do not occur in the New Testament at all.

It is worthy of note that there is not a trace here, any more than there is in the similar passage in 1 Timothy, of the parallel between the threefold ministry in the Old Testament and a threefold ministry in the Christian Church, high-priest, priests, and Levites, being compared with bishop, presbyters, and deacons. This parallel was a favourite one, and it was made early. The fact, therefore, that we do not find it in any of these Epistles, nor even any material out of which it could be constructed, confirms us in the belief that these letters belong to the first century, and not to the second.

In giving this injunction to Titus, St. Paul assumes that his disciple and delegate is as free as he himself is from all feelings of jealousy, or envy. "Art thou jealous for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets," is the spirit in which these instructions are given, and no doubt were accepted. There is no grasping after power in the great Apostle of the Gentiles; no desire to keep everything in his own hands, that he might have the credit of all that was done. So long as Christ is rightly preached, so long as the Lord's work is faithfully done, he cares not who wins the glory. He is more than willing that Timothy and Titus should share in his work and its reward; and he without hesitation applies to them to admit others in like manner to share with them in their work and its reward. This generous willingness to admit others to co-operate is not always found, especially in men of strong character and great energy and decision. They will admit subordinates as a necessary evil to work out details, because they cannot themselves afford time for all these. But they object to anything like colleagues. Whatever of any serious importance is done must be in their own hands and must be recognised as their work. There is nothing of this spirit in St. Paul. He could rejoice when some "preached Christ even of envy and strife," "not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for him in his bonds." He rejoiced, not because of their evil temper, but because that at any rate Christ was preached. How much more, therefore, did he rejoice when Christ was preached "of good will" by disciples devoted to himself and his Master. They all had the same end in view; not their own glory, but the glory of God.

And this is the end which all Christian ministers have to keep in view, and which they too often exchange for ends that are far lower, and far removed (it may be) from the cause with which we choose to identify them. And as time goes on, and we look less and less with a single eye at the will of God, and have less and less of the single purpose of seeking his glory, our aims become narrower and our ends more selfish. At first it is the triumph of a system, then it is the advancement of a party. Then it becomes the propagation of our own views, and the extension of our own influence. Until at last we find ourselves working, no longer for God's glory, but simply for our own. While professing to work in His Name and for His honour, we have steadily substituted our own wills for His.

But it is only by forgetting ourselves that we find ourselves; only by losing our life that we find it. "God's steward" must be ready to sink every personal interest in the interests of the great Employer. He has nothing of his own. He deals with his Master's goods, and must deal with them in his Master's way. He who labours in this spirit will one day be rewarded by the Divine voice of welcome: "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

CHAPTER XX.

CHRISTIANITY AND UNCHRISTIAN LITERATURE.

TITUS i. 12, 13.

THE hexameter verse which St. Paul here cites from the Cretan poet Epimenides is one of three quotations from profane literature which are made by St. Paul. Of the other two, one occurs in 1 Cor. xv. 33, "Evil communications corrupt good manners"; and the other in the Apostle's speech on the Areopagus at Athens, as recorded in the Acts (xvii. 28): "For we are also his offspring." They cannot be relied upon as sufficient to prove that St. Paul was well read in classical literature, any more than the quoting of a hackneyed line from Shakespeare, from Byron, and from Tennyson, would prove that an English writer was well acquainted with English literature. It may have been the case that St. Paul knew a great deal of Greek classical literature, but these three quotations, from Epimenides, from some Greek tragedian, and from Cleanthes or Aratus, do not at all prove the point. In all three cases the source of the quotation is not certain. In the one before us the Apostle no doubt tells us that he is quoting a Cretan "prophet," and therefore quotes the line as coming from Epimenides. But a man may know that "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," is Shakespeare, without having read a single play. And we are quite uncertain whether St. Paul had even seen the poem of Epimenides on Oracles in which the line which he here quotes occurs. The iambic which he quotes in the letter to the Corinthians, although originally in some Greek play (perhaps of Euripides or Menander), had passed into a proverb, and proves even less than the line from Epimenides that St. Paul knew the work in which it occurred. The half-line which is given in his speech at Athens, stating the Divine parentage of mankind, may have come from a variety of sources: but it is not improbable that the Apostle had read it in the "Phænomena" of Aratus, in which it occurs in the form in which it is reproduced in the Acts. This astronomical poem was popular in St. Paul's day, and he was the more likely to have come across it, as Aratus is said to have been a native of Tarsus, or at any rate of Cilicia. But even when we have admitted that the Apostle had read the "Phænomena" of Aratus or Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus, we have not made much way towards proving that he was well read in Greek literature. Indeed the contrary has been argued from the fact that, according to the reading of the best authorities, the iambic line in the Corinthians is quoted in such a way as to spoil the scanning; which would seem to show that St. Paul was not familiar with the iambic metre. If that was the case he can scarcely have read even a single Greek play.

But the question is not one of great importance, although doubtless of some interest. We do not need this evidence to prove that the Apostle was a person, not only of great energy and ability, but of culture. There are passages in his writings, such as chapters xiii. and xv in 1 Corinthians, which are equal for beauty and eloquence to anything in literature. Even among inspired writers few have known better than St. Paul how to clothe lofty thoughts in noble language. And of his general acquaintance with the moral philosophy of his age, especially of the Stoic school, which was very influential in the neighbourhood of Tarsus, there can be no doubt. Just as St. John laid the thoughts and language of Alexandrian philosophy under contribution, and gave them fuller force and meaning to express the dogmatic truths of the Gospel, so St. Paul laid the thoughts and language of Stoicism under contribution, and transfigured them to express the moral teaching of the Gospel. Cleanthes or Aratus, from one or both of whom one of the three quotations comes (and St. Paul seems to know both sources, for he says "as certain even of your own poets have said"), were both of them Stoics: and the speech in which the quotation occurs, short as it is in the Acts, abounds in parallels to the teaching of St. Paul's Stoic contemporary Seneca. If St. Paul tells us that "the God that made the world and all things therein . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands," Seneca teaches that "temples must not be built to God of stones piled on high: He must be consecrated in the heart of man." While St. Paul reminds us that God "is not far from each one of us," Seneca says "God is near thee: He is with thee; He is within." Again St. Paul warns his hearers that "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man"; and Seneca declares "Thou shalt not form Him of silver and gold: a true likeness of God cannot be moulded of this material."

But the quotations are of other interest than their bearing upon the question as to the Greek elements in the education and teaching of St. Paul. They have a bearing also on the question of Christian use of profane authors, and on the duty of self-culture in general.

The leading teachers of the early Church differed widely in their estimate of the value of heathen literature, and especially of heathen philosophy. On the whole, with some considerable exceptions, the Greek Fathers valued it highly, as containing precious elements of truth, which were partly the result of direct inspiration partly echoes of the Old Testament. The Latin Fathers, on the other hand, for the most part, treated all pagan teaching with suspicion and contempt. It was in no sense useful. It was utterly false, and simply stood in the way of truth. It was rubbish, which must be swept on one side in order to make room for the Gospel. Tertullian thinks that heathen philosophers are "blockheads when they knock at the doors of truth," and that "they have contributed nothing whatever that a Christian can accept." Arnobius and Lactantius write in a similar strain of contemptuous disapproval. Tertullian thinks it out of the question that a right-minded Christian should teach in pagan schools. But even he shrinks from telling Christian parents that they must allow their children to remain uneducated rather than send them to such schools. The policy of permitting Christian children to attend heathen schools, while forbidding Christian adults from teaching in them, appears singularly unreasonable. Every Christian teacher in a school rendered that school less objectionable for Christian children. But Tertullian urges that one who teaches pagan literature seems to give his sanction to it: one who merely learns it does nothing of the kind. The young must be educated: adults need not become

schoolmasters. One can plead necessity in the one case; not in the other ("De Idol.," x.). But the necessity of sending a child to a pagan school, because otherwise it could not be properly educated, did not settle the question whether it was prudent, or even right, for a Christian in after-life to study pagan literature; and it required the thought and experience of several centuries to arrive at anything like a consensus of opinion and practice on the subject. But during the first four or five centuries the more liberal view, even in the West, on the whole prevailed. From Irenæus, Tatian, and Hermias, among Greek writers, and from various Latin Fathers, disapproving opinions proceeded. But the influence of Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the East, and of Augustine and Jerome in the West, was too strong for such opinions. Clement puts it on the broad ground that all wisdom is a Divine gift; and maintains that the philosophy of the Greeks, limited and particular as it is, contains the rudiments of that really perfect knowledge, which is beyond this world. Origen, in rebutting the reproach of Celsus, that the gospel repelled the educated and gave a welcome only to the ignorant, quotes the Epistle to Titus, pointing out that "Paul, in describing what kind of man the bishop ought to be, lays down as a qualification that he must be a teacher, saying that he ought to be able to convince the gainsayers, that by the wisdom which is in him he may stop the mouths of foolish talkers and deceivers." The Gospel gives a welcome to the learned and unlearned alike: to the learned, that they may become teachers; to the unlearned, not because it prefers such, but because it wishes to instruct them. And he points out that in enumerating the gifts of the Spirit St. Paul places wisdom and knowledge before faith, gifts of healing, and miracles (1 Cor. xii. 8-10). But Origen does not point out that St. Paul himself makes use of heathen literature; although immediately before dealing with the accusation of Celsus, that Christians hate culture and promote ignorance, he quotes from Callimachus half of the saying of Epimenides, "Cretans are always liars" ("Con. Cels.," III. xliii.). What Origen's own practice was we learn from the "Panegyric" of his enthusiastic pupil, Gregory Thaumaturgus (xiii.).

With the exception of atheistic philosophy, which is not worth the risk, Origen encouraged his scholars to study everything; and he gave them a regular course of dialectics, physics, and moral philosophy, as a preparation for theology. Augustine, who ascribes his first conversion from a vicious life to the "Hortensius" of Cicero ("Conf.," III. iv. 1), was not likely to take an extreme line in condemning classical literature, from which he himself frequently quotes. Of Cicero's "Hortensius" he says, "This book in truth changed my affections, and turned my prayers to Thyself, O Lord, and made me have other hopes and desires." He quotes, among other classical authors, not only Virgil, Livy, Lucan, Sallust, Horace, Pliny, and Quintilian, but Terence, Persius, and Juvenal, and of the last from those Satires which are sometimes omitted by editors on account of their grossness. In his treatise "On Christian Doctrine" (II. xl.), he contends that we must not shrink from making use of all that is good and true in heathen writings and institutions. We must "spoil the Egyptians." The writings of his instructor Ambrose show that he also was well acquainted with the best Latin classics. In Jerome we have what may be called an essay on the subject. Ruffinus had suggested to Magnus, a Roman rhetorician, that he should ask Jerome why he filled his writings with so many allusions and quotations taken from Pagan literature, and Jerome in reply, after quoting the opening verses of the book of Proverbs, refers him to the example of St. Paul in the Epistles to Titus and the Corinthians, and in the speech in the Acts. Then he points to Cyprian, Origen, Eusebius, and Apollinaris: "read them, and you will find that in comparison with them we have little skill (in quotation)." Besides these he appeals to the examples, among Greek writers, of Quadratus, Justin Martyr, Dionysius, Clement of Alexandria, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, etc.; and among Latins, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, Hilary, and Juvencus. And he points out that quotations from profane authors occur in nearly all the works of these writers, and not merely in those which are addressed to heathen. But while Jerome defends the study of classical authors as a necessary part of education, he severely condemns those clergy who amused themselves with such writers as Plautus (of whom he himself had been very fond), Terence, and Catullus, when they ought to have been studying the Scriptures. Later in life his views appear to have become more rigid; and we find him rejoicing that the works of Plato and Aristotle are becoming neglected.

It was the short reign of Julian, commonly called "the Apostate" (A. D. 361-363), which had brought the question very much to the front. His policy and legislation probably influenced Augustine and Jerome in taking a more liberal line in the matter, in spite of Latin dislike of Greek philosophy and their own ascetic tendencies. Julian, jealous of the growing influence of Christian teachers, tried to prevent them from lecturing on classical authors. From this he hoped to gain two advantages. (1) Secular education would to a large extent be taken out of Christian hands. (2) The Christian teachers themselves would become less well educated, and less able to contend with heathen controversialists. He sarcastically pointed out the inconvenience of a teacher expounding Homer and denouncing Homer's gods: Christians had better confine themselves to "expounding Matthew and Luke in the Churches of the Galileans," and leave the interpretation of the masterpieces of antiquity to others. And he seems not to have contented himself with cynical advice, but to have passed a law that no Christian was to teach in the public schools. This law was at once cancelled by his successor Valentinian; but it provoked a strong feeling of resentment, and stirred up Christians to recognise and hold fast the advantages of a classical education.

But while the influence of the first three of the four great Latin Fathers was in favour of a wise use of the products of pagan genius, the influence of the last of the four was disastrously in the opposite direction.

In the period between Jerome and Gregory the Great two facts had had a calamitous effect upon the cause of liberal education. (1) The inroads of the barbarians almost destroyed the imperial schools in Gaul and Italy. (2) The miserable controversies about Origen produced an uneasy suspicion that secular study was prejudicial to orthodoxy. It is perhaps to this latter

influence that we may attribute two ecclesiastical canons of unknown date and origin. In the "Apostolical Constitutions" (I. vi.) we read, "Abstain from all heathen books. For what hast thou to do with such foreign discourses, or laws, or false prophets, which subvert the faith of the unstable? For what defect dost thou find in the law of God, that thou shouldest have recourse to those heathenish fables?" etc., etc. Again in a collection of canons, which is sometimes assigned to a synod at Carthage (A. D. 398), the 16th canon in the collection runs thus: "A bishop shall read no heathen books, and heretical books only when necessary." The Carthaginian synod of 398 is a fiction, and some of the canons in the collection deal with controversies of a much later date: but we need not doubt that all the canons were enacted in some Church or other in the course of the first six centuries. The spirit of this one is very much in harmony with the known tendencies of the sixth century; and we find Gregory the Great (A. D. 544-604) making precisely the same regulation. He forbade bishops to study heathen literature, and in one of his letters ("Epp.," ix. 48) he rebukes Desiderius, Bishop of Vienne, for giving his clergy instruction in grammar, which involved the reading of the heathen poets. "The praises of Christ do not admit of being joined in the same mouth with the praises of Jupiter; and it is a grave and execrable thing for bishops to sing what even for a religious layman is unbecoming." The story that he purposely burnt the Palatine library is not traced earlier than the twelfth century, and is probably untrue; but it indicates the traditional belief respecting his attitude towards classical literature. And it is certainly true that he was twice in Constantinople, and on the second occasion remained there three years (A. D. 579-582), and yet never learnt Greek. In his time, as we learn both from himself and his contemporary, Gregory of Tours, the belief was very prevalent that the end of the world was at hand; and it was argued that mankind had more serious things to attend to than the study of pagan literature—or indeed any literature that was not connected with the Scriptures or the Church. Henceforward, in the words of Gregory of Tours, "the study of literature perished": and, although there were some bright spots at Jarrow and elsewhere, yet on the whole the chief services which Christianity rendered to classical learning during the next few centuries, were the preservation of classical authors in the libraries of monasteries and the preservation of the classical languages in the liturgies of the Church.

The question will perhaps never cease to be argued, although it is hardly probable that so extreme a view as that of Gregory the Great will ever again become prevalent. Let us take a statement of the question from the utterances of one who will not be suspected of want of capacity or experience in the matter, or of want of sympathy with stern and serious views respecting education and life.

"Some one will say to me perhaps," wrote John Henry Newman in 1859, "our youth shall not be corrupted. We will dispense with all general or national literature whatever, if it be so exceptional; we will have a Christian Literature of our own, as pure, as true as the Jewish." "You cannot have it. . . . From the nature of the case, if Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of sinful man. You may gather together something very great and high, something higher than any literature ever was; and when you have done so, you will find that it is not Literature at all. You will simply have left the delineation of man, as such, and have substituted for it, as far as you have had anything to substitute, that of man, as he is or might be, under certain special advantages. Give up the study of man, as such, if so it must be; but say you do so. Do not say you are studying him, his history, his mind, and his heart, when you are studying something else. Man is a being of genius, passion, intellect, conscience, power. He exercises his great gifts in various ways, in great deeds, in great thoughts, in heroic acts, in hateful crimes. . . . Literature records them all to the life. . . .

"We should be shrinking from a plain duty, did we leave out Literature from Education. For why do we educate except to prepare for the world? Why do we cultivate the intellect of the many beyond the first elements of knowledge, except . . . to fit men of the world for the world? We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them. Proscribe (I do not say particular authors, particular works, particular passages) but secular literature as such: cut out from your class books all broad manifestations of the natural man; and those manifestations are waiting for your pupil's benefit, at the very doors of your lecture room in living and breathing substance. They will meet him there in all the charm of novelty, and all the fascination of genius or of amiableness. To-day a pupil, to-morrow a member of the great world: to-day confined to the Lives of the Saints, to-morrow thrown upon Babel;—thrown on Babel, without the honest indulgence of wit and humour and imagination ever permitted to him, without any fastidiousness of taste wrought into him, without any rule given him for discriminating 'the precious from the vile,' beauty from sin, the truth from the sophistry of nature, what is innocent from what is poison."

Many Christians are apt to forget that all truth is of God; and that every one who in an earnest spirit endeavours to ascertain and to teach what is true in any department of human knowledge, is doing God's work. The Spirit, we are promised by Christ Himself, "shall lead you into all the Truth," and "the Truth shall make you free." Our business is to see that nothing claims the name of truth unlawfully. It is not our business to prohibit anything that can make good its claim to be accounted true.

Those who enjoy large opportunities of study, and especially those who have the responsibility not only of learning, but of teaching, must beware of setting their own narrow limits to the domain of what is useful and true. It has a far wider range than the wants which we feel in ourselves or which we can trace in others. Even the whole experience of mankind would not suffice to give the measure of it. We dishonour rather than reverence the Bible, when we attempt to confine ourselves and others to the study of it. Much of its secret and inexhaustible store of treasure will remain undiscovered by us, until

our hearts are warmed, our intellects quickened, and our experiences enlarged, by the masterpieces of human genius. "To the pure all things are pure." In the first century, in which the perils of heathenism to Christianity were tenfold what they are at present, St. Paul in plain terms told his converts that if they liked to accept the invitations of their heathen friends and acquaintances, they need not scruple to do so (1 Cor. x. 27); and by his own example, he shows them that they may enjoy and use what is beautiful and true in heathen literature. Let us beware of narrowing the liberty wisely allowed by him. Each one of us can readily find out what is dangerous for himself. There is plenty that is not dangerous: let him freely enjoy that. But the limits that are wise for ourselves are not to bind others. Their liberty is not to be circumscribed by our conscience. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF SOBER-MINDEDNESS—THE USE AND ABUSE OF RELIGIOUS EMOTION.

TITUS ii. 1-6.

IN marked contrast to the seducing teachers who are described in the concluding verses of the first chapter, Titus is charged to teach that which is right. "But speak thou the things which befit the sound doctrine." What they taught was to the last degree unwholesome, full of senseless frivolities and baseless distinctions respecting meats and drinks, times and seasons. Such things were fatal alike to sound and robust faith and to all moral earnestness. Belief was frittered away in a credulous attention to "Jewish fables," and character was depraved by a weak punctiliousness about fanciful details. As in the Pharisees, whom Jesus Christ denounced, scrupulosity about trifles led to neglect of "the weightier matters of the law." But in these "vain talkers and deceivers," whom Titus had to oppose, the trifles by which they distracted their hearers from matters of the highest importance were not even the minor duties enjoined by the Law or the Gospel: they were mere "commandments of men." In opposition to calamitous teaching of this kind, Titus is to insist upon what is healthy and sound.

All classes are to be attended to, and the exhortations specially needed are to be given to each: to the older men and older women, the younger women and the younger men, to whom Titus is to show himself an example: and finally to slaves, for salvation is offered to all men, and is for no privileged class.

It will be observed that the sound teaching which Titus is charged to give to the different sections of his flock relates almost exclusively to conduct. There is scarcely a hint in the whole of this chapter that can be supposed to have reference to errors of doctrine. In quite a general way the old men are to be exhorted to be "sound in faith" as well as in love and patience: but otherwise all the instruction to be given to old and young, male and female, bond and free, relates to conduct in thought, word, and deed.

Nor is there any hint that the "vain talkers and deceivers" contradicted (otherwise than by an unholy life) the moral precepts which the Apostle here tells his delegate to communicate abundantly to his flock. We are not to suppose that these mischievous teachers taught people that there was no harm in intemperance, or slander, or unchastity, or theft. The mischief which they did consisted in their telling people to devote their attention to things that were morally unprofitable, while no care was taken to secure attention to those things the observance of which was vital. On the contrary, the emphasis laid upon silly superstitions led people to suppose that, when these had been attended to, all duties had been fulfilled; and a careless, godless life was the result. Thus whole households were subverted by men who made religion a trade. This disastrous state of things is to be remedied by pointing out and insisting upon the observances which are of real importance for the spiritual life. The fatal lowering of moral tone, which the morbid and fanciful teaching of these seducers produced, is to be counteracted by the bracing effects of wholesome moral teaching.

No one can read through the indications which the Apostle gives of what he means by "wholesome teaching," without perceiving the key-note which rings through it all;—sobriety or sobermindedness. The aged men are to be taught to be "temperate, grave, soberminded." The aged women to be "reverent in demeanour," "that they may school the young women . . . to be soberminded." The younger men are to be "exhorted to be soberminded." And in giving the reason for all this he points out God's purpose in His revelation to mankind; "to the intent that, denying ungodliness and wordly lusts, we should live soberly."

Now, what is the precise meaning of this sobriety or sobermindedness, on which St. Paul insists so strongly as a duty to be impressed upon men and women both old and young?

The words used in the original Greek (*σώφρων*, *σωφρονίζειν*, *σωφρονεῖν*) signify according to their derivation, "of sound mind," "to make of sound mind," and "to be of sound mind;" and the quality which they indicate is that *mens sana* or healthiness of mental constitution which shows itself in discreet and prudent conduct, and especially in self-control. This latter meaning is specially predominant in Attic writers.

Thus Plato defines it as "a kind of order and a controlling of certain pleasures and desires, as is shown by the saying that a man is 'master of himself' . . . an expression which seems to mean that in the man's soul there are two elements, a better and a worse, and when the better controls the worse, then he is said to be master of himself" ("Rep.," IV. p. 431). Similarly, Aristotle tells us that the lowest bodily pleasures are the sphere in which this virtue of self-control is specially displayed; that is, those bodily pleasures which the other animals share with man, and which are consequently shown to be slavish and bestial, viz., the pleasures of touch and taste ("Eth. N.," III. x. 4, 9; "Rhet.," I. ix. 9). And throughout the best Attic writers the vices to which self-control is opposed are those which imply immoderate indulgence in sensual pleasures. It is a virtue which has a very prominent place in heathen moral philosophy. It is one of the most obvious of virtues. It is manifest that in order to be a virtuous man at all one must at least have control over one's lowest appetites. And to a heathen it is one of the most impressive

of virtues. All of us have experience of the difficulty of regulating our passions; and to those who know nothing of Christian teaching or of the grace of God the difficulty is increased tenfold. Hence to the savage the ascetic seems to be almost superhuman; and even in the cultivated pagan abstinence from bodily pleasure and steadfast resistance of sensual temptation excite wonder and admiration. The beautiful panegyric of Socrates put into the mouth of Alcibiades in the "Symposium" of Plato illustrates this feeling: and Euripides styles such virtue as the "noblest gift of the gods."

But when this virtue becomes illuminated by the Gospel its meaning is intensified. The "sobermindedness" or "sobriety" of the New Testament is something more than the "self-control" or "temperance" of Plato and Aristotle. Its sphere is not confined to the lowest sensual enjoyments. Self-mastery with regard to such things is still included; but other things are included also. It is that power over ourselves which keeps under control, not only bodily impulses, but spiritual impulses also. There is a spiritual frenzy analogous to physical madness, and there are spiritual self-indulgences analogous to bodily intemperance. For these things also self-mastery is needed.

St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians sums up his own life under the two conditions of being out of his mind and in his right mind. His opponents at Corinth, like Festus (Acts xxvi. 24), accused him of being mad. He is quite ready to admit that at times he has been in a condition which, if they like, they may call madness. But that is no affair of theirs. Of his sanity and sobriety at other times there can be no question; and his conduct before these times of sobriety is of importance to them. "For whether we went out of our mind" (ἐξέστημεν), "it was for God, or are in our right mind" (σωφρονοῦμεν). "are of sober mind," R. V.), "it is for you" (2 Cor. v. 13). The Apostle "went out of his mind," as his enemies chose to say, at his conversion on the road to Damascus, when a special revelation of Jesus Christ was granted to him: and to this phase of his existence belonged his visions (Acts xvi. 9; xxvii. 23), ectasies and revelations (2 Cor. xii. 1-7), and his "speaking with tongues" (1 Cor. xiv. 18). And he was "in his right mind" in all the great tact, and sagacity, and self-denial, which he exhibited for the well-being of his converts.

It was absolutely necessary that the latter condition of mind should be the predominant one, and should control the other; that the ecstasy should be exceptional and the sobermindedness habitual, and that the sobermindedness should not be turned into self-exaltation by the remembrance of the ecstasy. There was so much danger of this evil in St. Paul's case, owing to "the exceeding greatness of the revelations" granted to him, that the special discipline of the "stake for the flesh" was given to him to counteract the temptation; for it was in the flesh, that is the sinful principle of his nature, that the tendency to pride himself on his extraordinary spiritual experiences was found.

St. Paul's case was, no doubt, highly exceptional; but in degree, rather than in kind. Very many of his converts had similar, although less sublime, and perhaps less frequent, experiences. Spiritual gifts of a supernatural kind had been bestowed in great abundance upon many of the members of the Church of Corinth (1 Cor. xii. 7-10), and were the occasion of some of the grievous disorders which were found there, because they were not always accompanied by sobriety, but were allowed to become incitements to license and spiritual pride. Few things show more plainly the necessity for self-control and sobermindedness, when men are under the influence of strong religious emotion, than the state of things existing among the Corinthian converts, as indicated in St. Paul's two letters to them. They had been guilty of two errors. First, they had formed an exaggerated estimate of some of the gifts bestowed upon them, especially of the mysterious power of speaking with tongues. And, secondly, they had supposed that persons so highly gifted as themselves were above, not only ordinary precautions, but ordinary principles. Instead of seeing that such special privileges required them to be specially on their guard, they considered that they stood in no need of vigilance, and might safely disregard custom, and common decency, and even principles of morality. Previous to their conversion they had been idolaters, and therefore had had no experience of spiritual gifts and manifestations. Consequently, when the experience came, they were thrown off their balance, and knew neither how to estimate these gifts, nor how to prevent "what should have been to their wealth, becoming to them an occasion of falling."

It might be thought that the conditions of the Christian life of St. Paul and of his converts were too unlike our own to yield any clear lesson in this respect. We have not been converted to Christianity from either Judaism or paganism; and we have received no special revelations or extraordinary spiritual gifts. But this is not so. Our religious life, like theirs, has its two different phases; its times of excitement, and its times of freedom from excitement. We no longer work miracles, or speak with tongues; but we have our exceptional moments of impassioned feelings, and highstrung aspirations, and sublime thoughts; and we are just as liable as the Corinthians were to plume ourselves upon them, to rest in them, and to think that, because we have them, all must necessarily be well with us. We cannot too often remind ourselves that such things are not religion, and are not even the material out of which religion is made. They are the scaffolding and appliances, rather than the formed edifice or the unformed stones and timber. They supply helps and motive power. They are intended to carry us over difficulties and drudgery; and hence are more common in the earlier stages of a Christian's career than in the time of maturity, and at crises when the career has been interrupted, than when it is progressing with steadfast regularity. Conversion to Christianity in the case of a pagan, and the realisation of what Christianity really means in the case of a nominal Christian, involve pain and depression: and the attempt to turn again and repent after grievous sin involves pain and depression. Strong religious emotion helps us to get the better of these, and may, if we use it aright, give us an impetus in the right direction. But, from the very nature of things, it cannot continue, and it is not desirable that it should. It will soon run its course, and we shall be left to go on our way with our ordinary resources. And our duty then is twofold;—first, not to repine at its withdrawal; "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath

taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord" : and, secondly, to take care that it does not evaporate in empty self-complacency, but is translated into action. Impassioned feeling, that leads on to conduct, strengthens character; impassioned feeling, that ends with itself, weakens it. If religious excitement is not to do us more harm than good, by leaving us more insensible to spiritual influences than we were before, it must be accompanied by the sobriety which refuses to be exalted by such an experience, and which, in making use of it, controls it. And, moreover, these warm feelings and enthusiastic aspirations after what is good must lead on to calm and steadfast performance of what is good. One act of real self-denial, one genuine sacrifice of pleasure to duty, is worth hours of religious emotion and thousands of pious thoughts.

But sobermindedness will not only keep us from being pleased with ourselves for our impassioned feelings about spiritual things, and help us to turn them to good account; it will also preserve us from what is even worse than allowing them to pass away without result, viz., talking about them. To feel warmly and to do nothing is to waste motive power: it leads to hardening of the heart against good influences in the future. To feel warmly and talk about it is to abuse motive power: it leads to puffing up of the heart in spiritual pride and to blinding the inward eye with self-complacency. And this is the fatal mistake which is made by some religious teachers at the present day. Strong feelings are excited in those whom they wish to lead from a life of sin to a life of holiness. Sorrow for the past and a desire for better things are aroused, and the sinner is thrown into a condition of violent distress and expectation. And then, instead of being gently led on to work out his salvation in fear and trembling, the penitent is encouraged to seek excitement again and again, and to attempt to produce it in others, by constant rehearsing of his own religious experiences. What should have been a secret between himself and his Saviour, or at most shared only with some wise adviser, is thrown out publicly to the whole world, to the degradation both of what is told and of the character of him who tells it.

The error of mistaking religious feeling for holiness, and good thoughts for good conduct, is a very common one; and it is confined to neither sex and to no period of life. Men as well as women, and the old as well as the young, need to be on their guard against it. And therefore the Apostle urges Titus to exhort all alike to be soberminded. There are times when to be agitated about religion, and have warm feelings either of sorrow or joy, is natural and right. When one is first roused to desire a life of holiness; when one is conscience-stricken at having fallen into some grievous sin; when one is bowed down under the weight of some great private or public calamity, or elated by the vivid appreciation of some great private or public blessing. At all such seasons it is reasonable and proper that we should experience strong religious emotion. Not to do so would be a sign of insensibility and deadness of heart. But do not let us suppose that the presence of such feelings marks us out as specially religious or spiritually gifted people. They do nothing of the kind. They merely prove that we are not utterly dead to spiritual influences. Whether we are the better or the worse for such feelings, depends upon the use that we make of them. And do not let us expect that these emotions will be permanent, which will certainly not be the case, or that they will frequently return, which will probably not be the case. Above all let us not be discouraged if they become more and more rare, as time goes on. They ought to become more rare; for they are sure to become less frequent as we advance in holiness. In the steady growth and natural development of the spiritual life there is not much need of them or room for them. They have done their work when they have carried us over the breakers, which troubled our early efforts, into the less excited waters of consistent obedience. And to be able to progress without them is a surer token of God's grace than to have them. To continue steadfast in our obedience, without the luxury of warm feelings and impassioned devotion, is more pleasing in His sight than all the intense longings to be freed from sin, and all the passionate supplications for increased holiness that we have ever felt and offered. The test of fellowship with God is not warmth of devotion, but holiness of life. "Hereby know we that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MORAL CONDITION OF SLAVES—THEIR ADORNMENT OF THE DOCTRINES OF GOD.

TITUS ii. 9, 10.

SOMETHING has already been said in a previous discourse (on 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2) respecting the institution of slavery in the Roman Empire in the first age of Christianity. It was not only unchristian, but inhuman; and it was so widespread that the slaves outnumbered the freemen. Nevertheless the Apostles and their successors taught neither to the slaves that they ought to resist a dominion which was immoral both in effect and in origin, nor to the masters that as Christians they were bound to set their servants free. Christianity did indeed labour for the abolition of slavery, but by quite other methods. It taught masters and slaves alike that all men have a common Divine parentage and a common Divine redemption, and consequently are equally bound to show brotherly love and equally endowed with spiritual freedom. It showed that the slave and his master are alike children of God, and as such free; and alike servants of Jesus Christ, and as such bondmen,—bondmen in that service which is the only true freedom. And thus very slowly, but surely, Christianity disintegrated and dispersed those unwholesome conditions and false ideas which made slavery to be everywhere possible, and to seem to most men to be necessary. And wherever these conditions and ideas were swept away, slavery gradually died out or was formally abolished.

As the number of slaves in the first century was so enormous, it was only in accordance with human probability that many of the first converts to Christianity belonged to this class; all the more so, as Christianity, like most great movements, began with the lower orders and thence spread upwards. Among the better class of

slaves, that is those who were not so degraded as to be insensible of their own degradation, the gospel spread freely. It offered them just what they needed, and the lack of which had turned their life into one great despair. It gave them something to hope for and something to live for. Their condition in the world was both socially and morally deplorable. Socially they had no rights beyond what their lord chose to allow them. They were ranked with the brutes, and were in a worse condition than any brutes, for they were capable of wrongs and sufferings of which the brutes are incapable or insensible. And St. Chrysostom in commenting on this passage points out how inevitable it was that the moral character of slaves should as a rule be bad. They have no motive for trying to be good, and very little opportunity of learning what is right. Every one, slaves included, admits that as a race they are passionate, intractable, and indisposed to virtue, not because God has made them so, but from bad education and the neglect of their masters. The masters care nothing about their slaves' morals, except so far as their vices are likely to interfere with their masters' pleasures or interests. Hence the slaves, having no one to care for them, naturally sink into an abyss of wickedness. Their chief aim is to avoid, not crime, but being found out. For if free men, able to select their own society, and with many other advantages of education and home life, find it difficult to avoid the contact and contaminating influence of the vicious, what can one expect from those who have none of these advantages, and have no possibility of escape from degrading surroundings? They are never taught to respect themselves; they have no experience of persons who do respect themselves; and they never receive any respect from either their superiors or their fellows. How can virtue or self-respect be learnt in such a school? "For all these reasons it is a difficult and surprising thing that there should ever be a good slave." And yet this is the class which St. Paul singles out as being able in a peculiar way to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

"To adorn the doctrine of God." How is the doctrine of God to be adorned? And how are slaves capable of adorning it?

"The doctrine of God" is that which He teaches, which He has revealed for our instruction. It is His revelation of Himself. He is the author of it, the giver of it, and the subject of it. He is also its end or purpose. It is granted in order that men may know Him, and love Him, and be brought home to Him. All these facts are a guarantee to us of its importance and its security. It comes from One Who is infinitely great and infinitely true. And yet it is capable of being adorned by those to whom it is given.

There is nothing paradoxical in this. It is precisely those things which in themselves are good and beautiful that we consider capable of adornment and worthy of it. To add ornament to an object that is intrinsically vile or hideous, does but augment the existing bad qualities by adding to them a glaring incongruity. Baseness, which might otherwise have escaped notice, becomes conspicuous and grotesque. No person of good taste and good sense would waste and degrade ornament by bestowing it upon an unworthy object. The very fact, therefore, that adornment is attempted proves that those who make the attempt consider the object to be adorned an object worthy of honour and capable of receiving it. Thus adornment is a form of homage: it is the tribute which the discerning pay to beauty.

But adornment has its relations not only to those who bestow, but to those also who receive it. It is a reflection of the mind of the giver; but it has also an influence on the recipient. And, first, it makes that which is adorned more conspicuous and better known. A picture in a frame is more likely to be looked at than one that is unframed. An ornamented building attracts more attention than a plain one. A king in his royal robes is more easily recognised as such than one in ordinary clothing. Adornment, therefore, is an advertisement of merit: it makes the adorned object more readily perceived and more widely appreciated. And, secondly, if it is well chosen and well bestowed, it augments the merit of that which it adorns. That which was fair before is made still fairer by suitable ornament. The beautiful painting is still more beautiful in a worthy frame. Noble ornament increases the dignity of a noble structure. And a person of royal presence becomes still more regal when royally arrayed. Adornment, therefore, is not only an advertisement of beauty, it is also a real enhancement of it.

All these particulars hold good with regard to the adornment of the doctrine of God. By trying to adorn it and make it more beautiful and more attractive, we show our respect for it; we pay our tribute of homage and admiration. We show to all the world that we think it estimable and worthy of attention and honour. And by so doing we make the doctrine of God better known: we bring it under the notice of others who might otherwise have overlooked it: we force it upon their attention. Thus, without consciously intending to be anything of the kind, we become evangelists: we proclaim to those among whom we live that we have received a Gospel that satisfies us. Moreover, the doctrine which we thus adorn becomes really more beautiful in consequence. Teaching which nobody admires, which nobody accepts—teaching which teaches nobody is a poor thing. It may be true, it may have great capabilities; but for the present it is as useless as a book in the hands of an illiterate savage, and as valueless as treasures lying at the bottom of the sea. Our acceptance of the doctrine of God, and our efforts to adorn it, bring out its inherent life and develop its natural value, and every additional person who joins us in doing this is an augmentation of its powers. It is within our power not only to honour and make better known, but also to enhance, the beauty of the doctrine of God.

But slaves,—and such slaves as were found throughout the Roman Empire in St. Paul's day,—what have they to do with the adornment of the doctrine of God? Why is this duty of making the Gospel more beautiful specially mentioned in connection with them? That the aristocracy of the Empire, its magistrates, its senators, its commanders,—supposing that any of them could be induced to embrace the faith of Jesus Christ,—should be charged to adorn the doctrine which they had accepted, would be intelligible. Their acceptance of it would be a tribute to its dignity. Their loyalty to it would be a proclamation of its merits. Their accession to its ranks would be a real augmentation of its powers of attraction. But almost the reverse of

all this would seem to be the truth in the case of slaves. Their tastes were so low, their moral judgment so debased, that for a religion to have found a welcome among slaves would hardly be a recommendation of it to respectable people. And what opportunities had slaves, regarded as they were as the very outcasts of society, of making the Gospel better known or more attractive?

So many a person, and especially many a slave, might have argued in St. Paul's hearing; and not altogether without reason and support from experience. The fact that Christianity was a religion acceptable to slaves and the associates of slaves was from very early times one of the objections made against it by the heathen, and one of the circumstances which prejudiced men of culture and refinement against it. It was one of the many bitter reproaches that Celsus brought against Christianity, that it laid itself out to catch slaves, women, and children, in short the immoral, the unintellectual, and the ignorant classes. And we need not suppose that this was merely a spiteful taunt: it represented a deep-seated and not altogether unreasonable prejudice. Seeing how many religions there were at that time which owed much of their success to the fact that they pandered to the vices, while they presumed upon the folly and ignorance of mankind, it was not an unjustifiable presumption that a new faith which won many adherents in the most degraded and vicious class of society, was itself a degrading and corrupting superstition.

Yet St. Paul knew what he was about when he urged Titus to commit the "adorning of the doctrine of God" in a special manner to slaves: and experience has proved the soundness of his judgment. If the mere fact that many slaves accepted the faith could not do a great deal to recommend the power and beauty of the Gospel, the Christian lives, which they thenceforward led, could. It was a strong argument *a fortiori*. The worse the unconverted sinner, the more marvellous his thorough conversion. There must be something in a religion which out of such unpromising material as slaves could make obedient, gentle, honest, sober, and chaste men and women. As Chrysostom puts it, when it was seen that Christianity, by giving a settled principle of sufficient power to counterbalance the pleasures of sin, was able to impose a restraint upon a class so self-willed, and render them singularly well-behaved, then their masters, however unreasonable they might be, were likely to form a high opinion of the doctrines which accomplished this. So that it is neither by chance, nor without reason, that the Apostle singles out this class of men: since, the more wicked they are, the more admirable is the power of that preaching which reforms them. And St. Chrysostom goes on to point out that the way in which slaves are to endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God is by cultivating precisely those virtues which contribute most to their master's comfort and interest,—submissiveness, gentleness, meekness, honesty, truthfulness, and a faithful discharge of all duties. What a testimony conduct of this kind would be to the power and beauty of the Gospel; and a testimony all the more powerful in the eyes of those masters who became conscious that these despised Christian slaves were living better lives than their owners! The passionate man, who found his slave always gentle and submissive; the inhuman and ferocious man, who found his slave always meek and respectful; the fraudulent man of business, who noticed that his slave never pilfered or told lies; the sensualist, who observed that his slave was never intemperate and always shocked at immodesty;—all these, even if they were not induced to become converts to the new faith, or even to take much trouble to understand it, would at least at times feel something of respect, if not of awe and reverence, for a creed which produced such results. Where did their slaves learn these lofty principles? Whence did they derive the power to live up to them?

The cases in which masters and mistresses were converted through the conduct of their own slaves were probably by no means rare. It was by the gradual influence of numerous Christian lives, rather than by organised missionary effort, that the Gospel spread during the first ages of the Church; and nowhere would this gradual influence make itself more strongly and permanently felt than in the family and household. Some slaves, then, like some domestic servants now, stood in very close relations with their masters and mistresses; and the opportunities of "adorning the doctrine of God" would in such cases be frequent and great. Origen implies that it was no uncommon thing for families to be converted through the instrumentality of the slaves (Migne, "Series Græca," xi. 476, 483). One of the grievous moral defects of that most immoral age was the low view taken of the position of women in society. Even married women were treated with but scant respect. And as the marriage tie was very commonly regarded as an irksome restraint, the condition of most women, even among the free-born, was degraded in the extreme. They were scarcely ever looked upon as the social equals and the necessary complement of the other sex; and, when not required to minister to the comforts and pleasures of the men, were often left to the society of slaves. Untold evil was the natural result; but, as Christianity spread, much good came out of the evil. Christian slaves sometimes made use of this state of things to interest their mistresses in the teaching of the Gospel; and when the mistress was converted, other conversions in the household became much more probable. Another grievous blot on the domestic life of the time was the want of parental affection. Fathers had scarcely any sense of responsibility towards their children, especially as regards their moral training. Their education generally was left almost entirely to slaves, from whom they learnt some accomplishments and many vices. They too often became adepts in wickedness before they had ceased to be children. But here again through the instrumentality of the Gospel good was brought out of this evil also. When the slaves, who had the care and the training of the children, were Christians, the morals of the children were carefully guarded; and in many cases the children, when they came to years of discretion, embraced Christianity.

Nor were these the only ways in which the most degraded and despised class in the society of that age were able to "adorn the doctrine of God." Slaves were not only an ornament to the faith by their lives; they adorned it also by their deaths. Not a few slaves won the martyr's crown. Those who have read that most precious relic of early Christian literature, the letter of

the Churches of Lyons and Vienne to the Churches of Asia Minor and Phrygia, will not need to be reminded of the martyrdom of the slave Blandina with her mistress in the terrible persecution in Gaul under Marcus Aurelius in the year 177. Eusebius has preserved the greater portion of the letter at the beginning of the fifth book of his "Ecclesiastical History." Let all who can do so read it, if not in the original Greek, at least in a translation. It is an authentic and priceless account of Christian fortitude.

What slaves could do then we all of us can do now. We can prove to all for whom and with whom we work that we really do believe and endeavour to live up to the faith that we profess. By the lives we lead we can show to all who know anything of us that we are loyal to Christ. By avoiding offence in word or in deed, and by welcoming opportunities of doing good to others, we can make His principles better known. And by doing all this brightly and cheerfully, without ostentation or affectation or moroseness, we can make His principles attractive. Thus we also can "adorn the doctrine of God in all things."

"In all things." That all-embracing addition to the Apostolic injunction must not be lost sight of. There is no duty so humble, no occupation so trifling, that it cannot be made into an opportunity for adorning our religion. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31).

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOPE AS A MOTIVE POWER—THE PRESENT HOPES OF CHRISTIANS.

TITUS ii. 11-15.

THERE are not many passages in the Pastoral Epistles which treat so plainly as this does of doctrine. As a rule St. Paul assumes that his delegates, Timothy and Titus, are well instructed (as he knew they were) in the details of the Christian faith, and he does not stay even to remind them of what he had frequently taught to them and to others in their presence. The purpose of the Epistles is to give practical rather than doctrinal instruction; to teach Timothy and Titus how to shape their own conduct, and what kind of conduct they are chiefly to insist upon in the different classes of Christians committed to their charge. Here, however, and in the next chapter, we have marked exceptions to this method. Yet even here the exception is more apparent than real; for the doctrinal statements are introduced, not as truths to be recognised and believed (it is taken for granted that they are recognised and believed), but as the basis of the practical exhortations which have just been given. It is because these great truths have been revealed, because life is so real and so important, and because eternity is so certain, that Titus is to exert all his influence to produce the best kind of conduct in his flock, whether men or women, old or young, bond or free.

The passage before us might almost serve as a summary of St. Paul's teaching. In it he once more insists upon the inseparable connection between creed and character, doctrine and life, and intimates the close relations between the past, the present, and the future, in the Christian scheme of salvation. There are certain facts in the past, which must be believed; and there is a kind of life in the present which must be lived; and there are things in store for us in the future, which must be looked for. Thus the three great virtues of faith, charity, and hope are inculcated. Two Epiphanies or appearances of Jesus Christ in this world are stated as the two great limits of the Christian dispensation. There is the Epiphany of grace, when the Christ appeared in humility, bringing salvation and instruction to all men; and there is the Epiphany of glory, when He will appear again in power, that He may claim as His own possession the people whom He has redeemed. And between these two there is the Christian life with its "blessed hope," the hope of the Lord's return in glory to complete the kingdom which His first Advent began.

Most of us make far too little of this "blessed hope." It is of incalculable value; first, as a test of our own sincerity and reality; and, secondly, as a source of strength to carry us over the difficulties and disappointments which beset our daily course.

There is perhaps no more certain test of a Christian's earnestness than the question whether he does, or does not, look forward with hope and longing for Christ's return. Some men have seriously persuaded themselves that there is no such thing either to hope for or to dread. Others prefer not to think about it; they know that doubts have been entertained on the subject, and as the topic is not a pleasant one to them, they dismiss it as much as possible from their minds, with the wish that the doubts about there being any return of Christ to judgment may be well-founded; for their own lives are such that they have every reason to desire that there may be no judgment. Others again, who on the whole are trying to lead Christian lives, nevertheless so far share the feelings of the godless, in that the thought of Christ's return (of the certainty of which they are fully persuaded) inspires them with fear rather than with joy. This is especially the case with those who are kept in the right way much more by the fear of hell than by the love of God, or even the hope of heaven. They believe and tremble. They believe in God's truth and justice much more than in His love and mercy. He is to them a Master and Lord to be obeyed and feared, much more than a God and Father to be adored and loved. Consequently their work is half-hearted, and their life servile, as must always be the case with those whose chief motive is fear of punishment. Hence they share the terrors of the wicked, while they lose their share of the joys of the righteous. They are too much afraid to find any real pleasure either in sin or in good works. To have sinned fills them with terror at the thought of inevitable punishment; and to have done what is right fills them with no joy, because they have so little love and so little hope.

Those who find from experience that the thought of Christ's return in glory is one on which they seldom dwell, even if it be not positively unwelcome, may be sure that there is something defective in their life. Either they are conscious of shortcomings which they make little or no attempt to correct, the recollection of which becomes intolerable when confronted with the thought of the day of judgment (and this shows that there is a great lack of earnestness in their religious life); or they are being

content with low motives for avoiding iniquity and striving after righteousness, and thus are losing a real source of strength to help them in their efforts. No doubt there are persons over whom high motives have little influence, and can have but little influence, because they are as yet unable to appreciate them. But no one in watching over either his own soul or the souls of others can afford to be content with such a state of things. Childish things must be put away when they cease to be appropriate. As the character develops under the influence of lower motives, higher motives begin at times to make themselves felt; and these must gradually be substituted for the others. And when they do make themselves felt, high motives are much more powerful than low ones; which is a further reason for appealing to them rather than to the others. Not only is a man who is capable of being moved, both by the fear of hell and by the love of God, more influenced by the love than by the fear, but love has more power over his will than fear has over the will of one who cannot be influenced by love.

All this tends to show how much is lost by those who make no effort to cultivate in their minds a feeling of joy at the thought of "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." They lose a great source of strength by neglecting to cultivate what would be a powerful motive to help them on the right way. Nor does the loss end here. With it they lose much of the interest which they would otherwise take in all that helps to "accomplish the number of God's elect and to hasten His kingdom." Christians pray daily, and perhaps many times daily, "Thy kingdom come." But how few realise what they are praying for! How few really long that their prayer may be speedily granted. How few take a keen and untiring interest in all that promotes the coming of the kingdom! And thus again motive power is lost; for if we had but the eyes to see, and the heart to appreciate, all that is going on round about us, we should feel that we live, as compared with our forefathers, in very encouraging times.

We are often enough told that Christianity in general, and the Church of England in particular, is at the present time passing through a great crisis; that this is an age of peculiar dangers and difficulties; that we live in times of unblushing vice and uncompromising scepticism; and that the immensity of our social, commercial, and political corruption is only the natural outcome of the immensity of our irreligion and unbelief. These things may be true; and there is no earnest Christian who has not at times been perplexed and saddened by them. But, thank God, there are other things which are equally true, and which ought to be equally recognised and remembered. If the present is an age of peculiar dangers and boundless irreligion, it is also an age of peculiar encouragements and boundless hope.

There are Christians who love to look back to some period in the history of the Church, which they have come to regard as a sort of golden age; an age in which communities of saintly men and women were ministered to by a still more saintly clergy, and in which the Church went beautifully on its way, not altogether free from persecutions, which were perhaps necessary for its perfection, but untroubled by doubts, or dissensions, or heresies, and unstained by worldliness, apostasy, or sloth. So far as the experience of the present writer has carried him, no such golden age can be found in the actual history of the Church.

It is not to be found in the New Testament, either before or after Pentecost.

We do not find it where we might have expected to find it, in the period when Christ was still present in the flesh as the Ruler and Instructor of His Church. That period is marked by the ignorance and unbelief of the Apostles, by their quarrels, their ambition for the first places in an earthly kingdom, their intolerant spirit, by the flight of all of them in the hour of Christ's danger, by the denials of St. Peter, by the treachery and suicide of Judas. Nor do we find it, where again we might have expected to find it, in the age immediately succeeding the completion of Christ's work, when the Apostles, newly anointed with the Spirit, were still alive to direct and foster the Church which He had founded. That period also is marred by many disfiguring marks. Apostles can still be time-serving, can still quarrel among themselves; and they also experience what it is to be forsaken and opposed by their own disciples. Their converts, as soon as the Apostle who established them in the faith is withdrawn, and sometimes even while he is still with them, become guilty of the gravest errors in conduct and belief. Witness the monstrous disorders in the Church of Corinth, the fickleness of the Galatian converts, the unchristian asceticism of the Colossian heretics, the studied immorality of those of Ephesus. The Church which was presided over by St. Timothy was the Church of Alexander, Hymenæus, and Philetus, who removed the very corner-stone of the faith by denying the Resurrection; and the Churches which were presided over by St. John contained the Nicolaitans, condemned as hateful by Jesus Christ, and Diotrephes, who repudiated the Apostle and excommunicated those who received the Apostle's messengers. And there is much more of the same sort, as the Pastoral Epistles show us, proving that what comes to us first as a sad surprise is of still sadder frequency, and that the Apostolic age had defects and stains at least as serious as those which deface our own.

The failure to find any golden age in either of these two divisions of the period covered by the New Testament ought to put us on our guard against expecting to find it in any subsequent period. And it would not be difficult to take each of the epochs in the history of the Church which have been selected as specially bright and perfect, and show that in every case, directly we pass through the hazy glow which the imagination of later writers has thrown around such periods, and get down to solid facts, then, either the brightness and perfection are found to be illusory, or they are counterbalanced by many dark spots and disorders. The age of the martyrs is the age of the lapsed; the ages of faith are the ages of fraud; and the ages of great success are the ages of great corruption. In the first centuries increase of numbers was marked by increase of heresies and schisms; in the Middle Ages, increase of power by increase of pride. A fair comparison of the period in which our own lot has been cast with any previous period in the history of the Church will never lead to any just feeling of discouragement. Indeed it may reasonably be contended that at no era since

Christianity was first founded have its prospects been so bright as at the present time.

Let us look at the contest between the Gospel and heathenism,—that great contest which has been going on since "the grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all men," and which is to continue until "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour." Was there ever a time when missions were more numerous or better organised, and when missionaries were as a rule better instructed, better equipped, or more devoted? And although it is impossible to form a correct estimate on such a subject, because some of the most important data are beyond our reach, yet it may be doubted whether there ever was a time when missions achieved more solid success. The enormous growth of the colonial and missionary episcopate during the last hundred years is at any rate one great fact which represents and guarantees a great deal. Until 1787 there was not a single episcopal see of the Anglican communion in any of the colonies or settlements of the British Empire; still less was there a single missionary bishop. And now, as the Lambeth Conferences remind us, these colonial and missionary bishops are not far short of a hundred, and are always increasing.

Or let us look at the relations between the great Churches into which Christendom is unhappily divided. Was there ever a period at which there was less bitterness, or more earnest and wide-spread desire for the restoration of unity? And the increased desire for reunion comes hand in hand with an increase of the conditions which would render reunion possible. Two things are absolutely indispensable for a successful attempt in this direction. First, a large measure of culture and learning, especially among the clergy of the divided Churches; and secondly, intelligent religious zeal. Ignorant controversialists cannot distinguish between important and unimportant differences, and thus aggravate rather than smooth difficulties. And without religious earnestness the attempt to heal differences ends in indifferentism. Both these indispensable elements are increasing, at any rate in the Anglican and in the Eastern Churches: and thus reunion, which "must be possible, because it is a duty," is becoming not only a desire, but a hope.

Let us look again at our own Church; at its abundant machinery for every kind of beneficent object; at the beautiful work which is being done in a quiet and simple way by numbers of Christian men and women in thousands of parishes; at the increase in services, in confirmations, in communions; at the princely offerings of many of the wealthy laity; at the humble offerings—equally princely in God's sight—of many of the poor. Can we point to a time when party feeling (bad as it still is) was less rancorous, when parishes were better worked, when the clergy were better educated or more self-sacrificing, when the people were more responsive to what is being done for them?

The very possibility of seriously raising such questions as these is in itself a reason for taking courage, even if we cannot answer all of them in the way that would please us most. There are at any rate good grounds for hoping that much is being done for the advancement of Christ's dominion, and that the prayer "Thy kingdom come" is being answered day by day. If we could but convince ourselves more thoroughly of the truth of all this, we should work more hopefully and more earnestly. More hopefully, because we should be working with a consciousness of being successful and making progress, with a conviction that we are on the winning side. And more earnestly, not merely because hope makes work more earnest and thorough, but also because we should have an increased sense of responsibility: we should fear lest through any sloth or negligence on our part such bright prospects should be marred. The expectation of defeat makes some men strive all the more heroically; but most men it paralyses. In our Christian warfare we certainly need hope to carry us onward to victory.

"The appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Among the foolish charges which have been brought against the Revisers is that of favouring Arian tendencies by blurring those texts which teach the Divinity of Jesus Christ. The present passage would be a sufficient answer to such a charge. In the A. V. we have "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," where both the wording and the comma make it clear that "the great God" means the Father and not our Saviour. The Revisers, by omitting the comma, for which there is no authority in the original, and by placing the "our" before both substantives, have given their authority to the view that St. Paul means both "great God" and "Saviour" to apply to Jesus Christ. It is not any Epiphany of the Father which is in his mind, but the "Epiphany of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The wording of the Greek is such that absolute certainty is not attainable; but the context, the collocation of the words, the use of the word "Epiphany," and the omission of the article before "Saviour" (ἐπιφάνειαν τῆς δόξης τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν I. X.), all seem to favour the Revisers' rendering. And, if it be adopted, we have here one of the plainest and most direct statements of the Divinity of Christ to be found in Scripture. As such it was employed in the Arian controversy, although Ambrose seems to have understood the passage as referring to the Father and Christ, and not to Christ alone. The force of what follows is enhanced, if the Revisers' rendering, which is the strictly grammatical rendering, is maintained. It is as being "our great God" that He gave Himself for us, that He might "redeem us from all iniquity;" and it was because He was God as well as man, that what was uttered as a bitter taunt was really a glorious truth;—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." It was morally impossible that the Divine Son should turn back from making us "a people for His own possession." Let us strengthen ourselves in the hope that our efforts to fulfil this gracious purpose are never thrown away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DUTY OF OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY, WITH ITS LIMITS; THE DUTY OF COURTESY WITHOUT LIMITS.

TITUS iii. 1-3.

ST. PAUL, having in the previous chapter sketched the special duties which Titus is to

inculcate upon different classes of Christians,—aged men and aged women, young women, young men, and slaves,—now passes on to point out what must be impressed on all Christians alike, especially as regards their conduct towards those who are in authority and who are not Christians.

Here he is on delicate ground. The Cretans are said to have been a turbulent race, or rather a group of turbulent races; neither peaceable among themselves, nor very patient of foreign dominion: and the Roman rule had been established there for less than a century and a half. Previous to their conquest by Metellus in B. C. 67, they had been accustomed to democratic forms of government, and therefore would be likely to feel the change to the Roman yoke all the more acutely. As our own experiences in a neighbouring island have taught us, people who have been allowed to misgovern themselves, and to fight among themselves, for many generations, do not readily give a welcome to a power which deprives them of these liberties, even when it offers in exchange for them the solid but prosaic advantages of peace and security. Besides this, there was in Crete a strong mixture of Jews, whose rebellious propensities seemed to be unquenchable. Nor was this all. Within the Church itself the spirit of anarchy had displayed itself: partly because, as in the Churches of Corinth and Galatia, the characteristic faults of the people still continued to show themselves after the acceptance of Christianity; partly because, as everywhere in the Churches of that age the contests between Jewish and Gentile converts were always producing disorder. This appears in the first chapter of our Epistle, in which the Apostle states that "there are many unruly men, . . . specially they of the circumcision," and in which he finds it necessary to make it a qualification for the office of bishop or overseer, that the persons appointed should be such as "are not accused of riot or are unruly." Besides which, as we learn from numerous sources in the New Testament, there was in various quarters a tendency to gross misconceptions respecting Christian liberty. Through Gnostic and other antinomian influences there was a disposition in many minds to translate liberty into license, and to suppose that the Christian was above the distinctions of the moral law, which for him had no meaning. Lastly, there were probably some earnest Christians, who, without going to any of these disastrous extremes, or sympathising with the factious and seditious spirit of their fellow-countrymen, nevertheless had serious doubts as to whether Christians were under any obligation to obey a pagan magistrate, and perhaps were inclined to believe that it was their duty to disobey him.

For all these reasons St. Paul must have known that he was charging Titus to give instructions which would be very unwelcome to a large number of Cretan converts, when he told him to "put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers and authorities, and to be obedient." But it was the very fact that the instructions would be unwelcome to many that made it so necessary that they should be given. Both for the internal well-being of the Church, and for the maintenance of right relations with the State, it was imperative that the principle of obedience to authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, should be upheld. There must be peace, and there must be liberty: but there could be neither the one nor the other without a respect for law and for those who have to administer it.

The Apostle does not here argue the case. He lays down certain positions as indisputable. The loyal Christian must submit himself to those who are placed over him; he must render obedience to existing authorities. There is one obvious limit to this which he indicates by a single word to be noticed hereafter, but with that one qualification the duty of obedience is imperative and absolute. Jew and Gentile Christian alike must obey the laws, not only of the Church, as administered by its overseers, but also of the State, as administered by the magistrates, even though the State be a heathen power and the magistrate an idolater. The reason why St. Paul does not argue the matter is obvious. He is not writing to those who are likely to dispute or disobey these injunctions, but to one who has to see that they are obeyed. His object is not to prove the excellence of the rules which he lays down, but to advise Titus as to what rules are to be most insisted upon. Titus was well aware of the principles upon which these rules were based and of the arguments by which the Apostle was accustomed to defend them. He does not need information on that point. What the Apostle thinks may be necessary for his guidance is a clear intimation of those practical lessons of which the Cretans needed most to be reminded. It was quite possible that Titus might have taken the view that the question about obedience to existing authorities was a burning one, and that it would be better for the present to say as little about it as possible. To object, therefore, that these directions in the second and third chapters of this Epistle are unworthy of St. Paul, and consequently not written by him, because they contain nothing which might serve as a sufficient refutation of the adversaries, is to beat the air without effect. They contain nothing calculated to serve as a refutation of the adversaries, because the apostle writes with no intention of refuting opponents, but in order to give practical instructions to his delegate.

But although the Apostle does not here argue the case, we are not left in ignorance as to the principles upon which he based the rules here laid down so emphatically. The thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is quite clear on that point. "There is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God." That is the kernel of the whole matter. The fact that a few rule over the many is not to be traced to a world-wide usurpation of the rights of the simple and the weak by the selfishness of the crafty and the strong. That theory may explain the terrorism of a bully, or of a band of brigands, or of a secret society; it is no explanation of the universal relations between governors and the governed. Nor is it the result of a primeval "social compact," in which the weak voluntarily surrendered some of their rights in order to have the advantage of the protection of the strong: that theory is pure fiction, and finds no support either in the fact of man's nature, or in the relics of primitive society, or in the records of the past. The one explanation which is at once both adequate and true, is, that all authority is of Divine origin. This was the declaration of the Forerunner, when his disciples complained to him of the influence which Jesus exercised

over those who came in contact with His teaching: "A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven" (John iii. 27). This was the declaration of the Christ, when the Roman Procurator pointed out to Him that He had power of life and death over Him: "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11.). The power of the Redeemer over the minds of men and the power of a heathen governor over the bodies of men have one and the same source,—Almighty God. Christ declared His innocence and asserted His claims; but He made no protest against being tried by a pagan official, who represented the power that had deprived the Jewish nation of its liberties, because he also represented the principle of law and order, and as such was the representative of God Himself.

St. Paul, therefore, is doing more than restating what the Lord had already taught both by word and example. Christians must show submission to rulers and constituted authorities, and must yield ready obedience to magistrates, even when they are heathen. As heathen they were no doubt rebels against God, however little they might be aware of the fact. But as magistrates they were His delegates, however little they were aware of the fact. The Christian is aware of both facts; and he must not suppose that the one cancels the other. The magistrate still remains God's delegate, however inconsistent his own life may be with such a position. Therefore it is not only allowable for Christians to obey him; but they must make it a matter of conscience to do so: and the history of the Church throughout the eras of persecution shows how greatly such teaching was needed. Whatever may have been the case when St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, we may safely maintain that persecution had already taken place when he wrote these instructions to Titus. Not that he seems to have a persecuting power in his mind, when he enjoins simple obedience to existing authority; but he writes with full knowledge of the extreme cases that might occur. A moralist who could insist upon the duty of submission to rulers, when a Nero had been on the throne for twelve or fourteen years, was certainly not one who could be ignorant of what his principles involved. Nor could it be said that the evils of Nero's insolent despotism were counteracted by the excellence of his subordinates. The infamous Tigellinus was Prætorian Prefect and the Emperor's chief adviser. Helius, who acted as governor of Italy during the Emperor's absence in Greece, was in character a second Nero. And Gessius Florus, one of Pilate's successors as Procurator of Judea, was so shameless in his enormities that the Jews regretted the departure of his predecessor Albinus, although he had mercilessly oppressed them. But all these facts, together with many more of the same kind, and some also of an opposite character, were beside the question. Christians were not to concern themselves with discussing whether rulers governed well or ill, or whether their private lives were good or bad. The one fact which concerned them was that the rulers were there to administer the law, and as such must be respected and obeyed. The conscience of Christians and the experiences of politicians, whether rulers or ruled, throughout all the subsequent ages have ratified the wisdom of St. Paul's injunctions; and not only their wisdom, but their profound morality. Renan says with truth, but with a great deal less than the whole truth, that "Paul had too much tact to be a preacher of sedition: he wished that the name of Christian should stand well, and that a Christian should be a man of order, on good terms with the police, and of good repute in the eyes of the pagans" ("St. Paul," p. 477). The criticism which resolves a profound moral principle into a mere question of tact is worthy of the critic who makes it. Certainly St. Paul was far-sighted enough to see that frequent collisions between Christians and the recognised administrators of the law would be no good thing for Christianity: but it was not because he believed obedience to be the best policy that he charged Titus to insist upon it.

It is of the very essence of a ruler that he is "not a terror to the good work, but to the evil: . . . for he is a minister of God to thee for good, . . . an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil." It is quite possible that the law which he administers is unjust, or that he administers it in such a way as to make it work injustice, so that good deeds are punished and evil deeds are rewarded. But nowhere is good punished as good, or evil rewarded as evil. When Naboth was judicially murdered to gratify Jezebel, it was on the assumption that he was a blasphemer and a rebel; and when Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin and by the Procurator, it was on the assumption that he was guilty of similar crimes. So also with all the monstrous and iniquitous laws which have been made against Christianity and Christians. The persecuting edict "cast out their name as evil."

It was because men believed, or professed to believe, that Christians were grievous offenders or dangerous citizens, that they brought them before the magistrates. And the same holds good of the religious persecutions of which Christians have been guilty against other Christians. Nowhere can we point to a case in which a person has been condemned for having been virtuous, or for having failed to commit a crime. Many have been condemned for what was really meritorious, or for refusing to do what was really wicked; but in all such cases the meritorious conduct and the wicked conduct were held to be of exactly the opposite character by the representatives of the law. Legally constituted authority, therefore, is always by profession, and generally in fact also, a terror to the evil and a supporter of the good. It is charged with the all-important duty of upholding right and punishing wrong in human conduct, a duty which it never disowns. For even when through blindness or perversity it upholds what is wrong or punishes what is right, it professes to be doing the opposite. Therefore to rebel against it is to rebel against the principle of moral government; it is a revolt against that principle which reflects and represents, and that by his ordinance, the moral government of Almighty God.

St. Paul assumes that rulers aim at what is just and right. The Christian is "to be ready unto every good work": and, although the words are no doubt intended to have a general meaning as well, yet the context suggests that their primary meaning in this place is that Christians are always, not only to be obedient to rulers and magistrates, but to be ready to support and assist them in any good work: the

presumption being that what the authorities direct is good. But, without perhaps having this object in view, the Apostle here indirectly intimates the limits to Christians' obedience and support. They are to be given to further "every good work": they cannot of course be given to further what is evil. What then must a Christian do when lawful authority requires him to do what he knows to be wrong? Is he to rebel? to stir up a revolt against those who make this demand? No, he is still "to be in subjection to rulers": that is, he must disobey and quietly take the consequences. He owes it to his conscience to refuse to do what it condemns: but he also owes it to the representative of Divine law and order to abstain from shaking its authority. It has the power to give commands and the right to punish disobedience, and he has no right to refuse both obedience and punishment. To disobey and submissively take the consequences of disobedience is his plain duty in so painful a case. In this way, and in this way only, will loyalty to conscience and loyalty to authority both alike be preserved. In this way, and in this way best (as history has again and again shown), is the reformation of unjust laws effected. The moral sense of society is far more impressed by the man who disobeys for conscience' sake and unresistingly goes to prison or mounts the scaffold for his disobedience, than by him who violently resists all attempts to punish him and stirs up rebellion against the authority which he cannot conscientiously obey. Rebellion may succeed in redressing injustice, but at a cost which is likely to be more grievous than the injustice which it redresses. Conscientious disobedience, accompanied by loyal submission to the penalty of disobedience, is sure to succeed in reforming unjust laws, and that without any cost to counterbalance the good thus gained.

Having thus trenchantly determined the duty of believers towards rulers and magistrates, St. Paul passes on to sketch their proper attitude towards other members of society. And just as in speaking of conduct towards authorities he evidently has in his mind the fact that most authorities are unbelievers, so in speaking of conduct in society he evidently is thinking of a state of society in which many of its members are unbelievers. What kind of conduct will Titus have to insist upon as befitting a Christian? "To speak evil of no man, not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness towards all men."

It would be difficult to point to a precept which is more habitually violated by Christians at the present day, and therefore more worthy of constantly being brought to the front and urged upon their consideration. There are plenty of precepts both of the Old and of the New Testaments, which are habitually violated by the godless and the irreligious, by those who, while bearing the name of Christian, scarcely make even a pretence of endeavouring to live Christian lives. But here we have a group of precepts, which a large number, not only of those who profess to live soberly and righteously, but of those who do indeed in other respects live as Christians should, consent to forget or ignore. "To speak evil of no man; not to be contentious; to be gentle, showing all meekness towards all men." Let us consider calmly what such words as these really mean; and then let us consider what we constantly meet with in the controversial writing, and still more in the controversial speaking, of the present day. Consider the tone of our party newspapers, and especially our religious newspapers, on the burning questions of the hour and on the men who take a leading part in them. Read what a High Church paper says of a Low Church Bishop, or what a Low Church paper says of a High Church Bishop, and measure it by the injunction "to speak evil of no man." Or, again, read what some of the organs of Dissent allow themselves to say respecting the clergy of the Established Church, or what some Church Defence orators have allowed themselves to say respecting Liberationists, and measure it by the injunctions "not to be contentious, to be gentle, showing all meekness towards all men." It is sometimes necessary to speak out and call attention to real or suspected evils; although not nearly so frequently as we like to think. But it is never necessary to throw mud and deal in personal abuse.

Moreover, it is very unbecoming to do so. It is doubly unbecoming, as St. Paul reminds us. First, such conduct is utterly unchristian. Secondly, it is very much out of place in those who before now have been guilty of quite as grave faults as those for which we now abuse others. We are just the persons who ought to remember, because we know from personal experience how much the grace of God can effect. If we have by His mercy been brought out of the sins which we now condemn in other people, what may we not hope for in their case, provided we do not disgust them with virtue by our acrimonious and uncharitable fault-finding? Abuse is the wrong weapon to use against unrighteous conduct, just as rebellion is the wrong weapon to use against unrighteous laws.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CO-OPERATION OF THE DIVINE PERSONS IN EFFECTING THE NEW BIRTH—THE LAVER OF REGENERATION.

TITUS iii. 4-7.

FOR the second time in this short letter we have one of those statements of doctrine which are not common among the practical instructions which form the main portion of the Pastoral Epistles. The other doctrinal statement was noticed in a previous discourse on chap. ii. 11-14. It is worth while to compare the two. Though similar, they are not identical in import, and they are introduced for quite different purposes. In the earlier passage, in order to show why different classes of Christians should be taught to exhibit the virtues which specially befit them, the Apostle states the purpose of Christ's work of redemption, a purpose which all Christians are bound to help in realising, stimulated by what has been done for them in the past and by the hope which lies before them in the future. In the passage which we have now to consider, St. Paul contrasts with the manifold wickedness of unbelievers the undeserved mercies of God towards them, in order to show what gratitude those who have been brought out of their unbelief ought to feel for this unearned blessing, a gratitude which they ought to exhibit in gentle forbearance and

goodwill towards those who are still in the darkness of unbelief as well as to others.

The passage before us forms the main part of the Second Lesson for the evening of Christmas Day in both the old and the new lectionaries. Its appropriateness in setting forth so explicitly the Divine bounty in the work of regeneration is manifest. But it would have been equally appropriate as a lesson for Trinity Sunday, for the part which each Person of the Blessed Trinity takes in the work of regeneration is plainly indicated. The passage is in this respect strikingly parallel to what St. Peter had written in the opening of his Epistle: "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). The goodness and love of God the Father towards mankind is the source of man's redemption. From all eternity He saw man's fall; and from all eternity He devised the means of man's recovery. He appointed His Son to be our representative; and He accepted Him on our behalf. In this way the Father is "our Saviour," by giving and accepting One Who could save us. The Father "saved us . . . through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Thus the Father and the Son co-operate to effect man's salvation, and each in a very real and proper sense is called "our Saviour." But it is not in man's own power to accept the salvation thus wrought for him and offered to him. For power to do this he needs Divine assistance; which, however, is abundantly granted to him. By means of the outward laver of baptism the inward regeneration and renewal by the Spirit is granted to him through the merits of Christ; and then the work of his salvation on the Divine side is complete. Through the infinite mercy of the Blessed Trinity, and not through his own merits, the baptised Christian is in a state of salvation, and is become an heir of eternal life. It remains to be seen whether the Christian, thus richly endowed, will continue in this blessed state, and go on, by the daily renewal of the Holy Spirit, from grace to grace; or will through his own weakness and wilfulness, fall away. But, so far as God's share in the transaction is concerned, his salvation is secured; so that, as the Church of England affirms in the note added to the service for the Public Baptism of Infants: "It is certain by God's Word, that children which are baptised, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved." And the several parts which the Persons of the Blessed Trinity take in the work of salvation are clearly indicated in one of the prayers before the baptismal act, as in the present passage by St. Paul. Prayer is offered to the "heavenly Father," that He will "give His Holy Spirit to this Infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation; through our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, as at the baptism of the Christ, so also at that of every Christian, the presence and co-operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are indicated.

It is the Apostle's object in this condensed doctrinal statement to emphasise the fact that it was "not by works in righteousness which we ourselves did," but by the work of the Blessed Trinity, that we were placed in a state of salvation. He does not stop to make the qualifications, which, however true and necessary, do not alter this fact. In the case of adults, who are converted to Christianity,—and it is of such that he is thinking,—it is necessary that they should be duly prepared for baptism by repentance and faith. And in the case of all (whether adults, or infants who live to become responsible for their actions), it is necessary that they should appropriate and use the graces bestowed upon them; in other words, that they should grow in holiness. All this is true; but it does not affect the position. For although man's co-operation is indispensable—for God saves no man against his will—yet without God's assistance man cannot either repent or believe before baptism, nor can he continue in holiness after baptism. This passage expressly denies that we effect our own salvation, or that God effected it in return for our merits. But it gives no encouragement to the belief that we have nothing to do with "working out our own salvation," but have merely to sit still and accept what has been done for us.

That "the washing of regeneration," or (as the margin of the R. V. more exactly has it) "the laver of regeneration,"* signifies the Christian rite of baptism, ought to be regarded as beyond dispute. This is certainly one of those cases to which Hooker's famous canon of interpretation most thoroughly applies, that "where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst" ("Eccl. Pol.," v. lix. 2). This Hooker holds to be "a most infallible rule in expositions of sacred Scripture"; and although some persons may think that assertion somewhat too strong, of the soundness of the rule no reasonable student of Scripture can doubt. And it is worth our while to notice that it is in connection with this very subject of baptismal regeneration that Hooker lays down this rule. He is answering those who perversely interpreted our Lord's words to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit" (John iii. 5), as meaning no more than "Except a man be born of the Spirit," "water" being (as they imagined) only a metaphor, of which "the Spirit" is the interpretation. On which Hooker remarks: "When the letter of the law hath two things plainly and expressly specified, Water, and the Spirit; Water as a duty required on our parts, the Spirit as a gift which God bestoweth; there is danger in presuming so to interpret it, as if the clause which concerneth ourselves were more than needeth. We may by such rare expositions attain perhaps in the end to be thought witty, but with ill advice." All which may be fitly applied to the passage before us, in which it is quite arbitrary and against all probability to contend that "the bath of regeneration" is a mere metaphor for regeneration without any bath, or for the Holy Spirit, or for the unmeasured bounty with which the Holy Spirit is poured upon the believer.

This might be tenable, if there had been no such rite as baptism by water enjoined by Christ and practised by the Apostles as the necessary and universal method of admission to the Christian Church. In Eph. v. 26 (the only other passage in the New Testament in which the word for "laver" or "bath" or "washing" occurs) the reference to baptism by water is indisputable, for the water is expressly mentioned. "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Him-

* λουτρὸν παλιγγενεσίας. Comp. Eph. v. 26.

self up for it; that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word." And in the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians which, like the one before us, contrasts the appalling wickedness of unbelievers with the spiritual condition of Christians, the reference to baptism is scarcely less clear. "And such were some of you: but ye were washed (lit. 'ye washed away' your sins), but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). In which passage, as here, the three Persons of the Trinity are named in connection with the baptismal act.

And in speaking to the Jews at Jerusalem of his own admission to the Church, St. Paul uses the same forms of the same word as he uses to the Corinthians of their admission. The exhortation of Ananias to him, as he lay at Damascus, was "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins" (*ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου*), "calling on His Name" (Acts xxii. 16): words which are very parallel to the exhortation of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Repent ye, and be baptised, every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 38; comp. Heb. x. 23). In these passages we have a sacred rite described in which the human and the Divine elements are clearly marked. On man's side there is the washing with water; and on God's side there is the washing away of sin and pouring out of the Spirit. The body is purified, the soul is purified, and the soul is hallowed. The man is washed, is justified, is sanctified. He is regenerated: he is "a new creature." "The old things," his old principles, motives, and aims, then and there "passed away" (aorist tense, *παρῆλθεν*): "behold, they are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Can any one, with these passages before him, reasonably doubt that, when the Apostle speaks of "the washing of regeneration" he means the Christian rite of baptism, in which, and by means of which, the regeneration takes place?

We are fully justified by his language here in asserting that it is by means of the baptismal washing that the regeneration takes place; for he asserts that God "saved us through the washing of regeneration." The laver or bath of regeneration is the instrument or means by which God saved us. Such is the natural, and almost the necessary meaning of the Greek construction (*διά* with the genitive). Nor is this an audacious erection of a comprehensive and momentous doctrine upon the narrow basis of a single preposition. Even if this passage stood alone, it would still be our duty to find a reasonable meaning for the Apostle's Greek: and it may be seriously doubted whether any more reasonable meaning than that which is here put forward can be found. But the passage does not stand alone, as has just been shown. And there are numerous analogies which throw light upon the question, proving to us that there is nothing exceptional in God (Who of course does not need any means or instruments) being willing to use them, doubtless because it is better for us that He should use them.

In illustration of the Greek construction we may compare that used by St. Peter of the event which he takes (and the Church of England in her baptismal service has followed him) as a type of Christian baptism. "When the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." St. Peter says that Noah and his family "were saved by means of water" (*δι' ὕδατος*) just as St. Paul says that God "saved us by means of the laver of regeneration" (*διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας*). In each case the water is the instrument of salvation. And the analogy does not end with the identity of the instrument; that is the mere external resemblance between the flood and baptism. The main part of the likeness lies in this, that in both cases one or the same instrument both destroys and saves. The Flood destroyed the disobedient by drowning them, and saved Noah and his family by floating them into a new home. Baptism destroys the old corrupt element in man's nature by washing it away, and saves the regenerated soul by bringing it into a new life. And the other event which from the earliest days has been taken as a figure of baptism is of the same kind. At the crossing of the Red Sea, the water which destroyed the Egyptians saved the Israelites. In all these cases God was not tied to use water, or any other instrument. He could have saved Noah and the Israelites, and destroyed the disobedient and the Egyptians, just as He could have healed Naaman and the man born blind, without employing any means whatever. But for our edification He condescends to employ means, such as we can perceive and understand.

In what way is the employment of perceptible means a help to us? In two at least. It serves the double purpose of being both a test of faith and an aid to faith.

1. The acceptance of Divinely appointed means is necessarily a test of faith. Human intellect is apt to assume that Omnipotence is above using instruments. "Is it likely," we ask, "that the Almighty would employ these means? Are they not altogether beneath the dignity of the Divine Nature? Man needs tools and materials: but God needs neither. It is not credible that He has ordained these things as conditions of His own operation." All which is the old cry of the captain of the host of Syria. "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper." That is, why need he enjoin any instrument at all? But if he must, he might have enjoined something more suitable. "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" In precisely the same spirit we ask still, "How can water wash away sin? How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood? How can the laying on of a man's hand confer the gift of the Holy Spirit? Do not all such assumptions savour of magic rather than of Divine Providence?" Therefore humbly to accept the means which God has revealed as the appointed channels of His spiritual blessings is a real test of the recipient's faith. He is thus enabled to perceive for himself whether he does sincerely believe or not; whether he has the indispensable qualification for receiving the promised blessing.

2. The employment of visible means is a real

aid to faith. It is easier to believe that an effect will be produced, when one can perceive something which might contribute to produce the effect. It is easier to believe when one sees means than when none are visible; and it is still easier to believe when the means seem to be appropriate. The man who was born blind would more readily believe that Christ would give him sight, when he perceived that Christ was using spittle and clay for the purpose; for at that time these things were supposed to be good for the eyes. And what element in nature is more frequently the instrument both of life and of death than water? What could more aptly signify purification from defilement? What act could more simply express a death to sin and a rising again to righteousness than a plunge beneath the surface of the water and a re-issuing from it? As St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans: "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism" (*διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος*) "into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (vi. 4). And again to the Colossians: "Having been buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead" (ii. 12). Faith in the inward gift, promised by God to those who believe and are baptised, becomes more easy, when the outward means of conferring the gift, not only are readily perceived, but are recognised as suitable. In this way our faith is aided by God's employment of means.

Is the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" the same thing as the "washing of regeneration"? In this passage the two expressions refer to the same fact, but in their respective meanings they are not co-extensive. The Greek construction is ambiguous like the English; and we cannot be sure whether St. Paul means that God saved us by means of the washing and by means of the renewing, or that God saved us by means of a laver, which is both a laver of regeneration and a laver of renewal. The latter is more probable: but in either case the reference is to one and the same event in the Christian's life. The laver and the renewing refer to baptism; and the regeneration and the renewing refer to baptism; viz., to the new birth which is then effected. But, nevertheless, the two expressions are not co-extensive in meaning. The laver and the regeneration refer to one fact, and to one fact only; a fact which takes place once for all and can never be repeated. A man cannot have the new birth a second time, any more than he can be born a second time: and hence no one may be baptised twice. But the renewing of the Holy Spirit may take place daily. It precedes baptism in the case of adults; for it is only through a renewal which is the work of the Spirit that they can prepare themselves by repentance and faith for baptism. It takes place at baptism, as the Apostle clearly indicates here. And it continues after baptism; for it is by repeated quickening of the inward life through the action of the Spirit that the Christian grows in grace day by day. In the case of the adult, who unworthily receives baptism without repentance and faith, there is no spiritual renewal. Not that the sacred rite remains without effect: but the renewing of the Spirit is suspended until the baptised person repents and believes. Meanwhile the mysterious gift bestowed in baptism becomes a curse rather than a blessing; or at least a curse as well as a blessing. It may perhaps increase the possibilities of repentance: it certainly intensifies the guilt of all his sins. Such a person has thrust himself into a society without being qualified for membership. He has incurred the responsibilities of membership: if he desires the privileges, he must obtain the qualifications.

It is God's gracious purpose that all should have the privileges in full. In baptism He washed us from our sins, He gave us a new birth, He poured out His Holy Spirit upon us richly, through Jesus Christ; "in order that, being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to hope of eternal life"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MEANING OF HERESY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND THE APOSTLE'S DIRECTIONS RESPECTING THE TREATMENT OF HERETICAL PERSONS.

TITUS iii. 10, 11.

IT is in connection with this instruction respecting the treatment of heretical persons that we have some of the earliest testimonies to the genuineness of the Epistle to Titus. Thus Irenæus about A. D. 180 writes: "But as many as fall away from" (*ἀφίστανται*, 1 Tim. iv. 1) "the Church and give heed to these old wives' fables" (*γραώδεσι, μύθοις*, 1 Tim. iv. 7), "are truly self-condemned" (*αὐτοκατάκριτοι*, Tit. iii. 1): "whom Paul charges us after a first and second admonition to refuse" ("Adv. Hær.," I. xvi. 3). It will be observed that in this passage Irenæus makes an obvious allusion to the First Epistle to Timothy, and then quotes the very words of our text, attributing them expressly to St. Paul. And about ten or twelve years later, Tertullian, after commenting on St. Paul's words to the Corinthians, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 19), continues as follows: "But no more about that, seeing that it is the same Paul who elsewhere also in writing to the Galatians reckons heresies among sins of the flesh (Gal. v. 20), and who intimates to Titus that a man who is heretical must after a first admonition be refused, because he that is such is perverted and sinneth as being self-condemned. But in almost every Epistle, when insisting on the duty of avoiding false doctrines, he censures heresies, of which the practical results are false doctrines, called in Greek heresies, with reference to the choice which a man exercises, whether in instituting or in adopting them. For this reason he says that the heretical person is also self-condemned, because he has chosen for himself that in which he is condemned. We, however, may not allow ourselves anything after our own will; nor yet choose what any one has introduced of his own will. The Apostles of the Lord are our authorities; and even they did not choose to introduce anything of their own will, but faithfully consigned to the nations the instruction which they received from Christ. And so, even if an

angel from heaven were to preach any other gospel, he would be called accursed by us" ("De Præs. Hær.," vi). In this passage, which contains a valuable comment on the meaning of the word "heresy," it will be noticed that Tertullian not only quotes the text before us as coming from the Epistle to Titus, but, like Irenæus, his earlier contemporary, says expressly that the words are those of St. Paul. Thus, from both sides of the Mediterranean, men who had very large opportunities of knowing what books were accepted as Apostolic and what not, attribute our Epistle without hesitation to St. Paul. And in both cases this is done in treatises directed against heretics, who might be expected to reply with very telling effect, if it could be shown that what was quoted against them as the writing of an Apostle was of quite doubtful origin and authority.

But the testimony which these passages bear to the authenticity of this Epistle is not the main reason for their being quoted here. Their interest for us now consists in the light which they throw upon the history of the word "heresy," and upon the attitude of the primitive Church towards heretics.

"Heresy," as Tertullian points out, is a word of Greek origin, and the idea which lies at the root of it is "choice." Choosing for oneself what pleases oneself, independently of other considerations;—that is the fundamental notion on which later meanings of the term are based. Thus in the Septuagint it is used of a free-will offering, as distinct from what a man is bound to offer (Lev. xxii. 18; comp. 1 Macc. viii. 30). Then comes the notion of choice in reference to matters of opinion, without, however, necessarily implying that the chosen opinion is a bad one. And in this sense it is used quite as often for the party or school of thought which holds the particular opinion as for the body of opinion which is held. In this sense it is several times used in the Acts of the Apostles; as "the sect of the Sadducees" (v. 17), "the sect of the Pharisees" (xv. 5; xxvi. 5): and in this way Christianity itself was spoken of as a "heresy" or "sect"; that is, a party with chosen opinions (xxiv. 5, 14; xxviii. 22). And in profane literature we find Diogenes Laertius in the second or third century speaking of ten "heresies" or schools in moral philosophy (i. 19). But it will be seen from the passages in the Acts that the word is already acquiring somewhat of a bad meaning; and indeed this was almost inevitable, unless the original signification was entirely abandoned. In all spheres of thought and action, and especially in matters of belief, a tendency to choose for oneself, and to pursue one's own way independently, almost of necessity leads to separation from others, to divisions and factions. And factions in the Church readily widen into schisms and harden into heresies.

Outside the Acts of the Apostles the word heresy is found in the New Testament only in three passages: 1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20; and 2 Pet. ii. 1. In the last of these it is used of the erroneous opinions themselves; in the other two the parties who hold them may be indicated. But in all cases the word is used of divisions inside the Church, not of separations from it or of positions antagonistic to it. Thus in 2 Pet. ii. 1 we have the prophecy that "there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them." Here the false teachers are evidently inside the Church, corrupting its members; not outside, inducing its members to leave it. For the prophecy continues: "And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of." They could not cause "the way of the truth to be evil spoken of," if they were complete outsiders, professing to have no connection with it. In Gal. v. 20 "heresies" are among "the works of the flesh" against which St. Paul warns his fickle converts, and "heresies" are there coupled with "factions" and "divisions." In 1 Cor. xi. 19 the Apostle gives as a reason for believing the report that there are divisions in the Church of Corinth the fact that (man's tendency to differ being what it is) divisions are inevitable, and have their use, for in this way those which are approved among Christians are made manifest. It is possible in both these passages to understand St. Paul as meaning the "self-chosen views," as in the passage in 2 Peter, rather than the schools or parties which have adopted the views. But this is not of much moment. The important thing to notice is, that in all three cases the "heresies" have caused or are tending to cause splits inside the Church: they do not indicate hostile positions outside it. This use of the word is analogous to that in the Acts of the Apostles, where it represents the Pharisees and Sadducees, and even the Christian Church itself, as parties or schools inside Judaism, not as revolts against it. We shall be seriously misled, if we allow the later meaning of "heresy," with all its mediæval associations, to colour our interpretation of the term as we find it in the New Testament.

Another important thing to remember in reference to the strong language which St. Paul and other writers in the New Testament use with regard to "heresies" and erroneous doctrine, and the still stronger language used by early Christian writers in commenting on these texts, is the downright wickedness of a good many of the "self-chosen views" which had begun to appear in the Church in the first century, and which became rampant during the second. The peril, not only to faith, but to morals, was immense, and it extended to the very foundations of both. When Christians were told that there were two Creators, of whom one was good and one was evil; that the Incarnation was an impossibility; that man's body was so vile that it was a duty to abuse it; that his spirit was so pure that it was impossible to defile it; that to acquire knowledge through crime was estimable, for knowledge was good, and crime was of no moral significance to the enlightened;—then it was necessary to speak out, and tell men in plain terms what the persons who were inculcating such views were really doing, and what strong measures would be necessary if they persisted in such teaching.

Unless we keep a firm grasp upon these two facts;—(1) the difference between the meaning of the word "heresy" as we find it in the New Testament and its usual meaning at the present time; and (2) the monstrous character of some of the views which many persons in the first century, and many more in the second, claimed to hold as part and parcel of the Christian religion;—we shall be liable to go grievously

astray in drawing conclusions as to our own practice from what is said on the subject in Scripture.

"Woe unto the world," said our blessed Lord, "because of occasions of stumbling! For it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh" (Matt. xviii. 7). Human nature being what it is, it is morally impossible that no one should ever lead another into sin. But that fact does not destroy the responsibility of the individual who leads his fellows into sin. St. Paul takes up the principle thus laid down by Christ and applies it in a particular sphere. He tells his Corinthian converts that "there must be heresies" among them, and that they serve the good purpose of shifting the chaff from the wheat. Wherever the light comes, it provokes opposition; there is at once antagonism between light and darkness. This is as true in the sphere of faith and morals as in that of the material world. Sooner or later, and generally sooner rather than later, truth and innocence are met and opposed by falsehood and sin; and it is falsehood, wilfully maintained in opposition to revealed and generally held truth, that constitutes the essence of heresy. There are many false opinions outside what God has revealed to mankind, outside the scope of the Gospel. However serious these may be, they are not heresies. A man may be fatally at fault in matters of belief; but, unless in some sense he accepts Christianity as true, he is no heretic. As Tertullian says, "In all cases truth precedes its copy; after the reality the likeness follows" ("De Præs. Hær.," xxix.). That is, heresy, which is the caricature of Christian truth, must be subsequent to it. It is a distortion of the original truth, which some one has arrogantly chosen as preferable to that of which it is the distortion. Error which has not yet come in contact with revelation, and which has had no opportunity of either submitting to it or rebelling against it, is not heretical. The heretical spirit is seen in that cold critical temper, that self-confident and self-willed attitude, which accepts and rejects opinions on principles of its own, quite independently of the principles which are the guaranteed and historical guides of the Church. But it cannot accept or reject what has never been presented to it; nor, until the Christian faith has to some extent been accepted, can the rejection of the remainder of it be accounted heresy. Heresy is "a disease of Christian knowledge." The disease may have come from without, or may have developed entirely from within; and in the former case the source of the malady may be far older than Christianity itself. But until the noxious elements have entered the Christian organism and claimed a home within the system, it is a misuse of language to term them heretical.

We have not exhausted the teaching of the Apostles respecting this plague of self-assertion and independent teaching, which even in their time began to afflict the infant Church, when we have considered all the passages in which the words "heresy" and "heretical" occur. There are other passages, in which the thing is plainly mentioned, although this name for it is not used. It has been said that "the Apostles, though they claimed disciplinary authority, had evidently no thought of claiming infallibility for any utterances of theirs."* But they certainly treated opposition to their teaching, or deviations from it, as a very serious matter. St. Paul speaks of those who opposed him in the Church of Corinth as "false apostles, deceitful workers" and "ministers of Satan" (2 Cor. xi. 13-15). He speaks of the Galatians as "bewitched" by those who would pervert the Gospel of Christ, and pronounces an anathema on those who should "preach any gospel other than that which he preached" (Gal. i. 7, 8; iii. 1). Of the same class of teachers at Philippi he writes: "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision" (iii. 2). He warns the Colossians against any one who may "make spoil of them through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (ii. 8); just as he warned the elders of the Church at Ephesus that after his departure "grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock; and that from among themselves men would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29, 30). And in the Pastoral Epistles we have several utterances of the same kind, including the one before us (1 Tim. i. 3-7, 19, 20; iv. 1-3; vi. 3, 4, 20, 21; Tit. i. 10-16; iii. 8-11; 2 Tim. ii. 16-18; iii. 8, 13).

Nor is St. Paul the only writer in the New Testament who feels bound to write in this strain. The same kind of language fills no inconsiderable portion of the Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude (2 Pet. ii.; Jude 8-16). More remarkable still, we find even the Apostle of Love speaking in tones not less severe. The Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia abound in such things (Rev. ii.; iii.). In his General Epistle he asks, "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John ii. 22: comp. ii. 26; iv. 1, 3). In his letter to "the elect lady and her children" he speaks of the "many deceivers" who "confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh." And, in a passage not unlike the direction to Titus which we are now considering, he says: "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works."

The impression which these passages produce on our minds is at least this;—that, whether or no the Apostles were conscious of being protected by the Holy Spirit from teaching anything that was doctrinally false, they were at any rate very stern in their condemnation of those Christians who deliberately contravened what an Apostle had taught. And this sternness is not confined to those who resisted the instructions of Apostles in matters of discipline. It is quite as clearly manifested against those who contradicted Apostolic teaching in matters of faith. The context of the passage before us shows that by "a man that is heretical" is meant one who wilfully takes his own line and thereby causes divisions in doctrine quite as much as one who does so as regards the order and discipline of the Church.

What, then, does St. Paul mean when he di-

* T. Ll. Davies in a remarkable paper on "The Higher Life," in the *Fortnightly Review*, January, 1888.

rects Titus to "refuse" such a person after once or twice admonishing him? Certainly not that he is to excommunicate him; the passage has nothing to do with formal excommunication. It is possible to maintain that the direction here given may imply excommunication; but it is also possible to maintain that it need not imply anything of the kind; and therefore that such an interpretation substitutes an uncertain inference for what is certainly expressed. The word translated in the R. V. "refuse," and in the A. V. "reject," is the same as that which is used in 1 Tim. v. 11 in the text, "Younger widows refuse" (*παραιτοῦ*). It means, "avoid, shun, excuse yourself from having anything to do with" (comp. Heb. xii. 25). It is also used of things as well as of persons, and in much the same sense: "Refuse profane and old wives' fables" (1 Tim. iv. 7), and "Foolish and ignorant questions refuse" (2 Tim. ii. 23). The meaning, then, here seems to be that, after a few attempts to induce the heretical person to desist from his perverse and self-willed conduct, Titus is to waste no more time on him, because now he knows that his efforts will be useless. At first he did not know this; but after having failed once or twice, he will see that it is vain to repeat what produces no effect. The man's self-will is incorrigible; and not only that, but inexcusable; for he stands self-condemned. He deliberately chose what was opposed to the received teaching; and he deliberately persists in it after its erroneous character has been pointed out to him. He "is perverted, and sinneth": that is, he not only has sinned, but goes on sinning: he continues in his sin, in spite of entreaty, exhortation, and reproof.

In what way are the directions here given to Titus to be used for our own guidance at the present time? Certain limitations as to their application have been already pointed out. They do not apply to persons who have always been, or who have ended in placing themselves, outside the Christian Church. They refer to persons who contend that their self-chosen views are part and parcel of the Gospel, and who claim to hold and teach such views as members or even ministers of the Church. Secondly, they refer to grave and fundamental errors with regard to first principles; not to eccentric views respecting matters of detail. And in determining this second point much caution will be needed; especially when inferences are drawn from a man's teaching. We should be on our guard with regard to assertions that a particular teacher virtually denies the Divinity of Christ, or the Trinity, or the personality of God. But when both these points are quite clear, that the person contradicts some of the primary truths of the Gospel, and that he claims to do so as a Christian, what is a minister to do to such a member of his flock? He is to make one or two efforts to reclaim him, and then to have as little to do with him as possible.

In all such cases there are three sets of persons to be considered:—the heretic himself, those who have to deal with him, and the Church at large. What conduct on the part of those who have to deal with him will be least prejudicial to themselves and to the Church, and most beneficial to the man himself? The supreme law of charity must be the guiding principle. But that is no true charity which shows tenderness to one person in such a way as to do grievous harm to others, or to do more harm than good to the person who receives it. Love of what is good is not only consistent with hatred of what is evil; it cannot exist without such hatred. What we have to consider, therefore, is this. Will friendliness confirm him in his error? Would he be more impressed by severity? Is intercourse with him likely to lead to our being led astray? Will it increase his influence and his opportunities of doing harm? Is severity likely to excite sympathy in other people, first for him, and then for his teaching? It is impossible to lay down a hard-and-fast rule that would cover all cases; and while we remember the stern instructions which St. Paul gives to Titus, and St. John to the "elect lady," let us not forget the way in which Jesus Christ treated publicans and sinners.

In our own day there is danger of mistaking lazy or weak indifferentism for Christian charity. It is a convenient doctrine that the beliefs of our fellow-Christians are no concern of ours, even when they try to propagate what contradicts the creed. And, while emphasis is laid upon the responsibility of accepting articles of faith, it is assumed that there is little or no responsibility in refusing to accept, or in teaching others to refuse also. To plead for tenderness, where severity is needed, is not charity, but Laodicæan lukewarmness; and mistaken tenderness may easily end in making us "partakers in evil works." To be severe, when severity is imperatively called for, is not only charity to the offenders, it "is also charity towards all men besides. It is charity towards the ignorant as carrying instruction along with it; charity towards the unwary, as giving them warning to stand off from infection; charity towards the confirmed Christians, as encouraging them still more, and preserving them from insults; charity towards the whole Church, as supporting both their unity and purity; charity towards all mankind, towards them that are without, as it is recommending pure religion to them in the most advantageous light, obviating their most plausible calumnies, and giving them less occasion to blaspheme."

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CHARACTER AND CONTENTS OF THE LAST EPISTLE OF ST. PAUL—THE NEMESIS OF NEGLECTED GIFTS.

2 Timothy i. 6, 7.

In the Second Epistle to Timothy we have the last known words of St. Paul. It is his last will and testament; his last instructions to his favourite disciple and through him to the Church. It is written with full consciousness that the end is at hand. His course in this world is all but over; and it will be closed by a violent, it may be by a cruel death. The letter is, therefore, a striking but thoroughly natural mixture of gloom and brightness. On the one hand, death throws its dark shadow across the

page. On the other, there is the joyous thought that the realisation of his brightest hopes is close at hand. Death will come with its pain and ignominy, to cut short the Apostle's still unfinished work, to take him away from the Churches which he has founded and which still sorely need his guidance, and from the friends whom he loves, and who still need his counsel and support. But death, while it takes him away from much to which he clings and which clings to him, will free him from toil, and anxiety, and neglect, and will take him to be with Christ until that day when he shall receive the crown of righteousness which is laid up for him.

If the shadow of impending death were the only source of gloom, the letter would be far more joyous than it is. It would be far more continuously a strain of thanksgiving and triumph. But the prospect of ending his life under the hand of the public executioner is not the thought which dominates the more sorrowful portion of the Epistle. There is the fact that he is almost alone; not because his friends are prevented from coming to him, but because they have forsaken him; some, it may be, for pressing work elsewhere; others because the attractions of the world were too strong for them; but the majority of them, because they were afraid to stand by him when he was placed at the bar before Nero. The Apostle is heavy-hearted about this desertion of him, not merely because of the wound which it inflicts on his own affectionate spirit, but because of the responsibility which those who are guilty of it have thereby incurred. He prays that it "may not be laid to their account."

Yet the thought which specially oppresses him is "anxiety about all the Churches"—and about Timothy himself. Dark days are coming. False doctrine will be openly preached and will not lack hearers; and utterly unchristian conduct and conversation will become grievously prevalent. And, while the godly are persecuted, evil men will wax worse and worse. This sad state of things has already begun; and the Apostle seems to fear that his beloved disciple is not altogether unaffected by it. Separation from St. Paul and the difficulties of his position may have told on his over-sensitive temperament, and have caused him to be remiss in his work, through indulgence in futile despondency. The words of the text strike the dominant chord of the Epistle and reveal to us the motive that prompts it. The Apostle puts Timothy in remembrance "that he stir up the gift of God which is in him." Again and again he insists on this and similar counsels. "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but suffer hardships." "That good thing which was committed to thee guard through the Holy Ghost" (vv. 8, 13). "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (ii. 3, 15). "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (iii. 14). And then, as the letter draws to a close, he speaks in still more solemn tones of warning: "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, Who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching." "Be thou sober in all things, suffer hardships, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry" (iv. 1, 2, 5). Evidently the Apostle is anxious lest even the rich gifts with which Timothy is endowed should be allowed to rust through want of use. Timidity and weakness may prove fatal to him and his work, in spite of the spiritual advantages which he has enjoyed. The Apostle's anxiety about the future of the Churches is interwoven with anxiety about the present and future conduct of his beloved delegate and successor.

The Second Epistle to Timothy is more personal than either of the other Pastoral Epistles. It is less official in tone and contents, and is addressed more directly to the recipient himself, than through him to others. Three main subjects are treated in the letter; and first and foremost of these is the conduct of Timothy himself. This subject occupies about a third of the Epistle. The next and longest section treats of the present and future prospects of the Church (ii. 14-iv. 5). And lastly the Apostle speaks of himself.

It is not difficult to understand how even these who condemn the Pastoral Epistles as the product of a later writer, feel almost obliged to admit that at least some of this touching letter must be genuine. Whoever wrote it must have had some genuine letters of St. Paul to use as material. It may be doubted whether any of the writings of that age which have come down to us are more thoroughly characteristic of the person whose name they bear, or are more full of touches which a fabricator would never have thought of introducing. The person who forged the Second Epistle to Timothy in the name of St. Paul, must indeed have been a genius. Nothing that has come down to us of the literature of the second century leads us to suppose that any such literary power existed. Whether we regard the writer, or the circumstances in which he is placed, or the person to whom he writes, all is thoroughly characteristic, harmonious, and in keeping. We have St. Paul with his exquisite sympathy, sensitiveness, and affection, his intense anxiety, his unflinching courage. We have the solemnity and importunity of one who knows that his days are numbered. And we have the urgency and tenderness of one who writes to a friend who has his faults and weaknesses, but who is trusted and loved in spite of them.

In encouraging Timothy to stir up the gift that is in him, and not suffer himself to be ashamed of the ignominy, or afraid of the hardships, which the service of Christ entails, the Apostle puts before him five considerations. There are the beautiful traditions of his family, which are now in his keeping. There is the sublime character of the Gospel which has been entrusted to him. There is the teaching of St. Paul himself, who has so often given him a "pattern of sound words" and a pattern of steadfast endurance. There is the example of Onesiphorus with his courageous devotion. And there is the sure hope of "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Any one of these things might suffice to influence him: Timothy cannot be proof against them all. St. Paul is persuaded that he is preserving the heritage of undissembled faith which his mother and his grandmother possessed before him. When

he considers the character of the Gospel, of which he has become a minister, and the gift of which he has thereby become a recipient, he cannot now become ashamed of bearing testimony for it. And has the teaching of his old master, separation from whom used once to make him weep, lost its hold upon him? Of the other disciples and friends of the master, some have turned away from him, showing coldness or dislike instead of sympathy and self-sacrifice; while others, at great personal inconvenience, and (it may be also) great personal danger, sought him out all the more diligently on account of his imprisonment, and ministered to him. Will Timothy take his stand with Phygelus and Hermogenes, or with Onesiphorus? And over and above all these considerations, which are connected with this world, there are the thoughts of the world to come. This is no mere question of expediency and opportuneness, or of personal loyalty and affection to a human teacher and friend. There is the whole of eternity at stake. To have shared Christ's martyr-death is to share His endless life. To share His endurance and service is to share His royalty. But to reject Him, is to ensure being rejected by Him. Were He to receive faithless followers among the faithful, He would be faithless to His promises and to Himself.

For all these reasons, therefore, the Apostle charges his disciple to "stir up the gift of God which is in him through the laying on of the Apostle's hands." And the fact that he uses so much argument and entreaty is evidence that he had grave anxiety about Timothy. Timothy's natural sensitiveness and tenderness of heart made him specially liable to despondency and timidity, especially when separated from friends and confronted by sturdy opposition.

"That thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee." Literally "that thou kindle up and fan into a flame." It does not necessarily imply that there has once been a bright flame, which has been allowed to die down, leaving only smouldering embers. But this is the natural meaning of the figure, as is possibly what St. Paul implies here. He does not explain what precise gift of God it is that Timothy is to kindle into a warmer glow; but, as it is one of those which were conferred upon him by the laying on of hands at the time of his ordination, we may reasonably suppose that it is the authority and power to be a minister of Christ. In the First Epistle St. Paul had given Timothy a similar charge (iv. 14); and by combining that passage with this we learn that both the Apostle and the elders laid their hands on the young evangelist: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." This talent, committed to his charge for use in God's service, must not be allowed to lie idle; it must be used with vigour, and trust, and courage. The very character of the gift bestowed proves that it is to be used, and used freely. "For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline." St. Paul includes himself in the statement. He, like his disciple, has received this gift from God, and he knows from long experience what its nature is. It is no "spirit of fearfulness;" no "spirit of bondage leading to fear" (Rom. viii. 15). It was never meant to produce in us a slavish fear of God, or a cowardly fear of men. To feel awe and reverence when dealing with God,—to feel responsibility when dealing with men,—is one thing. To abstain from action for fear of offending either, is quite another. It is sometimes possible to avoid criticism by refusing to commit oneself to anything; but such refusal may be a sinful neglect of opportunities: and no error of judgment in using the gifts committed to us can be worse than that of not using them at all. Those are not necessarily the most useful servants who make the fewest conspicuous mistakes.

The spirit with which we are endowed is a spirit of power, whereas a spirit of fearlessness is weak. Faint-heartedness cannot be strong. The faint-hearted mistrust themselves and others; and they discourage themselves and others. They anticipate dangers and difficulties, and thereby sometimes create them; and they anticipate failure, and thereby often bring it about. It is only by acting, and by acting vigorously and courageously, that we find out the full power of the spirit with which we have been blessed.

Again, the gift which God has bestowed upon us is a spirit of love: and more than anything else perfect love casts out the spirit of fear. Fear is the child of bondage; love is the child of freedom. If we love God, we shall not live in terror of His judgments: and if we love men, we shall not live in terror of their criticisms. Moreover, the spirit of love teaches us the nature of the gift of power. It is not force or violence; not an imposing of our own will on others. It is an affectionate striving to win others over to obedience to the will of God. It is the spirit of self-sacrifice; not of self-assertion.

Lastly, the spirit with which we are endowed by God is a spirit of discipline. By discipline that cowardly indolence, which the spirit of fearfulness engenders, can be kept down and expelled. If it be asked whether the discipline be that which Timothy is to enforce in ruling others, or that which he is to practise in schooling himself, we may answer, "Both." The termination of the word which is here used (*σωφρονισμός*) seems to require the transitive meaning; and slackness in correcting others may easily have been one of the ways in which the despondency of Timothy showed itself. On the other hand the whole context here speaks of Timothy's treatment of himself. To take a more lively interest in the conduct of others would be discipline for himself and for them also. There may be as much pride as humility in indulging the thought that the lives of other people are so utterly bad, that it is quite out of power of such persons as ourselves to effect a reformation. This is a subtle way of shirking responsibility. Strong in the spirit of power, glowing with the spirit of love, we can turn the faults of others, together with all the troubles which may befall us in this life, into instruments of discipline.

The words of the Apostle, though primarily addressed to ministers, in reference to the spiritual gifts bestowed on them at their ordination, must not be confined to them. They apply to the gifts bestowed by God upon every Christian, and indeed upon every human being. There is a terrible penalty attached to the neglect of the higher faculties, whether intellectual or moral; a penalty which works surely and unerringly by a natural law. We all of us have imagination,

intellect, will. These wonderful powers must have an object, must have employment. If we do not give them their true object, viz., the glory of God, they will find an object for themselves. Instead of soaring upwards on the wings supplied by the glories of creation and the mercies of redemption, they will sink downwards into the mire. They will fasten upon the flesh; and in an atmosphere poisoned by debasing associations they will become debased also. Instead of raising the man who possesses them into that higher life, which is a foretaste of heaven, they will hurry him downwards with the accumulated pressure of an undisciplined intellect, a polluted imagination, and a lawless will. That which should have been for wealth, becomes an occasion of falling. Angels of light become angels of darkness. And powers which ought to be as priests, consecrating the whole of our nature to God, become as demons, shameless and ruthless in devoting us to the Evil One. Not only every minister of Christ, but every thinking man, has need from time to time "to stir up the gift of God that is in him," to kindle it into a flame, and see that it is directed to holy ends and exercised in noble service. God's royal gifts of intellect and will cannot be flung away, cannot be left unused, cannot be extinguished. For good or for evil they are ours; and they are deathless. But, though they cannot be destroyed they can be neglected. They can be buried in the earth, till they breed worms and stink. They can be allowed to run riot, until they become as wild beasts, and turn again and rend us. Or in the spirit of power, or love, and of discipline, they may be chastened by lofty exercise and sanctified to heavenly uses, till they become more and more fit to be the equipment of one, who is for ever to stand "before the throne of God, and praise Him day and night in His temple."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HEARTLESSNESS OF PHYGELUS AND HERMOGENES—THE DEVOTION OF ONESIPHORUS—PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD.

2 Timothy i. 15-18.

We have here one of the arguments which St. Paul makes use of in urging his beloved disciple to stir up the gift of God that is in him through the laying on of hands, and not allow himself to be afraid of the ignominy and the sufferings, which the service of Jesus Christ involves. After reminding him of the holy traditions of his family, of the glorious character of the Gospel which has been committed to him, and of the character of the Apostle's own teaching, St. Paul now goes on to point out, as a warning, the conduct of those in Asia who had deserted him in his hour of need; and, as an example, in marked contrast to them, the affectionate courage and persistent devotion of Onesiphorus. Timothy is not likely to follow those in Asia in their cowardly desertion of the Apostle. He will surely bestir himself to follow an example, the details of which are so well known to him and so very much to the point. Timothy's special knowledge of both cases, so far as the conduct referred to lay not in Rome, but in Asia, is emphatically insisted upon by St. Paul. He begins by saying, "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia turned away from me!" and he concludes with the remark, "In how many things he ministered at Ephesus, thou knowest very well;" or, as the Greek comparative probably means, "thou knowest better than I do." And it is worth noticing that St. Paul uses a different word for "know" in the two cases. Of his desertion by those in Asia he uses a word of general meaning (*οἶδας*) which implies knowledge about the things or persons in question, but need not imply more than hearsay knowledge of what is notorious. Of the devoted service of Onesiphorus at Ephesus he uses a word (*γινώσκεις*) which implies progressive personal experience. Timothy had of course heard all about the refusal of Phygelus and Hermogenes and others to recognise the claim which St. Paul had upon their services; what he saw and experienced continually gave him intimate acquaintance with the conduct of Onesiphorus in the Church of which Timothy had the chief care.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the meaning of St. Paul's statements respecting these two contrasted cases: Phygelus and those like him on the one side, and Onesiphorus on the other: and with regard to both of them a variety of suggestions have been made, which are scarcely compatible with the language used, and which do not after all make the situation more intelligible. It must be admitted that the brevity of the statements does leave room for a certain amount of conjecture; but, nevertheless, they are clear enough to enable us to conjecture with a fair amount of certainty.

And first with regard to the case of those in Asia. They are in Asia at the time when this letter is being written. It is quite inadmissible to twist this plain language and force it to mean "those from Asia who are now in Rome." *Οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ* cannot be equivalent to *οἱ ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας*. If St. Paul meant the latter, why did he not write it? Secondly, it is the proconsular province of Asia that is meant, that is the western portion of Asia Minor, and not the continent of Asia. Thirdly, the "turning away" of these Christians in Asia Minor does not mean their apostasy from the faith, of which there is no hint either in the word or in the context. St. Paul would hardly have spoken of their abandonment of Christianity as turning away from him. It means that they turned their faces away from him, and refused to have anything to say to him. When he sought their sympathy and assistance, they renounced his acquaintance, or at any rate refused to admit his claim upon them. It is the very expression used by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount; "From him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 42). This was exactly what these Asiatic disciples had done: the Apostle had asked them to lend him their help and support; and they had "turned away from" him. But what is the meaning of the "all"? He says that "all that are in Asia turned away from" him. Obviously there is some qualification to be understood. He cannot mean that Timothy is well aware that every believer in Asia Minor had repudiated St. Paul. Some have supposed that the necessary qualification is to be found in what follows; viz., "of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes." The meaning would then be

that the whole of the party to which Phygelus and Hermogenes belong rejected the Apostle. But the arrangement of the sentence is quite against this supposition; and there is nothing either said or implied about these two men being the leaders or representatives of a party. The expression respecting them is exactly parallel to that in the First Epistle respecting those who "made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander" (i. 19, 20). In each case, out of a class of persons who are spoken of in general terms, two are mentioned by name. What then is the qualification of the "all," which common sense requires? It means simply, "all whom I asked, all to whom I made an appeal for assistance." At the time when this letter was written, there were several Christians in Asia Minor,—some of them known to Timothy,—to whom St. Paul had applied for help in his imprisonment; and, as Timothy was very well aware, they every one of them refused to give it. And this refusal took place in Asia Minor, not in Rome. Some have supposed that, although these unfriendly Christians were in Asia when St. Paul wrote about them, yet it was in Rome that they "turned away from" him. They had been in Rome, and instead of remaining there to comfort the prisoner, they had gone away to Asia Minor. On this supposition a difficulty has been raised, and it has been pressed as if it told against the genuineness of the Epistle. How, it is asked, could Timothy, who was in Ephesus, be supposed to be well aware of what took place in Rome? And to meet this objection it has been conjectured, that shortly before this letter was written some one had gone with news from Rome to Ephesus. But this is to meet an imaginary difficulty with an imaginary fact. Let us imagine nothing, and then all runs smoothly. Every one in Asia Minor, to whom application was made on behalf of St. Paul, "turned away from" him and refused to do what was asked. Of such a fact as this the overseer of the Church of Ephesus could not fail to have knowledge; and, distressing as it was, it ought not to make him sink down into indolent despondency, but stir him up to redoubled exertion. What the precise request was that Phygelus and Hermogenes and the rest had refused, we do not know; but very possibly it was to go to Rome and exert themselves on the Apostle's behalf. Of the two persons named nothing further is known. They are mentioned as being known to Timothy, and very possibly as being residents in Ephesus.

Now let us turn to the case of Onesiphorus, whose conduct is such a marked contrast to these others. In the most natural way St. Paul first of all tells Timothy what he experienced from Onesiphorus in Rome; and then appeals to Timothy's own experience of him in Ephesus. In between these two passages there is a sentence, inserted parenthetically, which has been the subject of a good deal of controversy. "The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day." On the one side it is argued that the context shows that Onesiphorus is dead, and that therefore we have Scriptural authority for prayers for the dead: on the other that it is by no means certain that Onesiphorus was dead at the time when St. Paul wrote; and that, even if he was, this parenthesis is more of the nature of a pious wish, or expression of hope, than a prayer. It need scarcely be said that on the whole the latter is the view taken by Protestant commentators, although by no means universally; while the former is the interpretation which finds favour with Roman Catholics. Scripture elsewhere is almost entirely silent on the subject; and hence this passage is regarded as of special importance. But it ought to be possible to approach the discussion of it without heat or prejudice.

Certainly the balance of probability is decidedly in favour of the view that Onesiphorus was already dead when St. Paul wrote these words. There is not only the fact that he here speaks of "the house of Onesiphorus" in connection with the present, and of Onesiphorus himself only in connection with the past: there is also the still more marked fact that in the final salutations, while greetings are sent to Prisca and Aquila, and from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, yet it is once more "the house of Onesiphorus" and not Onesiphorus himself who is saluted. This language is thoroughly intelligible, if Onesiphorus was no longer alive, but had a wife and children who were still living at Ephesus; but it is not easy to explain this reference in two places to the household of Onesiphorus, if he himself was still alive. In all the other cases the individual and not the household is mentioned. Nor is this twofold reference to his family rather than to himself the only fact which points in this direction. There is also the character of the Apostle's prayer. Why does he confine his desires respecting the requital of Onesiphorus' kindness to the day of judgment? Why does he not also pray that he may be requited in this life? that he "may prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospereth," as St. John prays for Gaius (3 John 2)? This again is thoroughly intelligible, if Onesiphorus is already dead. It is much less intelligible if he is still alive. It seems, therefore, to be scarcely too much to say that there is no serious reason for questioning the now widely accepted view that at the time when St. Paul wrote these words Onesiphorus was among the departed.

With regard to the second point there seems to be equal absence of serious reason for doubting that the words in question constitute a prayer. It is difficult to find a term which better describes them than the word "prayer:" and in discussing them one would have to be specially careful in order to avoid the words "pray" and "prayer" in connection with them. It does not much matter what meaning we give to "the Lord" in each case; whether both refer to Christ, or both to the Father, or one to Christ and the other to the Father. In any case we have a prayer that the Judge at the last day will remember those good deeds of Onesiphorus, which the Apostle has been unable to repay, and will place them to his account. Paul cannot requite them, but he prays that God will do so by showing mercy upon him at the last day.

Having thus concluded that, according to the more probable and reasonable view, the passage before us contains a prayer offered up by the Apostle on behalf of one who is dead, we seem to have obtained his sanction, and therefore the sanction of Scripture, for using similar prayers ourselves. But what is a similar prayer? There are many kinds of intercessions which may be made on behalf of those who

have gone before us into the other world: and it does not follow that, because one kind of intercession has Scriptural authority, therefore any kind of intercession is allowable. This passage may be quoted as reasonable evidence that the death of a person does not extinguish our right or our duty to pray for him: but it ought not to be quoted as authority for such prayers on behalf of the dead as are very different in kind from the one of which we have an example here. Many other kinds of intercession for the dead may be reasonable and allowable; but this passage proves no more than that some kinds of intercession for the dead are allowable, viz., those in which we pray that God will have mercy at the day of judgment on those who have done good to us and others during their life upon earth.

But is the right, which is also the duty, of praying for the departed limited by the amount of sanction which it is possible to obtain from this solitary passage of Scripture? Assuredly not. Two other authorities have to be consulted,—reason and tradition.

I. This pious practice, so full of comfort to affectionate souls, is reasonable in itself. Scripture, which is mercifully reticent respecting a subject so liable to provoke unhealthy curiosity and excitement, nevertheless does tell us plainly some facts respecting the unseen world. (1) Those whom we call the dead are still alive. God is still the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob: and He is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. xxii. 32). Those who believe that death is annihilation, and that there can be no resurrection, "do greatly err" (Mark xii. 27). And (2) the living souls of the departed are still conscious: their bodies are asleep in this world, but their spirits are awake in the other. For this truth we are not dependent upon the disputable meaning of the parable of Dives and Lazarus; although we can hardly suppose that that parable would ever have been spoken, unless the continued consciousness of the dead and their interest in the living were a fact.

Christ's parables are never mere fables, in which nature is distorted in order to point a moral: His lessons are ever drawn from God's universe as it is. But besides the parable (Luke xvi. 19-31), there is His declaration that Abraham not only "exulted" in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah, but "he saw" that coming "and was glad" thereat (John viii. 56). And there is His promise to the penitent thief: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). Can we believe that this promise, given at so awful a moment with such solemn assurance ("Verily I say unto thee"), would have been made, if the robber's soul, when in Paradise, would be unconscious of Christ's companionship? Could Christ then have "preached unto the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 19), if the spirits of those who had died in the Flood were deprived of consciousness? And what can be the meaning of "the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God" crying "How long, O Master the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?" (Rev. vi. 10), if the souls of the slain slumber in the unseen world?

It is not necessary to quote Scripture to prove that the departed are not yet perfect. Their final consummation will not be reached until the coming of Christ at the last great day (Heb. xi. 40).

If, then, the dead are conscious, and are not yet perfected, they are capable of progress. They may increase in happiness, and possibly in holiness. May we not go farther and say that they must be growing, must be progressing towards a better state; for, so far as we have experience, there is no such thing as conscious life in a state of stagnation. Conscious life is always either growing or decaying: and decay is incipient death. For conscious creatures, who are incapable of decay and death, growth seems to be a necessary attribute. We conclude, therefore, on grounds partly of Scripture and partly of reason, that the faithful departed are consciously progressing towards a condition of higher perfection.

But this conclusion must necessarily carry us still farther. These consciously developing souls are God's children and our brethren; they are, like ourselves, members of Christ and joint-heirs with us of His kingdom; they are inseparably united with us in "the Communion of Saints." May we not pray for them to aid them in their progress? And if, with St. Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus before us, we are convinced that we may pray for them, does it not become our bounden duty to do so? On what grounds can we accept the obligation of praying for the spiritual advancement of those who are with us in the flesh, and yet refuse to help by our prayers the spiritual advancement of those who have joined that "great cloud of witnesses" in the unseen world, by which we are perpetually encompassed (Heb. xii. 1)? The very fact that they witness our prayers for them may be to them an increase of strength and joy.

II. Tradition amply confirms us in the belief that this pious practice is lawful, and binding upon all who recognise its lawfulness. The remarkable narrative in 2 Maccabees xii. shows that this belief in a very extreme form was common among the Jews, and publicly acted upon, before the coming of Christ. It is highly improbable that prayers for the dead were omitted from the public worship of the synagogue, in which Jesus Christ so frequently took part. It is quite certain that such prayers are found in every early Christian liturgy, and to this day form part of the liturgies in use throughout the greater portion of Christendom. And, although the mediæval abuses connected with such prayers induced the reformers of our own liturgy almost, if not quite, entirely to omit them, yet the Church of England has never set any bounds to the liberty of its members in this respect. Each one of us is free in this matter, and therefore has the responsibility of using or neglecting what the whole of the primitive Church, and the large majority of Christians throughout all these centuries, have believed to be a means of advancing the peace and glory of Christ's kingdom. About the practice of the primitive Church there can be no question. Doubt has been thrown upon the liturgies, because it has been said that some portions are certainly of much later origin than the rest, and therefore these prayers may be later insertions and corruptions. But that cannot be so; for the liturgies do not stand alone. In this matter they have the support of a chain of Christian writers beginning with Tertullian in the second century, and also of early inscriptions in the

catacombs. About the meagre allusions to the departed in our own liturgy there is more room for doubt: but perhaps the most that can safely be asserted is this;—that here and there sentences have been worded in such a way that it is possible for those who wish to do so to include the faithful departed in the prayer as well as the living. Bishop Cosin has given his authority to this interpretation of the prayer that "we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His passion." By this, he says, "is to be understood, as well those that have been here before, and those that shall be hereafter, as those that are now members of it:" and as one of the revisers his authority is great. And the prayer in the Burial Service, "that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul," is equally patient of this meaning, even if it does not fairly demand it. For we do not pray that we may have our consummation and bliss with the departed; which might imply that they are enjoying these things now, and that we desire to join them; but we pray that we with the departed may have our consummation and bliss; which includes them in the prayer. And the petition in the Litany, "remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers," may, or may not, be a prayer for our forefathers, according to the way in which we understand it.

All this seems to show that neither Scripture nor the English Church forbids prayer for the departed; that, on the contrary, both of them appear to give a certain amount of sanction to it: and that what they allow, reason commends and tradition recommends most strongly. It is for each one of us to decide for himself whether or no he will take part in the charitable work thus placed before him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE NEED OF MACHINERY FOR THE PRESERVATION AND TRANSMISSION OF THE FAITH—THE MACHINERY OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

2 Timothy ii. 1, 2.

In this tenderly affectionate address we have a very early indication of the beginnings of Christian tradition and Christian schools, two subjects intimately connected with one another. St. Paul having pointed out as a warning to his "child" Timothy the cold or cowardly behaviour of those in Asia who had turned away from him, and as an example the affectionate courage of Onesiphorus, returns to the charge of which this letter is so full, that Timothy is "not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," but be willing to "suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God" (i. 8). "Thou, therefore, my child," with these instances in mind on the one hand and on the other, "be inwardly strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." In his own strength he will be able to do nothing; but in the grace which Christ freely bestows on all believers who ask it of Him, Timothy will be able to find all that he needs for the strengthening of his own character and for the instruction of others. And here St. Paul, in a way thoroughly natural in one who is writing a letter which is personal rather than official, diverges for a moment to give utterance to the idea which passes through his mind of securing permanence in the instruction of the faithful. Possibly it was in reference to this duty that he feared the natural despondency and sensitiveness of Timothy. Timothy would be likely to shrink from such work, or to do it in a half-hearted way. Or again the thought that this letter is to summon Timothy to come to him is in his mind (iv. 9, 21), and he forthwith exhorts him to make proper provision for continuity of sound teaching in the Church committed to his care. "The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." In other words, before leaving his flock in order to visit his spiritual father and friend, he is to secure the establishment of apostolic tradition. And in order to do this he is to establish a school,—a school of picked scholars, intelligent enough to appreciate, and trustworthy enough to preserve, all that has been handed down from Christ and His Apostles respecting the essentials of the Christian faith. There is only one Gospel,—that which the Apostles have preached ever since the Ascension. It is so well known, so well authenticated both by intrinsic sublimity and external testimony, that no one would be justified in accepting a different Gospel, even upon the authority of an angel from heaven. A second Gospel is an impossibility. That which is not identical with the Gospel which St. Paul and the other Apostles have preached would be no Gospel at all (Gal. i. 6-9). And this Divine and Apostolic Gospel is the Gospel which has been committed to Timothy's charge. Let him take all reasonable care for its preservation.

For in the first place, such care was commanded from the outset. Christ has promised that His truth shall continue and shall prevail. But He has not exempted Christians from the duty of preserving and propagating it. He, Who is the Truth, has declared that He is ever with His Church, even unto the end of the world (Matt. xxviii. 20); and in fulfilment of this promise He has bestowed the Spirit of truth upon it. But He has nowhere hinted that His Church is to leave the cause of His Gospel to take care of itself. On the contrary, at the very time that He promised to be alway with His disciples, He prefaced this promise with the command, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you;" as if His promise were contingent upon their fulfilment of this charge. At the very moment when the Church received the truth, it was told that it had the responsibility of safeguarding it and making it known.

And, secondly, experience has proved how entirely necessary such care is. The Gospel cannot be superseded by any announcement possessing a larger measure of truth and authority. So far as the present dispensation goes, its claims are absolute and final. But it may be seriously misunderstood; it may be corrupted by large admixture of error; it may be partially or even totally forgotten; it may be supplanted by some meretricious counterfeit. There were Thessalonians who had supposed that the Gospel exempted them from the obligation of work-

ing to earn their bread. There were Christians at Corinth and Ephesus who had confounded the liberty of the Gospel with antinomian license. There was the Church of Sardis which had so completely forgotten what it had received, that no works of its doing were found fulfilled before God, and the remnant of truth and life which survived was ready to perish. And the Churches of Galatia had been in danger of casting on one side the glories of the Gospel and returning to the bondage of the Law. Through ignorance, through neglect, through wilful misrepresentation or interested opposition, the truth might be obscured, or depraved, or defeated; and there were few places where such disastrous results were more possible than at Ephesus. Its restless activity in commerce and speculation; its worldliness; the seductiveness of its forms of paganism;—all these constituted an atmosphere in which Christian truth, unless carefully protected, would be likely to become tainted or be ignored. Even without taking into account the proposal that Timothy should leave Ephesus for awhile and visit the Apostle in his imprisonment at Rome, it was no more than necessary precaution that he should endeavour to secure the establishment of a permanent centre for preserving and handing on in its integrity the faith once for all committed to the saints.

"The things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses." The last three words are remarkable; and they are still more remarkable in the original Greek. St. Paul does not say simply "in the presence of many witnesses" (ἐνώπιον or παρόντων πολλῶν μαρτύρων), but "by means of many witnesses" (διὰ πολλῶν μαρτύρων). In the First Epistle (vi. 12) he had appealed to the good confession which Timothy had made "in the sight of many witnesses." As regards Timothy's confession these were witnesses and no more. They were able for ever afterwards to testify that he had made it; but they did not help him to make it. The confession was his, not theirs, although no doubt they assented to it and approved it; and their presence in no way affected its goodness. But here those who were present were something more than mere witnesses of what the Apostle said to Timothy: they were an integral part of the proceeding. Their presence was an element without which the Apostle's teaching would have assumed a different character. They were not a mere audience, able to testify as to what was said; they were guarantees of the instruction which was given. The sentiments and opinions which St. Paul might express in private to his disciple, and the authoritative teaching which he delivered to him in public under the sanction of many witnesses, were two different things and stood on different grounds. Timothy had often heard from his friend his personal views on a variety of subjects; and he had often heard from the Apostle his official testimony, delivered solemnly in the congregation, as to the truths of the Gospel. It is this latter body of instruction, thus amply guaranteed, of which Timothy is to take such care. He is to treat it as a treasure committed to his charge, a precious legacy which he holds in trust. And in his turn he is to commit it to the keeping of trustworthy persons, who will know its value, and be capable of preserving it intact and of handing it on to others as trustworthy as themselves.

Some expositors interpret the passage as referring, not to the Apostle's public teaching as a whole, but to the instructions which he gave to Timothy at his ordination respecting the proper discharge of his office; and the aorist tense (ἤκουσας) favours the view that some definite occasion is intended (comp. 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6). In that case the Apostle is here showing anxiety for the establishment of a sound tradition respecting the duties of ministers,—a very important portion, but by no means the main portion of the teaching which he had imparted. But the aorist does not compel us to confine the allusion to some one event, such as Timothy's ordination or baptism; and it seems more reasonable to understand the charge here given as a continuation of that which occurs towards the close of the first chapter. There he says, "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard" (ἤκουσας) "from me;" and here he charges Timothy not merely to hold this pattern of sound words fast himself, but to take care that it does not perish with him.

This, then, may be considered as the earliest trace of the formation of a theological school,—a school which has for its object not merely the instruction of the ignorant, but the protection and maintenance of a definite body of doctrine. That which the Apostle, when he was in Ephesus, publicly taught, under the sanction of a multitude of witnesses, is to be preserved and handed on without compromise or corruption as a pattern of wholesome doctrine. There are unhealthy and even deadly distortions of the truth in the air, and unless care is taken to preserve the truth, it may easily become possible to confuse weak and ignorant minds as to what are the essentials of the Christian faith.

The question as to the earliest methods of Christian instruction and the precautions taken for the preservation of Apostolic tradition is one of the many particulars in which our knowledge of the primitive Church is so tantalisingly meagre. A small amount of information is given us in the New Testament, for the most part quite incidentally, as here; and then the history runs underground, and does not reappear for a century or more. The first few generations of Christians did not contain a large number of persons who were capable of producing anything very considerable in the way of literature. Of those who had the ability, not many had the leisure or the inclination to write. It was more important to teach by word of mouth than with the pen; and where was the use of leaving records of what was being done, when (as was generally believed) Christ would almost immediately appear to put an end to the existing dispensation? Out of what was written much, as we know, has perished, including even documents of Apostolic origin (Luke i. 1, 2; 1 Cor. v. 9; 3 John 9). Therefore, much as we lament the scantiness of the evidence that has come down to us, there is nothing surprising about it. The marvel is, not that so little contemporary history has reached us, but that so much has done so. And what it behoves us to do is to make a sober use of such testimony as we possess.

We shall be doing no more than drawing a reasonable conclusion from the passage before us if we infer that what St. Paul enjoins Timothy to do at Ephesus was done in many other Churches also, partly in consequence of this Apostolic injunction, and partly because what

he enjoins would be suggested in many cases by necessity and common sense. This inference is confirmed by the fact that it is precisely to the continuity of doctrine secured by a regular succession of authorised and official teachers in the different Churches that appeal is continually made by some of the earliest Christian writers whose works have come down to us. Thus Hegesippus (*cir.* A. D. 170) gives as the result of careful personal investigations at Corinth, Rome, and elsewhere, "But in every succession (of bishops) and in every city there prevails just what the Law and the Prophets and the Lord proclaim" (Eus., "H. E.," IV. xxii. 3). Irenæus, in his great work against heresies, which was completed about A. D. 185, says, "We can enumerate those who were appointed bishops by the Apostles themselves in the different Churches, and their successors down to our own day; and they neither taught nor acknowledged any such stuff as is raved by these men. . . . But since it would be a long business in a work of this kind to enumerate the successions in all the Churches," he selects as a primary example that of "the very great and ancient Church, well known to all men, founded and established by the two most glorious Apostles Peter and Paul." After giving the succession of Roman bishops from Linus to Eleutherus, he glances at Smyrna, presided over by St. John's disciple, Polycarp, whose letter to the Philippian Church shows what he believed, and at Ephesus, founded as a Church by St. Paul and presided over by St. John, until the times of Trajan (III. iii. 1-3). Again he says that, although there may be different opinions respecting single passages of Scripture, yet there can be none as to the sum total of its contents, viz., "that which the Apostles have deposited in the Church as the fulness of truth, and which has been preserved in the Church by the succession of bishops." And again, still more definitely, "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples the belief in one God, Father Almighty, etc. . . . Having received this preaching and this belief, the Church, as we said before, although dispersed about the whole world, carefully guards it, as if dwelling in one house; and she believes these things, as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart, and with perfect concord she preaches them and teaches them and hands them down, as if she possessed but one mouth. For although the languages up and down the world are different, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For neither the Churches which are established in Germany believe anything different or hand down anything different, nor in Spain, nor in Gaul, nor throughout the East, nor in Egypt, nor in Libya, nor those established about the central regions of the earth. . . . And neither will he who is very mighty in word among those who preside in the Churches utter different [doctrines] from these (for no one is above the Master), nor will he who is weak in speaking lessen the tradition" (I. x. 1, 2). Clement of Alexandria (*cir.* A. D. 200) tells us that he had studied in Greece, Italy, and the East, under teachers from Ionia, Cœlesyria, Assyria, and Palestine; and he writes of his teachers thus: "These men, preserving the true tradition of the blessed teaching directly from Peter and James, from John and Paul, the holy Apostles, son receiving it from father (but few are they who are like their fathers), came by God's providence even to us, to deposit among us those seeds which are ancestral and apostolic" ("Strom.," I. p. 322, ed. Potter). Tertullian in like manner appeals to the unbroken tradition, reaching back to the Apostles, in a variety of Churches: "Run over the Apostolic Churches, in which the very chairs of the Apostles still preside in their places, in which their own authentic writings are read, uttering the voice and representing the face of each of them;" and he mentions in particular Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, and Rome. "Is it likely that Churches of such number and weight should have strayed into one and the same faith?" ("De Præs. Hær.," xxviii., xxxvi.).

This evidence is quite sufficient to prove that what St. Paul charged Timothy to do at Ephesus was done not only there, but at all the chief centres of the Christian Church: viz., that everywhere great care was taken to provide continuity of authoritative teaching respecting the articles of the faith. It indicates also that as a rule the bishop in each place was regarded as the custodian of the deposit, who was to be chiefly responsible for its preservation. But the precise method or methods (for there was probably different machinery in different places) by which this was accomplished, cannot now be ascertained. It is not until near the end of the second century that we begin to get anything like precise information as to the way in which Christian instruction was given, whether to believers or heathen, in one or two of the principal centres of Christendom; *e. g.*, Alexandria, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem.

St. Paul himself had ruled that a bishop must be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. iii. 2; comp. Tit. i. 9); and although we have no reason to suppose that as a rule the bishop was the only or even the chief instructor, yet he probably selected the teachers, as Timothy is directed to do here. In the great Catechetical School of Alexandria the appointment of what we should now call the Rector or senior professor was in the hands of the bishop. And, as we might expect, bishops selected clergy for this most important office. It forms one of the many contrasts between primitive Christianity and heathenism, that Christians did, and pagans did not, regard it as one of the functions of the priesthood to give instruction in the traditional faith. The heathen clergy, if consulted, would give information respecting the due performance of rites and ceremonies, and the import of omens and dreams; but of their giving systematic teaching as to what was to be believed respecting the gods, there is no trace.

It is more than probable that a great deal of the instruction both to candidates for baptism and candidates for the ministry was from very early times reduced to something like a formula; even before the dangers of corruption arising from Gnosticism rendered this necessary, we may believe that it took place. We know that the Gospel history was in the first instance taught orally; and the oral instruction very soon fell into something that approached to a stereotyped form. This would probably be the case with regard to statements of the essentials of the Christian faith. In Ignatius ("Philad.," viii.), Justin Martyr ("Apol.," I. 61, 66), and

in Irenæus ("Hær.," I. x. 1) we can trace what may well have been formulas in common use. But it is not until the middle of the fourth century that we get a complete example of the systematic instruction given by a Christian teacher, in the Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, delivered, however, before his episcopate.

But what is certain respecting the earliest ages of the Church is this; that in every Church regular instruction in the faith was given by persons in authority specially selected for this work, and that frequent intercourse between the Churches showed that the substance of the instruction given was in all cases the same, whether the form of words was identical or not. These facts, which do not by any means stand alone, are conclusive against the hypothesis that between the Crucifixion and the middle of the second century a complete revolution in the creed was effected; and that the traditional belief of Christians is not that which Jesus of Nazareth taught, but a perversion of it which owes its origin mainly to the overwhelming influence of His professed follower, but virtual supplanter, Saul of Tarsus.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE AS MILITARY SERVICE; AS AN ATHLETIC CONTEST; AS HUSBANDRY.

2 Timothy ii. 3-7.

St. Paul represents the Christian life and the Christian ministry under a variety of figures. Sometimes as husbandry; as when he tells the Galatians that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" and that "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. vi. 7, 9); or when he reminds the Corinthians that "he that plougheth ought to plough in hope, and he that thresheth, to thresh in hope of partaking" (1 Cor. ix. 10). Sometimes as an athletic contest; as when he tells the Corinthians that "every man who striveth in the games is temperate in all things" (1 Cor. ix. 25); or the Ephesians that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. vi. 12). Sometimes, and most frequently, as military service; as when he charges the Thessalonians to "put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. v. 8); or when he writes to the Philippians of Epaphroditus as his "fellow-soldier" (Phil. ii. 25).

In the passage before us he makes use of all three figures: but the one of which he seems to have been most fond is the one which he places first,—that of military service. "Suffer hardships with me," or "take thy share in suffering, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier." He had used the same kind of language in the First Epistle, urging Timothy to "war the good warfare" and to "fight the good fight of faith" (i. 18; vi. 12). Every Christian, and especially every Christian minister, may be regarded as a soldier, as an athlete, as a husbandman; but of the three similitudes the one which fits him best is that of a soldier.

Even if this were not so, St. Paul's fondness for the metaphor would be very intelligible.

1. Military service was very familiar to him, especially in his imprisonments. He had been arrested by soldiers at Jerusalem, escorted by troops to Cæsarea, sent under the charge of a centurion and a band of soldiers to Rome, and had been kept there under military surveillance for many months in the first Roman imprisonment, and for we know not how long in the second. And we may assume it as almost certain that the place of his imprisonment was near the prætorian camp. This would probably be so ordered for the convenience of the soldiers who had charge of him. He therefore had very large opportunities of observing very closely all the details of ordinary military life. He must frequently have seen soldiers under drill, on parade, on guard, on the march; must have watched them cleaning, mending, and sharpening their weapons; putting their armour on, putting it off. Often during hours of enforced inactivity he must have compared these details with the details of the Christian life, and noticed how admirably they corresponded with one another.

2. Military service was not only very familiar to himself; it was also quite sufficiently familiar to those whom he addressed. Roman troops were everywhere to be seen throughout the length and breadth of the Empire, and nearly every member of society knew something of the kind of life which a soldier of the Empire had to lead.

3. The Roman army was the one great organisation of which it was still possible, in that age of boundless social corruption, to think and speak with right-minded admiration and respect. No doubt it was often the instrument of wholesale cruelties as it pushed forward its conquests, or strengthened its hold, over resisting or rebelling nations. But it promoted discipline and *esprit de corps*. Even during active warfare it checked individual license; and when the conquest was over it was the representative and mainstay of order and justice against high-handed anarchy and wrong. Its officers several times appear in the narrative portions of the New Testament, and they make a favourable impression upon us. If they are fair specimens of the military men in the Roman Empire at that period, then the Roman army must have been indeed a fine service. There is the centurion whose faith excited even Christ's admiration; the centurion who confessed Christ's righteousness and Divine origin at the crucifixion; Cornelius, of the Italian cohort, to whom St. Peter was sent; C. Lysias, the chief captain or tribune who rescued St. Paul, first from the mob, and then from the conspiracy to assassinate him; and Julius, who out of consideration for St. Paul prevented the soldiers from killing the prisoners in the shipwreck.

But the reasons for the Apostle's preference for this similitude go deeper than all this.

4. Military service involves self-sacrifice, endurance, discipline, vigilance, obedience, ready co-operation with others, sympathy, enthusiasm, loyalty. Tertullian in his "Address to Martyrs" draws with characteristic incisiveness the

stern parallel between the severity of the soldier's life and that of the Christian. "Be it so, that even to Christians a prison is distasteful. We were called to active service under the Living God from the very moment of our response to the baptismal formula. No soldier comes to the war surrounded by luxuries, nor goes into action from a comfortable bedroom, but from the make-shift and narrow tent, where every kind of hardness and severity and unpleasantness is to be found. Even in peace soldiers learn betimes to suffer warfare by toil and discomforts, by marching in arms, running over the drill-ground, working at trench-making, constructing the tortoise till the sweat runs again. In the sweat of the brow all things are done, lest body and mind should shrink at changes from shade to sunshine, and from sunshine to frost, from the dress of ease to the coat of mail, from stillness to shouting, from quiet to the din of war. In like manner do ye, O blessed ones, account whatever is hard in this your lot as discipline of the powers of your mind and body. Ye are about to enter for the good fight, in which the Living God gives the prizes, and the Holy Spirit prepares the combatants, and the crown is the eternal prize of an angel's nature, citizenship in heaven, glory for ever and ever. Therefore your trainer, Jesus Christ, Who has anointed you with the Spirit and led you forth to this arena, has seen good to separate you from a state of freedom for rougher treatment, that power may be made strong in you. For the athletes also are set apart for stricter discipline, that they may have time to build up their strength. They are kept from luxury, from daintier meats, from too pleasant drink; they are driven, tormented, distressed. The harder their labours in training, the greater their hopes of victory. And they do it, says the Apostle, that they may obtain a corruptible crown. We, with an eternal crown to obtain, look upon the prison as our training-ground, that we may be led to the arena of the judgment-seat well disciplined by every kind of discomfort: because virtue is built up by hardness, but by softness is overthrown" ("Ad Mart.," iii.). It will be observed that Tertullian passes by an easy transition from training for military service to training for athletic contests. The whole passage is little more than a graphic amplification of what St. Paul writes to Timothy.

5. But military service implies, what athletic contests do not, vigilant, unwearying, and organised opposition to a vigilant, unwearying, and organised foe. In many athletic contests one's opponent is a rival rather than an enemy. He may defeat us; but he inflicts no injury. He may win the prizes; but he takes nothing of ours. And even in the more deadly conflicts of the amphitheatre the enemy is very different from an enemy in war. The combat is between individuals, not armies; it is the exception and not the rule; it is strictly limited in time and place, not for all times and all places; it is a duel and not a campaign,—still less a prolonged war. Military service is either perpetual warfare or perpetual preparation for it. And just such is the Christian life: it is either a conflict, or a preparation for one. The soldier, so long as he remains in the service, can never say, "I may lay aside my arms and my drill: all enemies are conquered; there will never be another war." And the Christian, so long as he remains in this world, can never think that he may cease to watch and to pray, because the victory is won, and he will never be tempted any more. It is for this reason that he cannot allow himself to be "entangled in the affairs of this life." The soldier on service avoids this error: he knows that it would interfere with his promotion. The Christian must avoid it at least as carefully; for he is always on service, and the loss of promotion is the loss of eternal life.

Observe that St. Paul does not suggest that Christians should keep aloof from the affairs of this life, which would be a flat contradiction of what he teaches elsewhere. The Christian is to "do his own business, and to work with his hands, that he may walk honestly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing" (1 Thess. iv. 11, 12). He has a duty to perform "in the affairs of this life," but in doing it he is not to be entangled in them. They are means, not ends; and must be made to help him on, not suffered to keep him back. If they become entanglements instead of opportunities, he will soon lose that state of constant preparation and alertness, which is the indispensable condition of success.

The same thought is brought out in the second metaphor by the word "lawfully." The athlete who competes in the games does not receive a crown, unless he has contended lawfully, *i. e.*, according to rule (*νομίμως*, *νόμος*). Even if he seems to be victorious, he nevertheless is not crowned, because he has violated the well-known conditions. And what is the rule, what are the conditions of the Christian's contest? "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." If we wish to share Christ's victory, we must be ready to share His suffering. No cross, no crown. To try to withdraw oneself from all hardship and annoyance, to attempt to avoid all that is painful or disagreeable, is a violation of the rules of the arena. This, it would appear, Timothy was in some respects tempted to do; and timidity and despondency must not be allowed to get the upper hand. Not that what is painful, or distasteful, or unpopular, is necessarily right; but it is certainly not necessarily wrong: and to try to avoid everything that one dislikes is to ensure being fatally wrong. So that, as Chrysostom says, "it behoves thee not to complain, if thou endurest hardness; but to complain, if thou dost not endure hardness."

Chrysostom and some modern commentators make the striving lawfully include not only the observance of the rules of the contest, but the previous training and preparation. "What is meant by lawfully? It is not enough that he is anointed, and even engages, unless he complies with all the regulations of training with respect to diet, temperance, and sobriety, and all the rules of the wrestling-school. Unless, in short, he go through all that is befitting a wrestler, he is not crowned." This makes good sense, if "is not crowned" be interpreted to mean "is not likely to be first," rather than "does not receive the crown, even if he is first." A victorious athlete is rightly deprived of the reward, if he has violated the conditions of the contest: but no one ever yet heard of a victor being refused the prize because he had not trained properly. Moreover, there are enough examples to show that "lawfully" (*νομίμως*)

does sometimes include the training as well as the contest.

But this does not seem to be St. Paul's meaning. In the first similitude he takes no account of the time which precedes the soldier's service, during which he may be supposed to be preparing himself for it. The Christian's life and the soldier's service are regarded as co-extensive, and there is no thought of any previous period. So also in the second similitude. The Christian's life and the athlete's contest are regarded as co-extensive, and no account is taken of anything that may have preceded. Baptism is entering the lists, not entering the training-school; and the only rules under consideration are the rules of the arena.

No doubt there are analogies between the training-school and Christian discipline, and St. Paul sometimes makes use of them (1 Cor. ix. 25, 27); but they do not seem to be included in the present metaphor.

But it is about the third similitude that there has been most discussion. "The husbandman that laboureth must be the first to partake of the fruits:" not, as the A. V., "must be first partaker of the fruits;" which seems to imply that he must partake of the fruits before he labours. What is the meaning of "first"? Some commentators resort to the rather desperate hypothesis that this word is misplaced, as it sometimes is in careless writing and conversation: and they suppose that what St. Paul means is, that "the husbandman, who labours first, must then partake of the fruits," or, more clearly, "the husbandman, who wishes to partake of the fruits, must first of all labour." The margin of the A. V. suggests a similar translation. But this is to credit the Apostle with great clumsiness of expression. And even if this transposition of the "first" could be accepted as probable, there still remains the fact that we have the present and not the aorist participle (κοπιῶντα and not κοπιάσαντα). Had St. Paul meant what is supposed, he would have said "The husbandman who has first laboured," not "who labour first." But there is no transposition of the "first." The order of the Greek shows that the emphatic word is "labours." "It is the labouring husbandman who must be the first to partake of the fruits." It is the man who works hard and with a will, and not the one who works listlessly or looks despondently on, who, according to all moral fitness and the nature of things, ought to have the first share in the fruits. This interpretation does justice to the Greek as it stands, without resorting to any manipulation of the Apostle's language. Moreover, it brings the saying into perfect harmony with the context.

It is quite evident that the three metaphors are parallel to one another and are intended to teach the same lesson. In each of them we have two things placed side by side,—a prize and the method to be observed in obtaining it. Do you, as a Christian soldier on service, wish for the approbation of Him who has enrolled you? Then you must avoid the entanglements which would interfere with your service. Do you, as a Christian athlete, wish for the crown of victory? Then you must not evade the rules of the contest. Do you, as a Christian husbandman, wish to be among the first to enjoy the harvest? Then you must be foremost in toil. And the Apostle draws attention to the importance of the lesson of self-devotion and endurance inculcated under these three impressive figures, by adding, "Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things." That is, He has confidence that His disciple will be enabled to draw the right conclusion from these metaphors; and having done so, will have grace to apply it to his own case.

Timothy is not the only Christian, or the only minister, who is in danger of being disgusted, and disheartened, and dismayed, by the coldness and apathy of professing friends, and by the hostility and contempt of secret or open enemies. We all of us need at times to be reminded that here we have no abiding city, but that our citizenship is in heaven. And we all of us are at times inclined to murmur, because the rest for which we so often yearn is not given us here;—a rest from toil, a rest from temptation, and a rest from sin. Such a sabbath-rest is the prize in store for us; but we cannot have it here. And if we desire to have it hereafter, we must keep the rules of the arena; and the rules are self-control, self-sacrifice, and work.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE POWER OF A BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION AND THE INCARNATION—THE GOSPEL OF ST. PAUL.

2 Timothy ii. 8-10.

These words are a continuation of the same subject. They are additional thoughts supplied to the Apostle's beloved disciple to induce him to take courage and to bear willingly and thankfully whatever difficulties and sufferings the preaching of the gospel in all its fulness may involve. In the three metaphors just preceding, St. Paul has indicated that there is nothing amazing, nothing that ought to cause perplexity or despondency, in the fact that ministers of the word have to encounter much opposition and danger. On the contrary, such things are the very conditions of the situation; they are the very rules of the course. One would have to suspect that there was something seriously amiss, if they did not occur; and without them there would be no chance of reward. Here he goes on to point out that this hardship and suffering is very far from being mere hardship and suffering; it has its bright side and its compensations, even in this life.

Throughout this section it is well worth while to notice the very considerable improvements which the Revisers have made in it. One or two of these have been already noticed; but for convenience some of the principal instances are here collected together.

"Suffer hardship with me," or "Take thy part in suffering hardship," is better than "Thou therefore endure hardship," which, while inserting a spurious "therefore," omits the important intimation that the hardship to which Timothy is invited is one which others are enduring, and which he is called upon, not to bear alone, but to share. "No soldier on service" is better than "No man that warreth," and "if also a man contend in the games" is more definite than the vague "if a man also strive for masteries." The ambiguity of "must

be first partaker of the fruits" is avoided in "must be the first to partake of the fruits." But perhaps none of these corrections are so important as those in the passage now before us. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead, according to my gospel," gives quite a wrong turn to St. Paul's language. It puts the clauses in the wrong order, and gives an erroneous impression as to what is to be remembered. Timothy is charged to "remember Jesus Christ;" and in remembering Him he is to think of Him as one Who is "risen from the dead," and Who is also "of the seed of David." These are central facts of the Gospel which St. Paul has always preached; they have been his support in all his sufferings; and they will be the same support to the disciple as they have been to the master. "Remember Jesus Christ." Every Christian, who has to endure what seem to him to be hardships, will sooner or later fall back upon this remembrance. He is not the first, and not the chief sufferer in the world. There is One Who has undergone hardships, compared with which those of other men sink into nothingness; and Who has expressly told those Who wish to be His disciples, that they must follow Him along the path of suffering. It is specially in this respect that the servant is not above his Lord. And just in proportion as we are true servants will the remembrance of Jesus Christ help us to welcome what He lays upon us as proof that He recognises and accepts our service.

But merely to remember Jesus Christ as a Master Who has suffered, and Who has made suffering a condition of service, will not be a permanently sustaining or comforting thought, if it ends there. Therefore St. Paul says to his perplexed and desponding delegate, "Remember Jesus Christ as one risen from the dead." Jesus Christ has not only endured every kind of suffering, including its extreme form, death, but He has conquered it all by rising again. He is not only the sinless Sufferer, but also the triumphant Victor over death and hell. He has set us an example of heroic endurance in obedience to the will of God; but He has also secured for us that our endurance in imitation of Him shall be crowned with victory. Had Christ's mission ended on Calvary, He would but have given to the world a purified form of Stoicism, a refined "philosophy of suffering;" and His teaching would have failed, as Stoicism failed, because a mere philosophy of suffering is quickly proved by experience to be a "philosophy of despair." Renan remarks with truth that the gospel of Marcus Aurelius fortifies, but does not console: and all teaching is doomed from the outset, which comes to a groaning and travailing humanity without any consolations to bestow. What is the thought which through long centuries has wrung, and is still wringing millions of human hearts with anguish? It is the thought of the existence and not only the existence but the apparent predominance, of evil. Everywhere experience seems to teach us that evil of every kind, physical, intellectual, and moral, holds the field and appears likely to hold it. To allow oneself to be mastered by this thought is to be on the road to doubting God's moral government of the world. What is the antidote to it? "Remember Jesus Christ as one risen from the dead." When has evil ever been so completely triumphant over good as when it succeeded in getting the Prophet of Nazareth nailed to the tree, like some vile and noxious animal? That was the hour of success for the malignant Jewish hierarchy and for the spiritual powers of darkness. But it was an hour to which very strict limits were placed. Very soon He Who had been dismissed to the grave by a cruel and shameful death, defeated and disgraced, rose again from it triumphant, not only over Jewish priests and Roman soldiers, but over death and the cause of death; that is, over every kind of evil—pain, and ignorance, and sin. It was for that very purpose that He laid down His life, that He might take it again: and it was for that reason that His Father loved Him, because He had received the commandment to lay it down and take it again from His Father (John x. 17, 18).

But "to remember Jesus Christ as one risen from the dead" does more than this. It not only shows us that the evil against which we have such a weary struggle in this life, both in others and in ourselves, is not (in spite of depressing appearances) permanently triumphant; it also assures us that there is another and a better life in which the good cause will be supreme, and supreme without the possibility of disaster, or even of contest. We talk in a conventional way of death as the country "from whose bourne no traveller returns:" but we are wrong. We do not mean it so; yet this saying, if pressed, would carry with it a denial of a fact which is better attested than any fact in ancient history. One Traveller has returned; and His return is no extraordinary accident or exceptional and solitary success. It is a representative return and a typical success. What the Son of Man has done, other sons of men can do, and will do. The solidarity between the human race and the Second Adam, between the Church and its Head, is such that the victory of the Leader carries with it the victory of the whole band. The breach made in the gates of death is one through which the whole army of Christ's followers may pass out into eternal life, free from death's power for evermore. This thought is full of comfort and encouragement to those who feel themselves almost overwhelmed by the perplexities, and contradictions, and sorrows of this life. However grievous this life may be, it has this merciful condition attached to it, that it lasts only for a short time; and then the risen Christ leads us into a life which is free from all trouble, and which knows no end. The miseries of this life are lessened by the knowledge that they cannot last long. The blessedness of the life to come is perfected by the fact that it is eternal.

Once more, to "remember Jesus Christ as one risen from the dead," is to remember One Who claimed to be the promised Saviour of the world, and Who proved His claim. By its countless needs, by many centuries of yearning, by its consciousness of failure and of guilt, the whole human race had been led to look forward to the coming of some great Deliverer, Who would rescue mankind from its hopeless descent down the path of sin and retribution, as a possibility. By the express promise of Almighty God, made to the first generation of mankind, and renewed again and again to patriarchs and prophets, the chosen people had been taught to look forward to the coming of a

Saviour as a certainty. And Jesus of Nazareth had claimed to be this longed for and expected Deliverer, the Desire of all nations and the Saviour of the world. "I that speak unto thee am He" (John iv. 26). By His mighty works, and still more by His life-giving words, He had shown that He had Divine credentials in support of His claim: but not until He rose again from the dead was His claim absolutely proved. It was the proof which He Himself volunteered. "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19). "There shall no sign be given but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 39, 40), and then return again to the light of day as Jonah did. He had raised others from the dead; but so had Elijah and Elisha done. That proved no more than that He was a prophet as mighty as they. But no one before Jesus had ever raised Himself. If His Messiahship was doubtful before, all doubt vanished on Easter morning.

And this leads St. Paul on to the second point which his downcast disciple is to remember in connection with Jesus Christ. He is to remember Him as "of the seed of David." He is not only truly God, but truly man. He was risen from the dead, and yet He was born of flesh and blood, and born of that royal line of which Timothy, who "from a babe had known the sacred writings," had many times heard and read. The Resurrection and the Incarnation;—those are the two facts on which a faltering minister of the Gospel is to hold fast, in order to comfort his heart and strengthen his steps.

It is worth noting that St. Paul places the Resurrection before the Incarnation, a fact which is quite lost in the transposed order of the A. V. St. Paul's order, which at first sight seems to be illogical, was the usual order of the Apostles' preaching. They began, not with the miraculous birth of Christ, but with His resurrection. They proved by abundant testimony that Jesus had risen from the dead, and thence argued that He must have been more than man. They did not preach His birth of a virgin, and thence argue that He was Divine. How was His miraculous birth to be proved, to those who were unwilling to accept His Mother's word for it? But thousands of people had seen Him dead upon the Cross, and hundreds had seen Him alive again afterwards. No matter of fact was more securely established for all those who cared to investigate the evidence. With the Resurrection proved, the foundations of the faith were laid. The Incarnation followed easily after this, especially when combined with the descent from David, a fact which helped to prove His Messiahship. Let Timothy boldly and patiently preach these great truths in all their grand simplicity, and they will bring comfort and strength to him in his distress and difficulty, as they have done to the Apostle.

This is the meaning of "according to my gospel." These are the truths which St. Paul has habitually preached, and of the value of which he can speak from full experience. He knows what he is talking about, when he affirms that these things are worth remembering when one is in trouble. The Resurrection and the Incarnation are facts on which he has ceaselessly insisted, because in the wear and tear of life he has found out their worth.

There is no emphasis on the "my," as the Greek shows. An enclitic cannot be emphatic. The Apostle is not contrasting his Gospel with that of other preachers, as if he would say, "Others may teach what they please, but this is the substance of *my* Gospel." And Jerome is certainly mistaken, if what is quoted as a remark of his is rightly assigned to him by Fabricius, to the effect that whenever St. Paul says "according to my Gospel" he means the written Gospel of his companion St. Luke, who had caught much of his spirit and something of his language. It would be much nearer the truth to say that St. Paul never refers to a written Gospel. In every one of the passages in which the phrase occurs the context is quite against any such interpretation (Rom. ii. 16; xvi. 25; *cf.* 1 Tim. i. 11). In this place the words which follow are conclusive: "Wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor." How could he be said to suffer hardship unto bonds in the Gospel of St. Luke?

A word of protest may be added against the strange and impossible theory that the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles were written by St. Paul himself. If there is one thing which is certain with regard to the authorship of the Books of the New Testament, it is that the Acts was written by a companion of St. Paul. Even destructive critics who spare little else, admit this of portions of the Acts; and the Book must be accepted or rejected as a whole. Moreover, it is admitted by both defenders and assailants that the writer of the Acts did not know the Epistle to the Galatians; and it is highly probable that when he wrote he had not seen the Epistles to the Romans and to the Corinthians. How then can he have been St. Paul? And why should the Apostle write sometimes in the third person of what *Paul* said and did, and sometimes in the first person of what *we* did? All this is quite natural, if the writer is a companion of the Apostle, who was sometimes with him and sometimes not; it is most extraordinary if the Apostle himself is the writer. And of course if the Acts is not by St. Paul, the third Gospel cannot be; for it is impossible to assign them to different writers. Moreover, not to mention other difficulties, it may be doubted whether, more than two years (Acts xxviii. 30) before the death of St. Paul, there would have been time for "many" to "have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us" (Luke i. 1), and then for him to have collected material for the third Gospel and to have written it, and then, after an interval, for him to have written the Acts. All the arguments in favour of the Pauline authorship of the third Gospel and of the Acts are satisfied by the almost universally accepted view, that these two works were written by a companion of the Apostle, who was thoroughly familiar with his modes of thought and expression.

The preaching of this Gospel of the Resurrection and the Incarnation had caused the Apostle (as he here tells us) to suffer much evil, as if he had done much evil, even to the extent of a grievous imprisonment. He is bound as a malefactor; but his Gospel "is not bound," because it is "the word of God." He perhaps changes the expression from "my Gospel" to

"the word of God" in order to indicate why it is that, although the preacher is in prison, yet his Gospel is free;—because the word which he preaches is not his own, but God's.

"The word of God is not bound." The Apostle is imprisoned; but his tongue and his companion's pen are free. He can still teach those who come to him; can still dictate letters for others to Luke and the faithful few who visit him. He can still, as in his first Roman imprisonment, see that what has befallen him may "have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that his bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest" (Phil. i. 12, 13). He has been able to influence those whom, but for his imprisonment, he would never have had an opportunity of reaching,—Roman soldiers, and warders, and officials, and all who have to take cognisance of his trial before the imperial tribunal.

"The word of God is not bound." While he is in prison, Timothy, and Titus, and scores of other evangelists and preachers, are free. Their action is not hampered because a colleague is shut up. The loss of him might have a depressing and discouraging effect on some; but this ought not to be so, and he hopes will not be so. Those who are left at large ought to labour all the more energetically and enthusiastically, in order to supply whatever is lost by the Apostle's want of freedom, and in order to convince the world that this is no contest with a human organisation or with human opinion, but with a Divine word and a Divine Person.

"The word of God is not bound," because His word is the truth, and it is the truth that makes men free. How can that of which the very essence is freedom, and of which the attribute is that it confers freedom, be itself kept in bondage? Truth is freer than air and more incompressible than water. And just as men must have air and must have water, and you cannot keep them long from either; so you cannot long keep them from the truth or the truth from them. You may dilute it, or obscure it, or retard it, but you cannot bury it or shut it up. Laws which are of Divine origin will surely and irresistibly assert themselves, and truth and the mind of man will meet.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE NEED OF A SOLEMN CHARGE AGAINST A CONTROVERSAL SPIRIT, OF DILIGENCE FREE FROM SHAME, AND OF A HATRED OF THE PROFANITY WHICH WRAPS UP ERROR IN THE LANGUAGE OF TRUTH.

2 Timothy ii. 14-18.

We here enter upon a new section of the Epistle, which continues down to the end of the chapter. It consists in the main of directions as to Timothy's own behaviour in the responsible post in which he has been placed. And these are both positive and negative; he is told what to aim at, and what to avoid.

As to the meaning of "these things," of which he is to put his flock in remembrance, it seems most natural to refer the expression to the "faithful saying" with which the previous section closes. He is to remind others (and thereby strengthen his own courage and faith), that to die for Christ is to live with Him, and to suffer for Christ is to reign with Him, while to deny Him is to involve His denying us; for, however faithless we may be, He must abide by what He has promised both of rewards and punishments. The fact that the Apostle uses the expression "put them in remembrance," implying that they already know it, is some confirmation of the view that the "faithful saying" is a formula that was often recited in the congregation; a view which the rhythmical character of the passage renders somewhat probable.

Having reminded them of what they already know well, Timothy is to "charge them in the sight of the Lord, that they strive not about words." This phrase "charge them in the sight of the Lord" is worthy of notice. The Apostle twice uses it in addressing Timothy himself. "I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice" (1 Tim. v. 21); and "I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, Who shall judge the quick and dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word" (2 Tim. iv. 1). The word for "charge" (*διαμαρτύθεσθαι*) indicates the interposition (*διά*) of two parties, and hence comes to mean to "call heaven and earth to witness;" in other words, to "testify solemnly" or "adjure;" and from this latter meaning it easily becomes employed for a solemn charge or exhortation. In translating, it would be quite legitimate to insert an adverb to express this: "solemnly charging them in the sight of God." In dealing with these pestilent disputes and perilous opinions Timothy, both for his own sake and for that of his hearers, is to remember, and to remind them, in Whose presence he is speaking. God's eye is upon both preacher and congregation; and in pleading the cause of truth and sobriety the preacher is in fact pleading before the Divine tribunal. This will make the teacher wary in his words, and will lead his hearers to listen to them in a spirit of sobriety.

It has been debated whether St. Paul has in his mind those "faithful men" to whom Timothy is to commit the substance of the Apostle's teaching (ver. 2), or whether he is not now taking a wider view and including the whole of the disciples' flock. It is impossible to determine this with certainty; and it is not a question of much moment. One thing is clear; viz., that the whole section is applicable to ministers throughout the Church in all ages; and the words under consideration seem to be well worthy of attention at the present time, when so many unworthy topics and so much unworthy language may be heard from the pulpit. One is inclined to think that if ministers always remembered that they were speaking "in the sight of God," they would sometimes find other things to say, and other ways of saying them. We talk glibly enough of another man's words and opinions, when he is not present. We may be entirely free from the smallest wish to misrepresent or exaggerate; but at the same time we speak with great freedom and almost without restraint. What a change comes over us, if, in the midst of our glib recital of his views and sayings, the man himself enters

the room! At once we begin to measure our words and to speak with more caution. Our tone becomes less positive, and we have less confidence that we are justified in making sweeping statements on the subject. Ought not something of this circumspection and diffidence to be felt by those who take the responsibility of telling others about the mind of God? And if they remembered constantly that they speak "in the sight of the Lord," this attitude of solemn circumspection would become habitual.

"That they strive not about words." The spirit of controversy is a bad thing in itself; but the evil is intensified when the subject of controversy is a question of words. Controversy is necessary; but it is a necessary evil: and that man has need of searchings of heart who finds that he enjoys it, and sometimes even provokes it, when it might easily have been avoided. But a fondness for strife about words is one of the lowest forms which the malady can take. Principles are things worth striving about, when opposition to what we know to be right and true is unavoidable. But disputatiousness about words is something like proof that love of self has taken the place of love of truth. The word-splitter wrangles, not for the sake of arriving at the truth, but for the sake of a dialectical victory. He cares little as to what is right or wrong, so long as he comes off triumphant in the argument. Hence the Apostle said in the first Epistle that the natural fruit of these disputes about words is "envy, strife, and railings" (vi. 4). They are an exhibition of dexterity in which the object of the disputants is not to investigate, but to baffle, not to enlighten, but to perplex. And here he says that they are worse than worthless. They tend "to no profit:" on the contrary they tend "to the subverting of those who listen to them." This subversion or overthrow (*καταστροφή*) is the exact opposite of what ought to be the result of Christian discussion, viz., edification or building up (*οἰκοδομή*). The audience, instead of being built up in faith and principle, find themselves bewildered and lowered. They have a less firm grasp of truth and a less loyal affection for it. It is as if some beautiful object, which they were learning to understand and admire, had been scored all over with marks by those who had been disputing as to the meaning and relation of the details. It has been a favourite device of the heretics and sceptics of all ages to endeavour to provoke a discussion on points about which they hope to place an opponent in a difficulty. Their object is not to settle, but to unsettle; not to clear up doubts, but to create them: and hence we find Bishop Butler in his Durham Charge recommending his clergy to avoid religious discussions in general conversation, because the clever propounder of difficulties will find ready hearers, while the patient answerer of them will not do so. To dispute is to place truth at an unnecessary disadvantage.

"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." In the previous section St. Paul exhorted Timothy to be ready to suffer for Christ: here he charges him to work for Him; and in the language which he uses he indicates that such work is a serious matter;—"Give diligence." The word which he uses (*σπουδάζειν*) is one which scarcely occurs in the New Testament except in the writings of St. Paul. And the corresponding substance (*σπουδή*) is also much more common in his Epistles than it is elsewhere. It indicates that ceaseless, serious, earnest zeal, which was one of his chief characteristics. And certainly if the proposed standard is to be reached, or even seriously aimed at, abundance of this zeal will be required. For the end proposed is not the admiration or affection of the congregation, or of one's superiors, nor yet success in influencing and winning souls; but that of presenting oneself to God in such a way as to secure His approval, without fear of incurring the reproach of being a workman who has shirked or scamped his work. The Apostle's charge is a most wholesome one: and if it is acted upon, it secures diligence without fussiness, and enthusiasm without fanaticism. The being "approved" (*δόκιμος*) implies being tried and proved as precious metals are proved before they are accepted (*δέχομαι*) as genuine. It is the word used of the "pure gold" with which Solomon overlaid his ivory throne (2 Chron. ix. 17). In the New Testament it is always used of persons, and with one exception (James i. 12) it is used by no one but St. Paul. He uses it of being approved both of men (Rom. xiv. 18) and of God (2 Cor. x. 18).

The single word which represents "that needeth not to be ashamed" (*ἀνεπαίσχυντος*) is a rare formation, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its precise meaning is not quite certain. The more simple and frequent form (*ἀναίσχυντος*) means "shameless," *i. e.*, one who does not feel ashamed when he ought to do so. Such a meaning, if taken literally, would be utterly unsuitable here. And we then have choice of two interpretations, either (1) that which is adopted in both A. V. and R. V., who need not feel shame, because his work will bear examination, or (2) who does not feel shame, although his work is of a kind which the world holds in contempt. The latter is the interpretation which Chrysostom adopts, and there is much to be said in its favour. Three times already in this letter has the Apostle spoken of not being ashamed of the Gospel. He says "Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner." Again, "I suffer these things; yet I am not ashamed." And again of Onesiphorus, "He oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain" (i. 8, 12, 16). Does he not, therefore, mean here also, "Present thyself to God as a workman who is not ashamed of being in His service and of doing whatever work may be assigned to him"? This brings us very close to what would be the natural meaning of the word, according to the analogy of the simpler form. "If you are to work for God," says Paul, "you must be in a certain sense shameless. There are some men who set public opinion at defiance, in order that they may follow their own depraved desires. The Christian minister must be prepared sometimes to set public opinion at defiance, in order that he may follow the commands of God." The *vox populi*, even when taken in its most comprehensive sense, is anything but an infallible guide. Public opinion is nearly always against the worst forms of selfishness, dishonesty, and sensuality; and to set it at defiance in such matters is to be "shameless" in the worst sense. But sometimes public opinion

is very decidedly against some of the noblest types of holiness; and to be "shameless" under such circumstances is a necessary qualification for doing one's duty. It is by no means certain that this is not St. Paul's meaning. If we translate, "A workman that feeleth no shame," we shall have a phrase that would cover either interpretation.

"Handling aright the word of truth," or "Rightly dividing the word of truth." There is some doubt here also as to the explanation of the word rendered "handling aright" or "rightly dividing" (ὀρθοτομεῖν). Once more we have a word which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Its radical meaning is to "cut aright" or "cut straight," especially of driving a straight road through a district, or a straight furrow across a field. In the LXX. it is twice used of making straight or directing a person's path. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths;" and "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way" (Prov. iii. 6; xi. 5). The idea of rightness seems to be the dominant one; that of cutting quite secondary; so that the Revisers are quite justified in following the example of the Vulgate (*recte tractantem*), and translating simply "rightly handling." But this right handling may be understood as consisting in seeing that the word of truth moves in the right direction and progresses in the congregation by a legitimate development. The word, therefore, excludes all fanciful and perilous deviations and evasions, such as those in which the false teachers indulged, and all those "strivings about words," which distract men's minds and divert them from the substance of the Gospel. It may be doubted whether the word contains any idea of distribution, as that the word of truth is to be preached according to the capacity of the hearers,—strong meat to the strong, and milk to those who are still but babes in the faith. We may feel sure that the expression has nothing to do with the cutting up of victims in sacrifices, or with cutting straight to the heart of a thing, as if the word of truth had a kernel which must be reached by cleaving it down the middle. Yet both these explanations have been suggested. Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius use the substantive derived from St. Paul's verb (ὀρθοτομία) in the sense of orthodoxy; which seems to imply that they understood the verb in the sense of handling aright ("Strom.," VII. xvi.; "H. E.," IV. iii.).

Once more (1 Tim. vi. 20) the Apostle warns his disciple against "profane babblings." He is (according to St. Paul's graphic word) to make a circuit in order to avoid such things to "give them a wide berth" (περιΐστασο; comp. Tit. iii. 9). These empty profanities, with their philosophic pretentiousness, had done much harm already, and would do still more; for the men who propagate them would certainly go still greater lengths in impiety; and they must receive no encouragement. Their teaching is of a kind that will spread rapidly, and it is deadly in its effects. It "will eat as doth a gangrene."

The substitution of "gangrene" for "cancer" is an improvement, as giving the exact word used in the original, which expresses the meaning more forcibly than "cancer." Cancer is sometimes very slow in its ravages, and may go on for years without causing serious harm. Gangrene poisons the whole frame and quickly becomes fatal. The Apostle foresees that doctrines, which really ate out the very heart of Christianity, were likely to become very popular in Ephesus and would do incalculable mischief. The nature of these doctrines we gather from what follows. They are preached by the kind of people (οἵτινες) who miss their aim as regards the truth. They profess to be aiming at the truth, but they go very wide of the mark. For instance, some of them say that it is quite a mistake to look forward to a resurrection of the body, or indeed to any resurrection at all. The only real resurrection has taken place already and cannot be repeated. It is that intellectual and spiritual process which is involved in rising from degrading ignorance to a recognition and acceptance of the truth. What is commonly called death, viz., the separation of soul and body, is not really death at all. Death in the true sense of the word means ignorance of God and of Divine things; to be buried is to be buried in error. Consequently the true resurrection is to be reanimated by the truth and to escape from the sepulchre of spiritual darkness; and this process is accomplished once for all in every enlightened soul. We learn from the writings of Irenæus ("Hær.," II. xxxi. 2) and of Tertullian ("De Res. Carn.," xix.) that this form of error was in existence in their day: and Augustine in a letter to Januarius (lv. iii. 4) shows how such false notions might have grown out of St. Paul's own teaching. The Apostle insisted so frequently upon the fact of our being dead with Christ and raised together with Him, that some persons jumped to the conclusion that this was the whole of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. The resurrection of the body was a great stumbling-block to Greeks and Orientals, with their low notions of the dignity of the human body; and therefore any interpretation of the resurrection which got rid of the difficulty of supposing that in the world to come also men would have bodies, was welcome. It was calamity enough to be burdened with a body in this life: it was appalling to think of such a condition being continued in eternity. Hence the obnoxious doctrine was explained away and resolved into allegory and metaphor.

Of Hymenæus and Philetus nothing further is known. Hymenæus is probably the same person as is mentioned in the first Epistle with Alexander, as having made shipwreck of the faith, and been delivered unto Satan by the Apostle, to cure him of his blasphemies. We are told here that much mischief had been done by such teaching: for a number of persons had been seduced from the faith. "Some," in the English phrase "overthrow the faith of some," conveys an impression, which is not contained in the Greek (τινων), that the number of those who were led astray was small. The Greek indicates neither a large nor a small number; but what is told us leads to the conclusion that the number was not small. It is probably to this kind of teaching that St. John alludes, when he writes some twenty or more years later than this, and says, "Even now there have arisen many antichrists" (1 John ii. 18). Teaching of this kind was only too likely to be popular in Ephesus.

It is by no means unknown among ourselves. At the present time also there is a tendency to retain the old Christian terms and to deprive

them of all Christian meaning. Not only such words as "miracle," "Church," "catholic," and "sacrament" are evaporated and etherealised, until they lose all definite meaning; but even such fundamental terms as "atonement," "redemption," and "immortality." Nay, it is quite possible to find even the word "God" used to express a Being which is neither personal nor conscious. And thus language, which has been consecrated to the service of religion for a long series of centuries, is degraded to the unworthy purpose of insinuating pantheism and agnosticism. This perversion of well-established phraseology is to be condemned on purely literary grounds: and on moral grounds it may be stigmatised as dishonest. If Hymenæus and Philetus wish to deny the resurrection, let them also surrender the word which expresses it. They have abundance of words wherewith to express mental and moral enlightenment. Let them not so handle a word of truth as to make it suggest a lie.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAST DAYS—THE BEARING OF THE MENTION OF JANNES AND JAMBRES ON THE QUESTION OF INSPIRATION AND THE ERRORS CURRENT IN EPHESUS.

2 Timothy iii. 1, 2, 8.

In the first chapter the Apostle looks back over the past; in the second he gives directions about the present; in the third he looks forward into the future. These divisions are not observed with rigidity throughout, but they hold good to a very considerable extent. Thus in the first division he remembers Timothy's affectionate grief at parting, his faith and that of his family, and the spiritual gift conferred on him at his ordination. And respecting himself he remembers his teaching Timothy, his being deserted by those in Asia, his being ministered to by Onesiphorus. In the second chapter he charges Timothy to be willing to suffer hardships with him, and instructs him how to conduct himself in the manifold difficulties of his present position. And now he goes on to forewarn and forearm him against dangers and troubles which he foresees in the future.

There are several prophecies in the New Testament similar to the one before us. There is that of St. Paul to the Ephesian Church some ten years before, just before his final departure for the bonds and afflictions which awaited him at Jerusalem. "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 29, 30). The Epistles to Timothy show that this prediction was already being fulfilled during the Apostle's lifetime. There is, secondly, the prophecy respecting the great falling away and the revealing of the man of sin, which is somewhat parallel to the one before us (2 Thess. ii. 3-7). Thirdly, there is the similar prediction in the First Epistle to Timothy (iv. 1-3). And besides these three by St. Paul, there are those contained in 2 Peter ii. 1, 2 about the rise of false teachers, and in the First Epistle of St. John (ii. 18 and iv. 3) about the coming of antichrist. Those in 2 Thessalonians and 2 Peter should be compared with the one before us, as containing a mixture of present and future. This mixture has been made the basis of a somewhat frivolous objection. It has been urged that the shifting from future to present and back again indicates the hand of a writer who is contemporary with the events which he pretends to foretell. Sometimes he adopts the form of prophecy and uses the future tense. But at other times the influence of facts is too strong for him. He forgets his assumed part as a prophet, and writes in the present tense of his own experiences. Such an objection credits the feigned prophet with a very small amount of intelligence. Are we seriously to suppose that any one would be so stupid as to be unable to sustain his part for half a dozen verses, or less, without betraying himself? But, in fact, the change of tense indicates nothing of the kind. It is to be explained in some cases by the fact that the germs of the evils predicted were already in existence, in others by the practice (especially common in prophecy) of speaking of what is certain to happen as if it were already a fact. The prophet is often a seer, who sees as present what is distant or future; and hence he naturally uses the present tense, even when he predicts.

The meaning of the "last days" is uncertain. The two most important interpretations are: (1) the whole time between Christ's first and second coming, and (2) the portion immediately before Christ's second coming. Probability is greatly in favour of the latter; for the other makes the expression rather meaningless. If these evils were to come at all, they must come between the two Advents; for there is no other time: and in that case why speak of this period as the "last days"? It might be reasonable to call them "these last days," but not "last days" without such specification. At the present time it would not be natural to speak of an event as likely to happen in the last days, when we meant that it would happen between our own time and the end of the world. The expression used in 1 Tim. iv. 1 very probably does mean no more than "in future times; hereafter" (ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς). But here and in 2 Pet. iii. 3 the meaning rather is "in the last days; when the Lord is at hand." It is then that the enemy will be allowed to put forth all his power, in order to be more completely overthrown. Then indeed there will be perilous, critical, grievous times (καιροὶ χαλεποί). The Apostle treats it as possible, or even probable, that Timothy will live to see the troubles which will mark the eve of Christ's return. The Apostles shared, and contributed to produce, the belief that the Lord would come again soon, within the lifetime of some who were then alive. Even at the close of a long life we find the last surviving Apostle pointing out to the Church that "it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18), obviously meaning by that expression that it is the time immediately preceding the return of Christ to judge the world. And some twenty years later we find Ignatius writing to the Ephesians, "These are the last times (ἔσχατοι καιροί). Henceforth let us be reverent; let us fear the longsuffering of God, lest it turn into a judgment against us. For either let us fear the

wrath which is to come, or let us love the grace which now is" (Eph. xi.). Only by the force of experience was the mind of the Church cleared so as to see the Kingdom of Christ in its true perspective. The warning which Jesus had given, that "of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father," seems to have been understood as meaning no more than the declaration "in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh." That is, it was understood as a warning against being found unprepared, and not as a warning against forming conjectures as to how near Christ's return was. Therefore we need not be at all surprised at St. Paul writing to Timothy in a way which implies that Timothy will probably live to see the evils which will immediately precede Christ's return, and must be on his guard against being amazed or overwhelmed by them. He is to "turn away from" the intense wickedness which will then be manifested, and go on undismayed with his own work.

"Like as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth." The Apostle is obviously referring to the Egyptian magicians mentioned in Exodus. But in the Pentateuch neither their number nor their names are given; so that we must suppose that St. Paul is referring to some Jewish tradition on the subject. The number two was very possibly suggested by the number of their opponents:—Moses and Aaron on one side, and two magicians on the other. And on each side it is a pair of brothers; for the Targum of Jonathan represents the magicians as sons of Balaam, formerly instructors of Moses, but afterwards his enemies. The names vary in Jewish tradition. Jannes is sometimes Johannes, and Jambres is sometimes either Mambres or Ambrosius. The tradition respecting them was apparently widely spread. It was known to Numenius, a Platonic philosopher of Apameia in Syria, who is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria ("Strom.," I. xxii.), and quoted by Origen and Eusebius as giving an account of Jannes and Jambres ("Con. Cels.," IV. li.; "Præp. Evang.," IX. viii.). In Africa we find some knowledge of the tradition exhibited by Appuleius, the famous author of the "Golden Ass," who like Numenius flourished in the second century. And in the previous century another Latin writer, Pliny the Elder, shows a similar knowledge. Both of them mention Jannes as a magician in connection with Moses, who is also in their eyes a magician; but Pliny appears to think that both Moses and Jannes were Jews. It is highly improbable that any of these writers derived their knowledge of these names from the passage before us; in the case of Pliny this would scarcely have been possible. His "Natural History" was published about A. D. 77, and at that time the Second Epistle to Timothy must have been known to but few, even among Christians. The author of the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus very possibly did derive his knowledge of the names from St. Paul; yet he may have had independent sources of information. He represents Nicodemus as pleading before Pilate that Jannes and Jambres worked miracles before Pharaoh; "but because they were not from God, what they did was destroyed." Whereas "Jesus raised up Lazarus, and he is alive" (chap. v.).

One of the ablest of English commentators on these Epistles remarks upon this passage, "It is probable that the Apostle derived these names from a current and (being quoted by him) true tradition of the Jewish Church." And in a similar spirit a writer in the "Dictionary of the Bible" thinks that it would be "inconsistent with the character of an inspired record for a baseless or incorrect current tradition to be cited."

Let us look at the phenomena of the case and see whether the number and the names appear to be trustworthy or otherwise, and then consider the question of inspiration. To drag in the latter question in order to determine the former, is to begin at the wrong end.

That there should be a pair of brothers to oppose a pair of brothers, has been pointed out already as a suspicious circumstance. The jingling pairing of the names is also more like fiction than fact. Thirdly, the names appear to be in formation, not Egyptian, but Hebrew; which would naturally be the case if Jews invented them, but would be extraordinary if they were genuine names of Egyptians. Lastly, Jannes might come from a Hebrew root which means "to seduce," and Jambres from one which means "to rebel." If Jews were to invent names for the Egyptian magicians, what names would they be more likely to fasten on them than such as would suggest seductive error and rebellious opposition? And is it probable that a really trustworthy tradition, on such an unimportant fact as the names of the enchanters who opposed Moses, would have survived through so many centuries? Sober and unbiassed critics will for the most part admit that the probabilities are very decidedly against the supposition that these names are true names, preserved from oblivion by some written or unwritten tradition outside Scripture.

But is it consistent with the character of an inspired writer to quote an incorrect tradition? Only those who hold somewhat narrow and rigid theories of inspiration will hesitate to answer this question in the affirmative. No one believes that inspired persons are in possession of all knowledge on all subjects. And if these names were commonly accepted as authentic by the Jews of St. Paul's day, would his inspiration necessarily keep him from sharing that belief? Even if he were well aware that the tradition respecting the names was untrustworthy, there would be nothing surprising in his speaking of the magicians under their commonly accepted names, when addressing one to whom the tradition would be well known. And if (as is more probable) he believed the names to be genuine, there is still less to surprise us in his making use of them to add vivacity to the comparison.

Nothing in God's dealings with mankind warrants us in believing that He would grant a special revelation to an Apostle, in order to preserve him from so harmless a proceeding as illustrating an argument by citing the incorrect details which tradition had added to historical facts. And it is worth noting that nothing is based upon the names; they occur in what is mere illustration. And even in the illustration it is not the names that have point, but the persons, who are supposed to have borne them; and the persons are real, although the names are probably fictitious. Still less are we warranted

in believing, as Chrysostom suggests, that St. Paul by inspiration had supernatural knowledge of the names. As we have seen, the names were known even to Gentiles who cannot well have derived their knowledge from him; and why should he have received a revelation about a trifle which in no way helps his argument? Such views of inspiration, although the product of a reverential spirit, degrade rather than exalt our conceptions of it. The main point of the comparison between the two cases appears to be opposition to the truth. But there is perhaps more in it than that. The magicians withstood Moses by professing to do the same wonders that he did; and the heretics withstood Timothy by professing to preach the same gospel as he did. This was frequently the line taken by heretical teachers; to disclaim all intention of teaching anything new, and to profess substantial, if not complete, agreement with those whom they opposed. They affirmed that their teaching was only the old truth looked at from another point of view. They used the same phraseology as Apostles had used: they merely gave it a more comprehensive (or, as would now be said, a more catholic) meaning. In this way the unwary were more easily seduced, and the suspicions of the simple were less easily aroused. But such persons betray themselves before long. Their mind is found to be tainted; and when they are put to the proof respecting the faith, they cannot stand the test (ἀδόκιμοι).

There is nothing improbable in the supposition that St. Paul mentions the magicians who withstood Moses as typical opponents of the truth, because the false teachers at Ephesus used magic arts; and the word which he uses for impostors (γόητες) in ver. 13 fits in very well with such a supposition, although it by no means makes it certain. Ephesus was famous for its charms and incantations (Ἐφέσια γράμματα) and around the statue of its goddess Artemis were unintelligible inscriptions, to which a strange efficacy was ascribed. The first body of Christians in Ephesus had been tainted by senseless wickedness of this kind. After accepting Christianity they had secretly retained their magic. The sons of the Jew Sceva had tried to use the sacred name of Jesus as a magical form of exorcism; and this brought about the crisis in which numbers of costly books of incantations were publicly burned (Acts xix. 13-20). The evil would be pretty sure to break out again, especially among new converts; just as it does among negro converts at the present day. Moreover, we know that in some cases there was a very close connection between some forms of heresy and magic: so that the suggestion that St. Paul has pretensions to miraculous power in his mind, when he compares the false teachers to the Egyptian magicians, is by no means improbable.

The connection between heresy and superstition is a very real and a very close one. The rejection or surrender of religious truth is frequently accompanied by the acceptance of irrational beliefs. People deny miracles and believe in spiritualism; they cavil at the efficacy of sacraments and accept as credible the amazing properties of an "astral body." There is such a thing as the nemesis of unbelief. The arrogance which rejects as repugnant to reason and morality truths which have throughout long centuries satisfied the highest intellects and the noblest hearts, is sometimes punished by being seduced into delusions which satisfy nothing higher than a grovelling curiosity.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE PERILS OF RATIONALISM AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LIFELONG CONTACT WITH TRUTH—THE PROPERTIES OF INSPIRED WRITINGS.

2 Timothy iii. 14-17.

For the second time in this paragraph the Apostle puts his faithful disciple in marked contrast to the heretical teachers. A few lines before, after comparing the latter to the Egyptian magicians, he continues, "But thou (σὺ δέ) didst follow my teaching." And in the passage before us, after saying that "evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse," he continues, "But abide thou (σὺ δὲ μένε) in the things which thou hast learned." Here there is a double contrast; first between Timothy and the impostors, and secondly between his abiding in the truth and their going away from it, and so from bad to worse, first as deceivers and then as being deceived. They begin by being seducers and end in being dupes, and the dupes (very often) of their own deceptions; for deceit commonly leads to self-deceit. Such a result may well act as a warning to Timothy and those committed to his charge of the peril of trifling with the fundamentals of religious truth.

The articles of the Christian faith are not like the commodities in a bazaar from which one can pick and choose at pleasure, and of which one can take three or four without in any way affecting one's relation to the remainder, or reject three or four, without in any way affecting the security of one's hold upon those which one decides to take. With regard to the truths of religion, our right to pick and choose has very strict limits. When the system as a whole has presented its credentials to the reason and the conscience, and these have decided that the bearer of such credentials must be the representative of a Divine Being, then the attempt to pick and choose among the details of the system becomes perilous work. To reject this or that item, as being mere fringe and setting rather than a constituent element, or as being at any rate unessential, may be to endanger the whole structure. We may be leaving an impregnable position for an exposed and untenable one, or be exchanging a secure platform for an inclined plane, on which we shall find no lasting resting place until the bottom is reached. And this was what the men, against whom Timothy is warned, had done. They had left the sure position, and were sometimes sliding, sometimes running, further and further away from the truth.

In other words, there is a right and a wrong use of reason in matters of faith. The wrong use is sometimes spoken of as "Rationalism," and (adopting that term as convenient) the following clear statement, borrowed from another writer, will show in a striking way where it was that St. Paul wished Timothy to part company with the principles of his opponents. "As regards Revealed Truth," wrote J. H. Newman

in 1835, "it is *not* Rationalism to set about to ascertain, by the exercise of reason, what things are attainable by reason, and what are not; nor, in the absence of an express Revelation, to inquire into the truths of Religion, as they come to us by nature; nor to determine what proofs are necessary for the acceptance of a Revelation, if it be given; nor to reject a Revelation on the plea of insufficient proof; nor, after recognising it as Divine, to investigate the meaning of its declarations, and to interpret its language; nor to use its doctrines, as far as they can be fairly used, in inquiring into its divinity; nor to compare and connect them with our previous knowledge, with a view of making them parts of a whole; nor to bring them into dependence on each other, to trace their mutual relations, and to pursue them to their legitimate issues. This is not Rationalism. But it is Rationalism to accept the Revelation, and then to explain it away; to speak of it as the Word of God, and to treat it as the word of man; to refuse to let it speak for itself; to claim to be told the why and the how of God's dealings with us, as therein described; and to assign to Him a motive and a scope of our own; to stumble at the partial knowledge which He may give us of them; to put aside what is obscure, as if it had not been said at all; to accept one half of what has been told us, and not the other half; to assume that the contents of Revelation are also its proof; to frame some gratuitous hypothesis about them, and then to garble, gloss, and colour them, to trim, clip, pare away and twist them, to order to bring them into conformity with the idea to which we have subjected them." *

Timothy is to abide in those things which he has "learned and been assured of." He has experienced the result which St. Luke wished to produce in Theophilus when he wrote his Gospel: he has attained to "full knowledge of the certainty concerning the things wherein he had been instructed" (Luke i. 4). And he is not to allow the wild teaching of his opponents, thoroughly discredited as it is and will be by equally wild conduct, to shake his security. Not everything that is disputed is disputable, nor everything that is doubted doubtful. And if the fruits of the two kinds of teaching do not fully convince him of the necessity of abiding by the old truths rather than by the suggestions of these innovators, let him remember those from whom he first learnt the truths of the Gospel,—his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and the Apostle himself. When it comes to a question of the authority of the teachers, which group will he choose? Those who established him in the faith, or those who are trying to seduce men away from it?

There is a little doubt about the word "of whom thou hast learned them." The "whom" is probably plural (*παρὰ τίνων*) but a reading which makes it singular (*παρὰ τίνος*) is strongly supported. The plural must include all Timothy's chief instructors in the faith, especially the earliest, as is clear from the nature of the case and from what follows. If the singular is adopted, we must refer it to St. Paul, in accordance with "the things which thou hast heard from me . . . the same commit thou to faithful men" (ii. 2). It is possible that the words just quoted have influenced the reading in the passage under consideration, and have caused the substitution of the singular for the plural.

But there is a further consideration. There are not only the character of the doctrine on each side, and the fruits of the doctrine on each side, and the teachers of whom Timothy has had personal experience, and about whose knowledge and trustworthiness he can judge; there is also the fact that from his tenderest infancy he has had the blessing of being in contact with the truth, first as it is revealed in the Old Testament, and then as it is still further revealed in the Gospel. The responsibilities of those who from their earliest days have been allowed to grow in the knowledge of God and of His government of the world, are far greater than the responsibilities of those who have had no opportunity of acquiring this knowledge until late in life.

Old habits of thought and conduct are not extinguished by baptism; and the false opinion and vicious behaviour of many of those who are vexing, or will hereafter vex, the Church in Ephesus, may be traced to influences which had become dominant in them long before they came into contact with God's revealed law. No such allowance can be made for Timothy. He has had the inestimable privilege of knowing the sacred writings from his earliest childhood. It will be his own fault if they do not "make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The expression "sacred writings" (*ἱερὰ γράμματα*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The usual expression is "the scriptures" (*αἱ γραφαί*) and once (Rom. i. 2) we have "holy scriptures" (*γραφαὶ ἁγίαι*). Here both substantive and adjective are unusual. The adjective occurs in only one other passage in the New Testament, a passage which throws light upon this one. "Know ye not that they who perform the sacred rites, from the sacred place get their food?" ("Speaker's Commentary," on 1 Cor. ix. 13.) And just as in that passage "the sacred rites" are the Jewish sacrifices, and "the sacred place" the Jewish temple, so here "the sacred writings" are the Jewish Scriptures. It is utterly improbable that any Christian writings are included. How could Timothy have known any of these from infancy? Even at the time when St. Paul wrote this farewell letter, there was little Christian literature, excepting his own Epistles; and he was not likely to speak of them as "sacred writings," or to include them under one expression with the Old Testament Scriptures. The suggestion that Christian writings are included, or are mainly intended, seems to be made with the intention of insinuating that this letter cannot have been written by the Apostle, but by some one of a later age. But would even a writer of the second century have made such a blunder as to represent Timothy as knowing Christian literature from his childhood?

With the use of the substantive "writings" (*γράμματα*) in this passage, should be compared the use of the same word in Christ's discourse at Jerusalem after the miracle at the pool of Bethesda, where he shows the Jews how hopeless their unbelief is, and how vain their appeal to Moses, who is really their accuser. "But if ye believe not *his* writings (*γράμματα*) how shall

* "Rationalism in Religion," in "Tracts for the Times," republished in "Essays Critical and Historical," vol. i. p. 32.

ye believe *My* words?" The Jews had had two opportunities of knowing and accepting the truth; the writings of Moses, and the words of Jesus. So also Timothy had had two sets of instructors; the holy women who had brought him up, whose work had been completed by the Apostle, and the sacred writings. If the authority of the former should seem to be open to question, there could be no doubt of the sufficiency of the latter. They "are able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

It must be observed that the Apostle uses the present tense and not the past (*δυνάμενα*) in expressing the power of the sacred writings in communicating a saving wisdom to him who uses them aright. This power was not exhausted when the young Timothy was brought to the ampler truths of the Gospel. However far advanced he may be in sacred knowledge, he will still find that they are able to make him increase in the wisdom which enlightens and saves souls.

But Scripture confers this life-giving wisdom in no mechanical manner. It is not a charm, which has a magical effect upon every one who reads it. The most diligent study of the sacred writings will do nothing for the salvation of a man who does not prosecute his researches in something more than the mere spirit of curious enquiry. Therefore St. Paul adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It is when this is added to the soul of the enquirer that the sacred writings of the Old Covenant have their illuminating power; without it, so far from leading to the salvation won for us by Christ, they may keep those who study them away from the truth, as in the case of the Jews to this day. The pillar of fire becomes a pillar of cloud, and what should have been for wealth becomes an occasion of falling.

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." This is the Revisers' rendering. Besides one or two smaller changes, they have made two important alterations of the A. V. (1) They have substituted "every scripture" for "all scripture," without allowing the old rendering even a place in the margin. (2) They have inserted the "is" (which must be supplied somewhere in the sentence) after instead of before "inspired by God;" thus making "inspired by God" an epithet of Scripture and not something stated respecting it. "Every scripture inspired by God is also profitable," instead of "is inspired of God and profitable:" but they allow the latter rendering a place in the margin.

This treatment of the passage appears to be very satisfactory, so far as the second of these two points is concerned. Certainty is not attainable in either. Yet, as regards the second, the probabilities are greatly in favour of the Apostle's meaning that "inspired scripture is also profitable," rather than "scripture is inspired and profitable." But with regard to the first point, it may be doubted whether the balance is so decidedly against the translation "all scripture" as to warrant its exclusion. No doubt the absence of the article in the Greek (*πᾶσα γραφή*, and not *πᾶσα ἡ γραφή*) is against the old rendering; but it is by no means conclusive, as other instances both in the New Testament and in classical Greek prove.* Nevertheless, there is the further fact that in the New Testament "the scripture" generally means a particular passage of Scripture (Mark xii. 10; Luke iv. 21; John xix. 24, 28, 36, 37; Acts viii. 32, 35). When Scripture as a whole is meant, the word is commonly used in the plural, "the scriptures" (Matt. xxi. 42; Mark xii. 24; John v. 39). In the passage before us the meaning is not seriously affected by the change. It matters little whether we say "the whole of scripture," or "every passage of scripture."

"Every scripture inspired by God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline (*παιδεία*) which is in righteousness:" *i. e.*, is of use both for doctrinal and for practical purposes, for informing both faith and conduct. It is because it is "inspired by God," because God's Spirit breathes through the whole of it, making every passage of it to be a portion of a living whole, that Scripture possesses this unique utility. And if the Apostle can say this of the Old Testament, much more may we affirm it of the New Testament. From the two together, everything that a Christian ought to believe, everything that a Christian ought to do, may be learned.

But while this declaration of the Apostle assures us that there is no passage in Holy Writ, which, when properly handled, does not yield Divine instruction for the guidance of our minds, and hearts, and wills, yet it gives no encouragement to hard-and-fast theories as to the manner in which the Spirit of God operated upon the authors of the sacred writings. Inspiration is no mechanical process. It is altogether misleading to speak of it as Divine dictation, which would reduce inspired writers to mere machines. There are certain things which it clearly does not do.

1. While it governs the substance of what is written, it does not govern the language word by word. We have no reasons for believing in verbal inspiration, and have many reasons for not believing in it. For no one believes that copyists and printers are miraculously preserved from making verbal mistakes. Is it, then, reasonable to suppose that God would work a miracle to produce what He takes no care to preserve. Of the countless various readings, which are the words which are inspired?

2. Inspiration does not preserve the inspired writers from every kind of mistake. That it guards them from error in respect to matters of faith and morality, we may well believe; but whether it does more than this remains to be proved. On the other hand it can be proved that it does not preserve them from mistakes in grammar; for there is plenty of unquestionably bad grammar in the Bible. Look for instance at the Greek of Mark vi. 8, 9; Acts xv. 22; xix. 34; Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 16; Rev. vii. 9; etc., etc. And it may be doubted whether inspiration preserves the inspired writer from all possibility of error as regards matters of fact, as to whether there were two men healed or only one; as to whether the healing took place as Christ entered the city or as he left it; as to whether the prophecy quoted comes from Jeremiah or Zechariah, and the like. Can there be any reasonable

* See the quotations given in Alford's note on *πᾶσα οἰκοδομή* in Eph. ii. 21, which might be increased, if necessary: *e. g.*, *πᾶν σῶμα*, in Arist., "Nic. Eth.," I. xiii. 7, which must = "the whole body."

doubt that St. Matthew has made a slip in writing "Zechariah the son of Barachiah" instead of "Zechariah the son of Jehoiada"? And is there any honest method of bringing St. Stephen's speech into complete harmony with statements in the Old Testament respecting all the facts mentioned? Must we not suppose that there is error on one side or the other? If, as is quite certain, inspiration does not make a man a grammatical scholar, or give him a perfect literary style, ought we to conclude that it will make him a faultless historian or chronologer? A Divine Revelation through a series of inspired writers has been granted in order to save our souls. We have no right to assume that it has been granted in order to save us trouble. Those saving truths about God and our relations to Him, which we could never have discovered without a revelation, we may expect to find set forth without taint of error in the sacred writings. But facts of geology, or history, or physiology, which our own intelligence and industry can discover, we ought not to expect to find accurately set forth for us in the Bible: and we ought to require very full evidence before deciding that in such matters inspired writers may be regarded as infallible. St. Luke tells us in the Preface to his Gospel that he took great pains to obtain the best information. Need he have done so, if inspiration protected him from all possibility of mistake?

3. Inspiration does not override and overwhelm the inspired writer's personal characteristics. There appears to be no such thing as an inspired style. The style of St. John is as different from that of St. Paul as the style of Bishop Butler is from that of Jeremy Taylor. Each inspired writer uses the language, and the illustrations, and the arguments that are natural and familiar to him. If he has an argumentative mind, he argues his points; if he has not, he states them without argument. If he has literary skill, he exhibits it; if he has none, inspiration does not give it to him. "No inspiration theory can stand for a moment which does not leave room for the personal agency and individual peculiarities of the sacred authors and the exercise of their natural faculties in writing" (Schaff, "Apostolic Christianity," p. 608).

What inspiration has not done in these various particulars is manifest to every one who studies the sacred writings. What it has done is scarcely less manifest, and is certainly much more generally recognised. It has produced writings which are absolutely without a parallel in the literature of the world. Even as regards literary merits they have few rivals. But it is not in their literary beauty that their unique character consists. It lies rather in their lofty spirituality; their inexhaustible capacities for instruction and consolation; their boundless adaptability to all ages and circumstances; above all, in their ceaseless power of satisfying the noblest cravings and aspirations of the human heart. Other writings are profitable for knowledge, for advancement, for amusement, for delight, for wealth. But these "make wise unto salvation." They produce that discipline which has its sphere in righteousness. They have power to instruct the ignorant, to convict the guilty, to reclaim the fallen, to school all in holiness; that all may be complete as men of God, "furnished completely unto every good work."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PARADOXICAL EXULTATION OF THE APOSTLE—HIS APPARENT FAILURE AND THE APPARENT FAILURE OF THE CHURCH—THE GREAT TEST OF SINCERITY.

2 Timothy iv. 5-8.

St. Chrysostom tells us that this passage was for a long time a source of perplexity to him. "Often," he says, "when I have taken the Apostle into my hands and have considered this passage, I have been at a loss to understand why Paul here speaks so loftily: I have fought the good fight. But now by the grace of God I seem to have found it out. For what purpose then does he speak thus? He writes to console the despondency of his disciple; and he therefore bids him be of good cheer, since he was going to his crown, having finished all his work and obtained a glorious end. Thou oughtest to rejoice, he says; not to grieve. And why? Because I have fought the good fight. Just as a son, who was sitting bewailing his orphan state, might be consoled by his father saying to him, Weep not, my son. We have lived a good life; we have reached old age; and now we are leaving thee. Our life has been free from reproach; we are departing with glory; and thou mayest be held in honour for what we have done. . . . And this he says not boastfully;—God forbid;—but in order to raise up his dejected son, and to encourage him by his praises to bear firmly what had come to pass, to entertain good hopes, and not to think it a matter grievous to be borne."

Chrysostom's explanation is no doubt part of the reason why the Apostle here speaks in so exalted a key. This unusual strain is partly the result of a wish to cheer his beloved disciple and assure him that there is no need to grieve for the death which now cannot be very far off. When it comes, it will be a glorious death and a happy one. A glorious death, for it will crown with the crown of victory struggles in a weary contest which is now ending triumphantly. And a happy death; for Paul has for years had the longing "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." The crown is one which will not wither; for it is not made of olive, bay, or laurel. And it is not one of which the glory is doubtful, or dependent upon the fickle opinions of a prejudiced crowd; for it is not awarded by a human umpire, nor amid the applauses of human spectators. The Giver is Christ, and the theatre is filled with angels. In the contests of this world men labour many days and suffer hardships; and for one hour they receive the crown. And forthwith all the pleasure of it passes away. In the good fight which St. Paul fought a crown of righteousness is won, which continues for ever in brightness and glory.

But besides wishing to console Timothy for the bereavement which was impending, St. Paul also wished to encourage him, to stimulate him to greater exertion and to a larger measure of courage. "Be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an Evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink-offering, and the time of my departure is at hand." That is: You must be

more vigorous, more enduring, more devoted; for I am going away, and must leave you to carry on to perfection that which I have begun. My fighting is over; therefore do you fight more bravely. My course is finished; therefore do you run more perseveringly. The faith entrusted to me has been preserved thus far inviolate: see to it that what has been entrusted to you be kept safe. The crown which righteousness wins is waiting now for me: so strive that such a crown may await you also. For this is a contest in which all may have crowns, if only they will live so as to feel a longing for the appearing of the righteous Judge who gives them.

But there is more in this passage than the desire to comfort Timothy for the approaching loss of his friend and instructor, and the desire to spur him on to greater usefulness, not merely in spite of, but because of, that loss. There is also the ecstatic joy of the great Apostle, as with the eye of faith he looks back over the work which he has been enabled to perform, and balances the cost of it against the great reward.

As has been already pointed out in an earlier passage, there is nothing in this touching letter which is more convincingly like St. Paul than the way in which conflicting emotions succeed one another and come to the surface in perfectly natural expression. Sometimes it is anxiety that is uppermost; sometimes it is confidence. Here he is overflowing with affection; there he is stern and indignant. One while he is deeply depressed; and then again becomes triumphant and exulting. Like the second Epistle to the Corinthians this last letter to the beloved disciple is full of intense personal feelings, of a different and apparently discordant character. The passage before us is charged with such emotions, beginning with solemn warning and ending in lofty exultation. But it is the warning, not of fear, but of affection; and it is the exultation, not of sight, but of faith.

Looked at with human eyes the Apostle's life at that moment was a failure,—a tragic and dismal failure. In his own simple, but most pregnant language, he had been "the slave of Jesus Christ." No Roman slave, driven by whip and goad, could have been made to work as Paul had worked. He had taxed his fragile body and sensitive spirit to the utmost, and had encountered lifelong opposition, derision, and persecution, at the hands of those who ought to have been his friends, and had been his friends until he entered the service of Jesus Christ. He had preached and argued, had entreated and rebuked, and in doing so had rung the changes on all the chief forms of human suffering. And what had been the outcome of it all? The few Churches which he had founded were but as handfuls in the cities in which he had established them; and there were countless cities in which he had established nothing. Even the few Churches which he had succeeded in founding had in most cases soon fallen away from their first faith and enthusiasm. The Thessalonians had become tainted with idleness and disorder, the Corinthians with contentiousness and sensuality, the Galatians, Colossians, and Ephesians with various forms of heresy; while the Roman Church, in the midst of which he was suffering an imprisonment which would almost certainly end in death, was treating him with coldness and neglect. At his first defence no one took his part, but all forsook him; and in his extremity he was almost deserted. As the results of a life of intense energy and self-devotion, all these things had the appearance of total failure.

And certainly if the work of his life seemed to have been a failure with regard to others, it did not bear any resemblance to success as regards himself. From the world's point of view he had given up much, and gained little, beyond trouble and disgrace. He had given up a distinguished position in the Jewish Church, in order to become the best hated man among that people of passionate hatreds. While his efforts on behalf of the Gentiles had ended for a third time in confinement in a Gentile prison, from which, as he saw clearly, nothing but death was likely to release him.

And yet, in spite of all this, St. Paul is exultingly triumphant. Not at all because he does not perceive, or cannot feel, the difficulties and sorrows of his position. Still less because he wishes to dissemble either to himself or others the sufferings which he has to endure. He is no Stoic, and makes no profession of being above human infirmities and human emotions. He is keenly sensitive to all that affects his own aspirations and affections and the well-being of those whom he loves. He is well aware of the dangers both of body and soul which beset those who are far dearer to him than life. And he gives strong expression to his trouble and anxiety. But he measures the troubles of time by the glories of eternity. With the eye of faith he looks across all this apparent failure and neglect to the crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge has in store for him, and for thousands upon thousands of others also,—even for all those who have learned to look forward with longing to the time when their Lord shall appear again.

In all this we see in miniature the history of Christendom since the Apostle's death. His career was a foreshadowing of the career of the Christian Church. In both cases there appears to be only a handful of real disciples with a company of shallow and fickle followers, to set against the stolid, unmoved mass of the unconverted world. In both cases, even among the disciples themselves, there are the cowardice of many and the desertions of some. In both cases those who remain true to the faith dispute among themselves which of them shall be accounted the greatest. St. Paul was among the first to labour that Christ's ideal of one holy catholic Church might be realised. Eighteen centuries have passed away, and the life of the Church, like that of St. Paul, looks like a failure. With more than half the human race still not even nominally Christian; with long series of crimes committed not only in defiance, but in the name, of religion; with each decade of years producing its unwholesome crop of heresies and schisms;—what has become of the Church's profession of being catholic, holy, and united?

The failure, as in St. Paul's case, is more apparent than real. And it must be noted at the outset that our means of gauging success in spiritual things are altogether uncertain and inadequate. Anything at all like scientific accuracy is quite out of our reach, because the data for a trustworthy conclusion cannot be obtained. But the case is far stronger than this. It is

impossible to determine even roughly where the benefits conferred by the Gospel end; what the average holiness among professing Christians really is; and to what extent Christendom, in spite of its manifold divisions, is really one. It is more than possible that the savage in central Africa is spiritually the better for the Incarnation of which he knows nothing, and which his whole life seems to contradict; for at least he is one of those for whom Christ was born and died. It is probable that among quite ordinary Christians there are many whom the world knows as sinners, but whom God knows as saints. And it is certain that a belief in a Triune God and in a common Redeemer unites millions far more closely than their differences about ministers and sacraments keep them apart. The Church's robe is tattered and travel-stained; but she is still the Bride of Christ, and her children, however much they may quarrel among themselves, are still one in Him.

And where the failure of St. Paul and of those who have followed him can be shown to be unquestionably real, it can generally be shown to be thoroughly intelligible. Although Divine in its origin, the Gospel has from the first used human instruments with all the weaknesses,—physical, intellectual, and moral,—which characterise humanity. When we remember what this implies, and also remember the forces against which Christianity has had to contend, the marvel rather is that the Gospel has had so large a measure of success, than that its success is not yet complete. It has had to fight against the passions and prejudices of individuals and nations, debased by long centuries of immorality and ignorance, and strengthened in their opposition to the truth by all the powers of darkness. It has had to fight, moreover, with other religions, many of which are attractive by their concessions to human frailty, and others by the comparative purity of their rites and doctrines. And against them all it has won, and continues to win, man's approbation and affection, by its power of satisfying his highest aspirations and his deepest needs. No other religion or philosophy has had success so various or so far reaching. The Jew and the Mahometan, after centuries of intercourse, remain almost without influence upon European minds; while to Western civilisation the creed of the Buddhist remains not only without influence, but without meaning. But the nation has not yet been found to which Christianity has been proved to be unintelligible or unsuitable. To whatever quarter of the globe we look, or to whatever period of history during the Christian era, the answer is still the same. Multitudes of men, throughout eighteen centuries, under the utmost variety of conditions, whether of personal equipment or of external circumstance, have made trial of Christianity, and have found it satisfying. They have testified as the result of their countless experiences that it can stand the wear and tear of life; that it can not only fortify, but console; and that it can rob even death of its sting and the grave of its victory by a sure and certain hope of the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge prepares for all those who love, and have long loved, His appearing.

"Who have loved and do love His appearing." That is the full force of the Greek perfect (τοῖς ἠγαπηκόσιν) which expresses the present and permanent result of past action; and therein lies the test whereby to try the temper of our Christianity. St. Paul, who had long yearned to depart and be with Christ, could not easily have given a more simple or sure method of finding out who those are who have a right to believe that the Lord has a crown of righteousness in store for them. Are we among the number?

In order to answer this question we must ask ourselves another. Are our lives such that we are longing for Christ's return? Or are we dreading it, because we know that we are not fit to meet Him, and are making no attempt to become so. Supposing that physicians were to tell us that we are smitten with a deadly disease, which must end fatally, and that very soon,—what would be our feeling? When the first shock was over, and we were able to take a calm view of the whole case, could we welcome the news as the unexpected fulfilment of a long cherished wish that Christ would deliver us out of the miseries of this sinful world and take us to Himself? The Bible sets before us the crown of righteousness which fadeth not away, and the worm which never dieth. Leaning upon God's unfailing love let us learn to long for the coming of the one; and then we shall have no need to dread, or even to ask the meaning of, the other.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE PERSONAL DETAILS A GUARANTEE OF GENUINENESS.

2 Timothy iv. 9-15, 19-21.

It would scarcely be exceeding the limits of legitimate hyperbole to say that these two passages prove the authenticity and genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles; that they are sufficient to show that these letters are an authentic account of the matters of which they treat, and that they are genuine letters of the Apostle Paul.

In the first of these expositions it was pointed out how improbable it is that a portion of one of these letters should be genuine, and not the remainder of it; or that one of the three should be genuine, and not the other two; and *a fortiori*, that two of the three should be genuine and not the remaining one.

The passages before us are among those of which it has been truly said that they "cling so closely to Paul that it is only by tearing the letter to pieces that any part can be dissociated from that Apostle." The internal evidence is here too strong even for those critics who deny the Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles as a whole. Thus Renan and Weisse are disposed to admit that we have here embedded in the work of a later writer portions of a genuine letter of the Apostle; while Ewald, Hausrath, and Pfleiderer accept not only these verses, but the earlier passage about Phygelus, Hermogenes, and Onesiphorus as genuine also. Similar views are advocated by Hitzig, Krenkel, and Immer, of whom the two first admit that the Epistle to Titus also contains genuine fragments. And quite recently (1882) we have

Lemme contending that only the central portion of 2 Timothy (ii. 11 to iv. 5) is an interpolation.

These concessions amount to a concession of the whole case. It is impossible to stop there. Either much more must be conceded or much less. For (1) we cannot without very strong evidence indeed accept so improbable a supposition as that a Christian long after the Apostle's death was in possession of letters written by him, of which no one else knew anything, that he worked bits of these into writings of his own, which he wished to pass off as Apostolic, and that he then destroyed the genuine letters, or disposed of them in such a way that no one knew that they had ever existed. Such a story is not absolutely impossible, but it is so unlikely to be true that to accept it without clear evidence would be most uncritical. And there is not only no clear evidence; there is no evidence at all. The hypothesis is pure imagination. (2) The portions of this letter which are allowed by adverse critics to be genuine are precisely those in which a forger would be pretty sure to be caught tripping. They are full of personal details, some of which admit of being tested, and all of which can be criticised, as to whether they are natural and consistent or not. Would a forger be likely to risk detection by venturing on such dangerous ground? He would put into the letter those doctrines for which he wished to appear to have St. Paul's authority; and, if he added anything else, he would take care not to go beyond vague generalities, too indefinite to be caught in the meshes of criticism. But the writer of this letter has done the reverse of all this. He has given an abundance of personal detail, such as can be found in only one other place in the New Testament, and that in the concluding portion of the Epistle to the Romans, one of the indisputable writings of St. Paul.

And he has not been caught tripping. Hostile writers have subjected these details to the most searching criticism; and the result, as we have seen, is that many of them are constrained to admit that these portions of the letter are genuine productions of the Apostle. That is, those portions of the Epistle which can be subjected to a severe test, are allowed to be by St. Paul, because they stand the test; while those which do not admit of being thus tested are rejected, not because there is any proof of their being spurious, but because critics think that the style is not like the Apostle's. Would they not be the first to deride others for such an opinion? Supposing that these details had contained absurdities or contradictions, which could not have been written by St. Paul, would they not have maintained, and reasonably maintained, that it was monstrous to surrender as spurious those sections of the letter which had been tested and found wanting, and to defend as genuine the other sections, which did not admit of being tested?

Let us look at the details a little more closely. Besides St. Paul and Timothy, twenty-three Christians of the Apostolic age are mentioned in this short letter. A considerable number of these are persons of whom we read in the Acts or in St. Paul's other letters; but the majority are new names, and in most of these cases we know nothing about the bearers of the names beyond what is told us here. Would a forger have given us this mixture of known and unknown? If he ventured upon names at all, would he not either have given us imaginary persons, whose names and actions could not be checked by existing records, or else have kept closely to the records, so that the checking might tell in his favour? He has done neither. The new names do not look like those of imaginary persons, and the mention of known persons is by no means a mere reproduction of what is said of them elsewhere.

"Demas forsook me, having loved this present world. . . . Take Mark and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering." A forger with the Acts and the Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon before him would have made Mark forsake Paul, and Demas be commended as useful to him; for in the Acts (xv. 38) Paul had to condemn Mark for slackness, and in the Epistles to the Colossians (iv. 14) and to Philemon (24) Demas with Luke is waiting on the Apostle in his imprisonment. And yet how natural that the Apostle's condemnation should rouse Mark to greater earnestness, and that the Apostle should recognise that earnestness in this farewell letter? And how consistent with human frailty also that Demas should have courage enough to stand by St. Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, and yet should quail before the greater risks of the second! That the Apostle's complaint respecting him means more than this is unlikely: yet some have exaggerated it into a charge of heresy, or even utter apostasy. We are simply to understand that Demas preferred comfort and security away from Rome to the hardship and danger of a Roman prison; and therefore went to Thessalonica. Why he selected that town we are not told, but there being a Christian community there would be one reason.

"Titus to Dalmatia." Why should a forger send Titus to Dalmatia? The Pastoral Epistles, whether a forgery or not, are all by one hand, and seem to have been written within a short time of one another. Would not a forger have sent Titus either to Crete (Tit. i. 5), or to Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12)? But if Titus went to Nicopolis, and failed to find Paul there, owing to his having been meanwhile arrested, what more probable than that he should go on into Dalmatia? The forger, if he had thought of this, would have called attention to it, to ensure that his ingenuity was not overlooked.

"But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus." The meaning of the "but" is not quite clear. Perhaps the most probable supposition is that it indicates the reason why the Apostle needs a useful person like Mark. "I had such a person in Tychicus; but he is gone on a mission for me to Ephesus." How natural all this is! And what could induce a forger to put it in? We are told in the Acts that Tychicus belonged to the Roman province of Asia (xx. 4), and that he was with St. Paul at the close of his third missionary journey about nine years before the writing of this letter to Timothy. Three or four years later we find Tychicus once more with St. Paul during the first Roman imprisonment; and he is sent with Onesimus as the bearer of the Epistle to the Colossians (iv. 7) and to the Ephesians (vi. 21). And we learn from the sentence before us, as well as from Titus iii. 12, that he still enjoys the confidence of the Apostle, for he is sent on missions for him to Crete and

to Ephesus. All these separate notices of him hang together consistently representing him as "the beloved brother," and also as a "faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord," whom St. Paul was accustomed to entrust with special commissions. If the mission to Ephesus mentioned here is a mere copy of the other missions, would not a forger have taken some pains to ensure that the similarity between his fiction and previous facts should be observed?

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments." Here the arguments against the probability of forgery reach a climax; and this verse should be remembered side by side with "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake" in the First Epistle (v. 23). What writer of a fictitious letter would ever have dreamed of inserting either passage? To an unbiassed mind they go a long way towards producing the impression that we are dealing with real letters and not with inventions. And this argument holds good equally well, whatever meaning we give to the word (φελόνη) which is rendered "cloke." It probably means a cloak and is a Greek form of the Latin *penula*. It appears to have been a circular garment without sleeves, but with a hole in the middle for the head. Hence some persons have made the astounding suggestion that it was a eucharistic vestment analogous to a chasuble, and have supposed that the Apostle is here asking, not for warm clothing "before winter," but for a sacerdotal dress for ritualistic purposes. But since Chrysostom's day there has been a more credible suggestion that the word means a bag or case for books. If so, would the Apostle have mentioned both the book-bag and the books, and would he have put the bag before the books? He might naturally have written, "Bring the book-bag,"—of course with the books in it; or, "Bring the books and the bag also." But it seems a strange way of putting the request to say, "The book-bag that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest; the books also, especially the parchments," as if the bag were the chief thing that he thought about.

It seems better to abide by the old rendering "cloke;" and, if this is correct, then it fits in well with "Do thy diligence to come before winter." Yet the writer in no way draws our attention to the connection between the need of the thick cloak and the approach of winter: and the writer of a real letter would have no need to do so. But would a forger have left the connection to chance?

Whether Alexander the coppersmith is the person of that name who was put forward by the Jews in the riot raised by Demetrius (Acts xix. 33), is not more than a possibility. The name Alexander was exceedingly common; and we are not told that the Jew in the riot at Ephesus was a smith, or that Alexander the smith was a Jew. In what way the coppersmith "showed much ill-treatment" to the Apostle we are not told. As St. Paul goes on immediately afterwards to speak of his "first defence," it seems reasonable to conjecture that Alexander had seriously injured the Apostle's cause in some way. But this is pure conjecture; and the ill-treatment may refer to general persecution of St. Paul and opposition to his teaching. On the whole the latter hypothesis appears to be safer.

The reading, "The Lord will render to him" (ἀποδώσει) is shown by an overwhelming balance of evidence to be preferable to "The Lord reward him (ἀποδώη) according to his works." There is no malediction. Just as in ver. 8 the Apostle expresses his conviction that the Lord will render (ἀποδώσει) a crown of righteousness to all those who love His appearing, so here he expresses a conviction that He will render a just recompense to all those who oppose the work of His kingdom. What follows in the next verse, "may it not be laid to their account," seems to show that the Apostle is in no cursing mood. He writes in sorrow rather than in anger. It is necessary to put Timothy on his guard against a dangerous person; but he leaves the requital of the evil deeds to God.

"Salute Prisca and Aquila." A forger with the Apostle's indisputable writings before him, would hardly have inserted this; for he would have concluded from Rom. xvi. 3, 4, that these two well-known helpers of St. Paul were in Rome at this very time. Aquila was a Jew of Pontus who had migrated from Pontus to Rome, but had had to leave the capital again when Claudius expelled the Jews from the city (Acts xviii. 2). He and his wife Prisca, or Priscilla, then settled in Corinth, where St. Paul took up his abode with them, because they were Jews and tent-makers, like himself. And in their workshop the foundations of the Corinthian Church were laid. Thenceforward they became his helpers in preaching the Gospel, and went with him to Ephesus, where they helped forward the conversion of the eloquent Alexandrian Jew Apollos. After much service to the Church they returned once more to Rome, and were there when St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Either the persecution under Nero, or possibly missionary enterprise, induced them once more to leave Rome and return to Asia. The Apostle naturally puts such faithful friends, "who for his life laid down their necks" (Rom. xvi. 3), in the very first place in sending his personal greetings; and they are equally naturally coupled with the household of Onesiphorus, who had done similar service in courageously visiting St. Paul in his imprisonment (ver. 16). The double mention of "the household of Onesiphorus" (not of Onesiphorus himself) has been commented upon in a former exposition.

Of the statements, "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick," no more need be said than to point out how lifelike and natural they are in a real letter from one friend to another who knows the persons mentioned; how unlikely they are to have occurred to a writer who was inventing a letter in order to advocate his own doctrinal views. That Trophimus is the same person as the Ephesian, who with Tychicus accompanied St. Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts xx. 4; xxi. 29), may be safely assumed. Whether Erastus is identical with the treasurer of Corinth (Rom. xvi. 23), or with the Erastus who was sent by Paul with Timothy to Macedonia (Acts xix. 22), must remain uncertain.

"Eubulus saluteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia." With this group of names our accumulation of arguments for the genuineness of this portion of the letter, and therefore of the whole letter, and therefore of

all three Pastoral Epistles, comes to an end. The argument is a cumulative one, and this last item of the internal evidence is by no means the least important or least convincing. About Eubulus, Pudens, and Claudia we know nothing beyond what this passage implies, viz., that they were members of the Christian Church in Rome; for the very bare possibility that Pudens and Claudia may be the persons of that name who are mentioned by Martial, is not worth more than a passing reference. But Linus is a person about whom something is known. It is unlikely that in the Apostolic age there were two Christians of this name in the Roman Church; and therefore we may safely conclude that the Linus who here sends greeting is identical with the Linus, who, according to very early testimony preserved by Irenæus ("Hær.," III. iii. 3), was first among the earliest bishops of the Church of Rome. Irenæus himself expressly identifies the first Bishop of Rome with the Linus mentioned in the Epistles to Timothy, and that in a passage in which (thanks to Eusebius) we have the original Greek of Irenæus as well as the Latin translation. From his time (*cir.* A. D. 180) to the present day, Linus, Anencletus or Anacletus or Cletus (all three forms of the name are used), and Clement have been commemorated as the three first Bishops of Rome. They must all of them have been contemporaries of the Apostle. Of these three far the most famous was Clement; and a writer at the end of the first century, or beginning of the second, inventing a letter for St. Paul, would be much more likely to put Clement into it than Linus. Again, such a writer would know that Linus, after the Apostle's death, became the presiding presbyter of the Church of Rome, and would place him before Eubulus and Pudens. But here Linus is placed after the other two. The obvious inference is, that, at the time when this letter was written, Linus was not yet in any position of authority. Like the other persons here named, he was a leading member of the Church in Rome, otherwise he would hardly have been mentioned at all; but he has not yet been promoted to the chief place, otherwise he would at least have been mentioned first, and probably with some epithet or title. Once more one asks, what writer of fiction would have thought of these niceties? And what writer who thought of them, and elaborated them thus skilfully, would have abstained from all attempt to prevent their being overlooked and unappreciated?

The result of this investigation is greatly to increase our confidence in the genuineness of this letter and of all three Pastoral Epistles. We began by treating them as veritable writings of the great Apostle, and a closer acquaintance with them has justified this treatment. Doubt may be raised about everything; but reasonable doubts have their limits. To dispute the authenticity of the Epistles to the Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians is now considered to be a sure proof that the doubter cannot estimate evidence; and we may look forward to the time when the Second Epistle to Timothy will be ranked with those four great Epistles as indisputable. Meanwhile let no student of this letter doubt that in it he is reading the touching words in which the Apostle of the Gentiles gave his last charge to his beloved disciple, and through him to the Christian Church.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE APOSTLE FORSAKEN BY MEN BUT STRENGTHENED BY THE LORD—THE MISSION TO THE GENTILES COMPLETED—THE SURE HOPE AND THE FINAL HYMN OF PRAISE.

2 Timothy iv. 16-18.

There is a general agreement at the present time that Eusebius is in error, when, in a well-known passage in his "Ecclesiastical History" (II. xxii. 2-7), he refers this "first defence" and the "deliverance out of the lion's mouth" to the first Roman imprisonment and the release which put an end to it, probably A. D. 63. The deliverance does not mean release from prison following upon acquittal, but temporary rescue from imminent danger. Eusebius makes a second mistake in this chapter which is the result of the first error; but an avoidance of the second would have preserved him from the first. He says that the Apostle shows in the Second Epistle to Timothy that only Luke was with him when he wrote, but at his former defence not even he. Now during the first Roman imprisonment St. Paul was not alone, and one of the persons who was with him was Timothy himself, as we see from the opening of the letter to the Philippians. It is, therefore, highly improbable that the Apostle would think it worth while to tell Timothy what took place at the trial which ended the first imprisonment, seeing that Timothy was then in Rome. And even if Timothy had left Rome before the trial came on, which is not very likely, he would long since have heard what took place, both from others and from the Apostle himself. It is obvious that in the present passage St. Paul is giving his disciple information respecting something which has recently taken place, of which Timothy is not likely to have heard.

The value of the witness of Eusebius is not, however, seriously diminished by this twofold mistake. It is clear that he was fully convinced that there were two Roman imprisonments; one early in Nero's reign, when the Emperor was more disposed to be merciful, and one later; and that he was convinced of this on independent grounds, and not because he considered that the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles would be untenable without the hypothesis of a second imprisonment.

Another confirmation of the view of Eusebius is found in the statement respecting Trophimus, that Paul had left him sick at Miletus. It is impossible to place the Apostle at Miletus with Trophimus prior to the first imprisonment. Consequently some who deny the second imprisonment, and yet maintain the genuineness of this letter, resort to the desperate method of making the verb to be third person plural instead of first person singular (ἀπέλειπον or ἀπέλιπον) and translating "Trophimus they left at Miletus sick."

"At my first defence no man took my part, but all forsook me." He had no *patronus*, no *advocatus*, no *clientela*. Among all the Christians in Rome there was not one who would stand at his side in court either to speak on his behalf, or to advise him in the conduct of his case, or to support him by a demonstration of sym-

pathy. The expression for "no one took my part" (*οὐδείς μοι παρεγένετο*) literally means "no one came to my side," or "became present on my behalf." The verb is specially frequent in the writings of St. Luke. And the word which is rendered "forsook" (*ἐγκατέλιπον*) is still more graphic. It signifies "leaving a person in a position," and especially in a bad position; leaving him in straits. It is almost the exact counterpart of our colloquial phrase "to leave in the lurch." St. Paul uses it elsewhere of those who with him are "pursued, but not forsaken" (2 Cor. iv. 9). And both St. Mark and St. Luke, following the LXX., use it in translating Christ's cry upon the cross: "Why hast thou forsaken Me?" Hence it signifies not merely desertion (*καταλείπειν*) but desertion at a time when help and support are needed.

What is the meaning of the "all"? "All forsook me." Does it include Luke, whom he has just mentioned as being the only person with him? And, if so, is it meant as an indirect reproach? Some would have it that we have here an indication of the spurious character of the letter. The forger is unable consistently to maintain the part which he has assumed. In writing "all forsook me" he has already forgotten what he has just written about Luke: and he forgets both statements when a few lines further on he represents Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and others as sending greetings.

But, like so many of these objections, this criticism turns out, when reasonably examined, to be an argument for the genuineness of the letter. These apparent inconsistencies are just the things which a forger could and would have avoided. Even a very blundering forger would have avoided three glaring contradictions in about thirty lines: and they are glaring contradictions, if they are interpreted as they must be interpreted for the purposes of this criticism. "Only Luke is with me." "Every one has forsaken me." "All the brethren salute thee." Any one of these statements, if forced to apply to the same set of circumstances, contradicts the other two. But then this meaning is forced upon them, and is not their natural meaning: and these are just the apparent inconsistencies which the writer of a real letter takes no pains to avoid, because there is not the smallest danger of his being misunderstood.

"All forsook me" is exactly a parallel to "all that are in Asia turned away from me" (see pp. 463, 464). The "all" in both cases means "all who might have been expected to help." It refers to those who could have been of service, who in many cases had been asked to render service, by being witnesses in Paul's favour and the like, and who abstained from doing anything for him. The Apostle's "first defence" probably took place some weeks, or even months, before the writing of this letter. From our knowledge of the delays which often took place in Roman legal proceedings, there would be nothing surprising if a whole year had elapsed since the first opening of the case. It is quite possible, therefore, that at the time when it began St. Luke was not yet in Rome, and consequently had no opportunity of aiding his friend. And it is also possible that he was not in a position to render any assistance, however anxious he may have been to do so. There is no reason whatever for supposing that the Apostle includes him among those for whom he prays that God will forgive them their desertion of him, even as he himself forgives it.

Nor is there any contradiction between "Only Luke is with me," and the salutations sent by Eubulus and others. There were various members of the Church in Rome who occasionally visited St. Paul in his imprisonment, or at least kept up a certain amount of communication with him. But Luke was the only outsider who was with him, the only one who had come to him from a distance and been both able and willing to remain with him. Others both in Rome and from other Churches had paid visits to the prisoner; but they had been unable or unwilling to stay with him. Luke was the only person who had done that. Therefore the fact that various Roman Christians were ready to send greetings to Timothy is in no way inconsistent with the special commendation bestowed upon St. Luke for being his friend's sole companion in prison.

For the cowardly or unkind abstention of the rest the Apostle has no stronger word of condemnation than "may it not be laid to their account." No one knew better than himself how weak-hearted many of these disciples were, and how great were the dangers of his own position and of all those who ventured to associate themselves with him. It was otherwise in his first imprisonment. Then Nero was not quite the monster that he had since become. At that time the burning of Rome had not yet taken place, nor had the cruel outcry against the Christians, of which the conflagration was made the occasion, as yet been raised. It was quite otherwise now. To be known as a Christian might be dangerous; and to avow oneself as the associate of so notorious a leader as Paul could not fail to be so. Therefore, "May it not be laid to their account" (*μὴ αὐτοῖς λογισθείη*). This is the very spirit which the Apostle himself years before had declared to be a characteristic of Christian charity; "it taketh not account of evil" (*οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν*): and of God Himself, Who in dealing with mankind, "lays not to their account their trespasses" (*μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν*).*

"But," in contrast to these timid friends, "the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." Christ did not desert His faithful servant in the hour of need, but gave him courage and strength to speak out bravely before the court all that it was right that he should say. The contrast which the Apostle here makes between the many who forsook him and the One who stood by him reminds us of a similar contrast made by the Lord Himself. "Behold, the hour cometh, yea is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me" (John xvi. 32). In this respect also the saying remains true "A servant is not greater than his lord" (John xv. 20); and Apostles must expect no better treatment than their Master received. If they are deserted by their disciples and friends in the hour of danger, so also was He. But in each case those who are deserted are not alone, because, although human help fails, Divine support is always present.

"The Lord" in this passage, both here and a few lines further on, means Christ rather than the Father. This is in accordance with St. Paul's usage. "Lord" here has the article (ὁ

* 1 Cor. xiii. 5; 2 Cor. v. 19.

κύριος): and when that is the case it commonly means Jesus Christ (comp. ii. 7, 14, 22; iii. 11; iv. 14, 22; 1 Tim. i. 2, 12, 14; vi. 3, 14; 1 Cor. iv. 5; vi. 13; vii. 10, 12, 34; etc., etc. In Titus the word does not occur). Where "Lord" has no article in the Greek (κύριος) St. Paul usually means God and not Christ. Some would assert that, excepting where he quotes from the Old Testament (*e. g.*, 1 Cor. x. 26), this usage is invariable; but that is probably too sweeping an assertion. Nevertheless, there is no reason for doubting that in this passage "the Lord" means Jesus Christ. We may compare our own usage, according to which "our Lord" almost invariably means Christ, whereas "the Lord" more commonly means God the Father.

The word for "strengthen" (ἐνδυναμοῦν) means literally "to infuse power into" a person. It is one of which the Apostle is rather fond; and outside his writings it occurs in the New Testament only in the Acts and in Hebrews, once in each (Rom. iv. 20; Eph. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 13; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 1). It is worth while to compare the passage in which he speaks to Timothy of Christ having given him power to turn to Him and become His servant; and still more the passage in which, during his first Roman imprisonment, he tells the Philippians "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." The same thing was true in the second imprisonment.

The special purpose for which Christ stood by His Apostle and put strength and power into him is stated. "That through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Those who follow Eusebius in the mistake of supposing that the "first defence" refers to the trial which ended in St. Paul's release after the first imprisonment, understand this proclamation of the message to the Gentiles as referring to the missionary work which St. Paul was enabled to do during the few years of interval (*cir.* A. D. 63-66) before he was again arrested. But if the proclamation of the message took place in consequence of the Apostle's release, then it would have been placed after, and not before, the mention of deliverance out of the mouth of the lion. It is not said that he was delivered in order that through him the message might be proclaimed, but that he was strengthened in order that it might be proclaimed. And the special strengthening by Christ took place in reference to the first hearing of the case in court, when all human friends forsook him, while Christ stood by him. It was in court, therefore, that the proclamation of the message was made, and that through the instrumentality of the Apostle the preaching of the Gospel reached its culmination (τὸ κήρυγμα πληροφορηθῇ). This was the climax; —that in the metropolis of the world, in open court, before the imperial tribunal, the Gospel proclamation should be made with all solemnity and power. It is quite possible that this event, which the Apostle of the Gentiles regards as the completing act of his own mission and ministry, took place in the forum itself. Here Tiberius had caused a tribunal to be erected for causes which he had to hear as Emperor. But Claudius sometimes heard such cases elsewhere; and his successors probably followed his example. So that in the reign of Nero we cannot be certain that such a case as St. Paul's would be heard in the forum. But at any rate it would be held in a court to which the public had access; and the Roman public at this time was the most representative in the world. The Apostle is fully justified, therefore, in the language which he uses. This opportunity and power were granted "in order that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and that all the Gentiles might hear." In that representative city and before that representative audience he preached Christ; and through those who were present and heard him the fact would be made known throughout the civilised world that in the imperial city and before the imperial bench the Apostle of Christ had proclaimed the coming of His Kingdom.

And the result of it was that he was "delivered out of the mouth of the lion." This was a second consequence of the Lord's standing by him and strengthening him. He was enabled to speak with such effect, that the sentence of condemnation, which had been feared, was for the present averted. He was neither acquitted nor convicted; but the court, being unable to arrive at a satisfactory decision, granted an extension of time (*ampliatio*); that is, an adjournment. In technical phraseology the *actio prima* ended in a verdict of *non liquet*, and an *actio secunda* became necessary; and as this second trial might have a similar result, the amount of delay that was possible was almost boundless.

To ask who is meant by the lion is a futile question. Whom did the Psalmist mean by the lion, when he prayed "Save me from the lion's mouth" (Ps. xxii. 21)? He meant no one by the lion; but by the lion's mouth he meant some great and imminent danger. And that is what we must understand here. All kinds of gratuitous conjectures have been made by those who have insisted on identifying the lion;—the lion of the amphitheatre, to whom the Apostle might have been thrown, had he been condemned; the Emperor Nero, or, as he was possibly in Greece at this time, his prefect and representative Helius; or, the chief accuser; or again, Satan, whom St. Peter describes as "a roaring lion." All these are answers to a question which does not arise out of the text. The question is not, "Who is the lion?" but, "What is the meaning of the lion's mouth?" And the answer to that is, "a terrible danger," and especially "peril of death."

The goodness of the Lord does not end with this welcome, but temporary deliverance. "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom." Paul's enemies are not likely to be idle during the extension of time granted by the court. They will do their utmost to secure a sentence of condemnation at the second hearing of the case, and thus get the man whom they detest removed from the earth. Whether they will succeed in this or not, the Apostle does not know. But one thing he knows;—that whatever is really evil in their works against him will be powerless to harm him. The Lord will turn their evil into good. They may succeed in compassing his death. But, even if they do so, the Lord will make their work of death a work of salvation; and by the severing of the thread which still binds Paul to this life "will save him unto," that is, will translate him safe into, "His heavenly kingdom."

It is utterly improbable that by "every evil

work," St. Paul means any weakness or sin into which he himself might be betrayed through want of courage and steadfastness. Even if the lion's mouth could mean Satan, this would not be probable; for it would be Satan's attacks from without, by means of opposition and persecution, and not his attempts from within by means of grievous temptations, that would be meant. What is said above about Alexander the coppersmith shows what kind of "evil" and what kind of "works" is intended in "every evil work." The expression evidently refers to the machinations of Paul's enemies.

It is also highly improbable that "will save me unto His heavenly kingdom" means "will keep me alive until He returns in glory." There was a time when the Apostle expected, like most other Christians of that day, to live to behold the second coming of Christ. But what we have already seen in this Epistle shows that in St. Paul's mind that expectation is extinct. He no longer thinks that he will be one of those "that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15, 17); that he will be among the living, who "shall be changed," rather than among the dead, who "shall be raised" at the sounding of the last trump (1 Cor. xv. 53). He does not repeat, what seems almost to have been a familiar watchword among the Christians of that day,—"Maran atha"; "the Lord is at hand" (1 Cor. xvi. 22; Phil. iv. 5). On the contrary, it is his own hour that is at hand: "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." He is fully persuaded now that he will not live to see Christ's return in glory; and he does not expect that return to come speedily; for, as we have seen, one of his chief anxieties is that there should be a permanently organised ministry in the Churches, and that provision should be made for handing on the faith intact from generation to generation (Tit. i. 5; 2 Tim. ii. 2). There can be little doubt, therefore, that when the Apostle expresses a conviction that the Lord will save him unto His heavenly kingdom, he is not expecting to reach that kingdom without first passing through the gate of death. What he is sure of is this,—that the evil works of his adversaries will never be allowed to prevent him from reaching that blessed resting place. Christ's kingdom is twofold; He has a kingdom on earth and a kingdom in heaven. The saints who are in the kingdom on earth are still exposed to many kinds of evil works; and the Apostle is persuaded that in his case such works will be overruled by the Lord to further his progress from the earthly to the heavenly kingdom.

"To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

If what was said above about "the Lord" is correct, then here we have a doxology which manifestly is addressed to Christ. It is possible that in Rom. ix. 5 and xvi. 27 we have other examples, as also in Heb. xiii. 21; but in all these three cases the construction is open to question. Here, however, there can be no doubt that "the glory for ever and ever" is ascribed to the Lord Who stood by Paul at his trial and will deliver him from all evil works hereafter; and the Lord is Jesus Christ. As Chrysostom pointedly remarks without further comment: "Lo, here is a doxology to the Son." And it is word for word the same as that which in Gal. i. 5 is addressed to the Father.

With these words of praise on his lips we take our leave of the Apostle. He is a wearied worker, a forlorn and all but deserted teacher, a despised and all but condemned prisoner; but he knows that he has made no mistake. The Master, Who seems to have requited His servant so ill, is a royal Master, Who has royal gifts in store. He has never failed His servant in this life, in which His presence, though but dimly reflected, has always brightened suffering; and He will not fail in His promises respecting the life which is to come. The Apostle has had to sustain him, not merely Divine truth wherewith to enlighten his soul, and Divine rules, wherewith to direct his conduct; he has had also a Divine Person, wherewith to share his life. He has kept the faith in the Divine truth; he has finished his course according to the Divine rules; yet these things he has done, not in his own strength, but in Christ Who lives in him. It is this gracious indwelling which made the victory that has been won possible; and it is this which gives it its value. The faith which has been kept is faith in Him Who is the Truth. The course which has been finished is according to Him Who is the Way. And the life which has been shared has been united with Him Who is the Life. That union will never end. It began here; and it will be continued throughout eternity in "the life which is life indeed." And therefore, with a heart full of thankfulness to the Master Who has shared his sufferings and will share his bliss, he leaves us as his last address to Christ, "To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PREFACE.

IN this book the sole aim of the writer has been to trace the unity of thought in one of the greatest and most difficult books of the New Testament. He has endeavoured to picture his reader as a member of what is known in the Sunday-schools of Wales as "the teachers' class," a thoughtful Christian layman, who has no Greek, and desires only to be assisted in his efforts to come at the real bearing and force of words and to understand the connection of the sacred author's ideas. It may not be unnecessary to add that this design by no means implies less labour or thought on the part of the writer. But it does imply that the labour is veiled. Criticism is rigidly excluded.

The writer has purposely refrained from discussing the question of the authorship of the Epistle, simply because he has no new light to throw on this standing enigma of the Church. He is convinced that St. Paul is neither the actual author nor the originator of the treatise.

T. C. E.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

BY THE REV. THOMAS CHARLES EDWARDS, D. D.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVELATION IN A SON.

HEBREWS i. 1-3 (R. V.).

"GOD hath spoken." The eternal silence has been broken. We have a revelation. That God has spoken unto men is the ground of all religion. Theologians often distinguish between natural religion and revealed. We may fairly question if all worship is not based on some revelation of God. Prayer is the echo in man's spirit of God's own voice. Men learn to speak to the Father Who is in heaven as children come to utter words: by hearing their parents speak. It is the deaf who are also dumb. God speaks first, and prayer answers as well as asks. Men reveal themselves to the God Who has revealed Himself to them.

The Apostle is, however, silent about the revelations of God in nature and in conscience. He passes them by because we, sinful men, have lost the key to the language of creation and of our own moral nature. We know that He speaks through them, but we do not know what He says. If we were holy, it would be otherwise. All nature would be vocal "like some sweet beguiling melody." But to us the universe is a hieroglyphic which we cannot decipher, until we discover in another revelation the key that will make all plain.

More strange than this is the Apostle's omission to speak of the Mosaic dispensation as a revelation of God. We should have expected the verse to run on this wise: "God, having spoken unto the fathers in the sacrifices and in the prophets, institutions, and inspired words," etc. But the author says nothing about rites, institutions, dispensations, and laws, The reason apparently is that he wishes to compare with the revelation in Christ the highest, purest, and fullest revelation given before; and the most complete revelation vouchsafed to men, before the Son came to declare the Father, is to be found, not in sacrifices, but in the words of promise, not in the institutions, but in holy men, who were sent, time after time, to quicken the institutions into new life or to preach new truths. The prophets were seers and poets. Nature's highest gift is imagination, whether it "makes" a world that transcends nature or "sees" what in nature is hidden from the eyes of ordinary men. This faculty of the true poet, elevated, purified, taken possession of by God's Holy Spirit, became the best instrument of revelation, until the word of prophecy was made more sure through the still better gift of the Son.

But it would appear from the Apostle's language that even the lamp of prophecy, shining in a dark place, was in two respects defective. "God spake in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners." He spake in divers portions; that is, the revelation was broken, as the light was scattered before it was gathered into one source. Again, He spake in divers manners. Not only the revelation was fragmentary, but the separate portions were not of the same kind. The two defects were that the revelation lacked unity and was not homogeneous.

In contrast to the fragmentary character of the revelation, the Apostle speaks of the Son, in the second verse, as the centre of unity. He is the Heir and the Creator of all things. With the heterogeneous revelation in the prophets he contrasts, in the third verse, the revelation that takes its form from the peculiar nature of Christ's Sonship. He is the effulgence of God's glory, the very image of His substance; He upholds all things by the word of His power; and, having made purification of sins, He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Let us examine a little more closely the double comparison made by the Apostle between the revelation given to the fathers and that which we have received.

First, the previous revelation was in portions. The Old Testament had no centre, from which all its wonderful and varied lights radiate, till we find its unity in the New Testament and read Jesus Christ into it. God scattered the revelations over many centuries, line upon line, precept after precept, here a little and there a little. He spread the knowledge of Himself over the ages of a nation's history, and made the development of one people the medium whereby to communicate truth. This of itself, if nothing more had been told us, is a magnificent conception. A nation's early struggles, bitter failures, ultimate triumph, the appearance within it of warriors, prophets, poets, saints, used by the Spirit of God to reveal the invisible! Sometimes revelation would make but one advance in an age. We might almost imagine that God's truth from the lips of His prophets was found at times too overpowering. It was crushing frail humanity. The Revealer must withdraw into silence behind the thick veil, to give human nature time to breathe and recover self-possession. The occasional message of prophecy resembles the suddenness of Elijah's appearances and departures, and forms a strange contrast to the ceaseless stream of preaching in the Christian Church.

Still more strikingly does it contrast with the New Testament, the greater book, yea the greatest of all books. Only two classes of men deny its supremacy. They are those who do not know what real greatness is, and those who disparage it as a literature that they may be the better able to seduce foolish and shallow youths to reject it as a revelation. But honest and profound thinkers, even when they do not admit that it is the word of God, acknowledge it to be the greatest among the books of men.

Yet the New Testament was all produced—if we are forbidden to say "given"—in one age, not fifteen centuries. Neither was this one of the great ages of history, when genius seems to be almost contagious. Even Greece had at this time no original thinkers. Its two centuries of intellectual supremacy had passed away. It was

the age of literary imitations and counterfeits. Yet it is in this age that the book which has most profoundly influenced the thought of all subsequent times made its appearance. How shall we account for the fact? The explanation is not that its writers were great men. However insignificant the writers, the mysterious greatness of the book pervades it all, and their lips are touched as with a live coal from the altar. Nothing will account for the New Testament but the other fact that Jesus of Nazareth had appeared among men, and that He was so great, so universal, so human, so Divine, that He contained in His own person all the truth that will ever be discovered in the book. Deny the incarnation of the Son of God, and you make the New Testament an insoluble enigma. Admit that Jesus is the Word, and that the Word is God, and the book becomes nothing more, nothing less, than the natural and befitting outcome of what He said and did and suffered. The mystery of the book is lost in the greater mystery of His person.

Here the second verse comes in, to tell us of this great Person, and how He unites in Himself the whole of God's revelation. He is appointed Heir of all things, and through Him God made the ages. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, He which is, and which was, and which is to come,—the spring from which all the streams of time have risen and the sea into which they flow. But these are the two sides of all real knowledge; and revelation is nothing else than knowledge given by God. All the infinite variety of questions with which men interrogate nature may be reduced to two: Whence? and whither? As to the latter question, the investigation has not been in vain. We do know that, whatever the end will be, the whole universe rises from lower to higher forms. If one life perishes, it reappears in a higher life. It is the ultimate purpose of all which still remains unknown. But the Apostles declare that this interrogation is answered in Jesus Christ. Only that they speak, not of "ultimate purpose," but of "the appointed Heir." He is more than the goal of a development. He is the Son of the living God, and therefore the Heir of all the works and purposes of His Father. He holds His position by right of sonship, and has it confirmed to Him as the reward of filial service.

The word "Heir" is an allusion to the promise made to Abraham. The reference, therefore, is not to the eternal relation between the Son and God, not to any lordship which the Son acquires apart from His assumption of humanity and atoning death. The idea conveyed by the word "Heir" will come again to the surface, more than once, in the Epistle. But everywhere the reference is to the Son's final glory as Redeemer. At the same time, the act of appointing Him Heir may have taken place before the world was. We must, accordingly, understand the revelation here spoken of to mean more especially the manifestation of God in the work of redemption. Of this work also Christ is the ultimate purpose. He is the Heir, to Whom the promised inheritance originally and ultimately belongs. It is this that befits Him to become the full and complete Revealer of God. He is the answer to the question, Whither? in reference to the entire range of redemptive thought and action.

Again, He, too, is the Creator. Many seek to discover the origin of all things by analysis. They trace the more complex to the less complex, the compound to its elements, and the higher developments of life to lower types. But to the theologian the real difficulty does not lie here. What matter whence, if we are still the same? We know what we are. We are men. We are capable of thinking, of sinning, of hating or loving God. The problem is to account for these facts of our spirit. What is the evolution of holiness? Whence came prayer, repentance, and faith? But even these questions Christianity professes to answer. It answers them by solving still harder problems than these. Do we ask who created the human spirit? The Gospel tells us who can sanctify man's inmost being. Do we seek to know who made conscience? The New Testament proclaims One Who can purify conscience and forgive the sin. To create is but a small matter to Him Who can save. Jesus Christ is that Saviour. He, therefore, is that Creator. In being these things, He is the complete and final revelation of God.

Second, previous revelations were given in divers manners. God used many different means to reveal Himself, as if He found them one after another inadequate. And how can a visible, material creation sufficiently reveal the spiritual? How can institutions and systems reveal the personal, living God? How can human language even express spiritual ideas? Sometimes the means adopted appear utterly incongruous. Will the great Spirit, the holy and good God, speak to a prophet in the dreams of night? Shall we say that the man of God sees real visions when he dreams an unreal dream? Or will an apparition of the day more befittingly reveal God? Has every substance been possessed by the spirit of falsehood, so that the Being of beings can only reveal His presence in unsubstantial phantoms? Has the waking life of intellect become so entirely false to its glorious mission of discovering truth that the God of truth cannot reveal Himself to man, except in dreams and spectres? Yet there was a time when it might be well for us to recall our dreams, and wise to believe in spiritualism. For a dream might bring a real message from God, and ecstasy might be the birth-throes of a new revelation. Some of the good words of Scripture were at first a dream. In the midst of the confused fancies of the brain, when reason is for a time dethroned, a truth descends from heaven upon the prophet's spirit. This has been, but will never again take place. The oracles are dumb, and we shall not regret them. We consult no interpreter of dreams. We seek not the séances of necromancers. Let the peaceful spirits of the dead rest in God! They had their trials and sorrows on earth. Rest, hallowed souls! We do not ask you to break the deep silence of heaven. For God has spoken unto us in a Son, Who has been made higher than the heavens, and is as great as God. Even the Son need not, must not, come to earth a second time to reveal the Father in mighty deeds and a mightier self-sacrifice. The revelation given is enough. "We will not say in our hearts, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) The word is nigh us, in our mouth,

and in our heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach." *

The final form of God's revelation of Himself is, therefore, perfectly homogeneous. The third verse explains that it is a revelation, not only in a Son, but in His Sonship. We learn what kind of Sonship is His, and how its glorious attributes qualify Him to be the perfect Revealer of God. Nevermore will a message be sent to men except in Jesus Christ. God, Who spake unto the fathers in divers manners, speaks to us in Him, Whose Sonship constitutes Him the effulgence of God's glory, the image of His substance, the Upholder of the universe, and, lastly, the eternal Redeemer and King.

1. He is the effulgence of God's glory. Many expositors prefer another rendering: "the reflection of His glory." This would mean that God's self-manifestation, shining on an external substance, is reflected, as from a mirror, and that this reflection is the Son of God. But such an expression does not convey a consistent idea. For the Son must be the substance from which the light is reflected. What truth there is in this rendering is more correctly expressed in the next clause: "the image of His substance." It is, therefore, much better to accept the rendering adopted in the Revised Version: "the effulgence of His glory." God's glory is the self-manifestation of His attributes, or, in other words, the consciousness which God has of His own infinite perfections. This implies the triune personality of God. But it does not imply a revelation of God to His creatures. The Son participates in that consciousness of the Divine perfections. But He also reveals God to men, not merely in deeds and in words, but in His person. He *is* the revelation. To declare this seems to be the Apostle's purpose in using the word "effulgence." It expresses "the essentially ministrative character of the person of the Son." † If a revelation will be given at all, His Sonship points Him out as the Interpreter of God's nature and purposes, inasmuch as He is essentially, because He is Son, the emanation or radiance of His glory.

2. He is the image of His substance. A solar ray reveals the light, but not completely, unless indeed it guides the eye back along its pencilled line to the orb of day. If the Son of God were only an effulgence, Christ could still say that He Himself is the way to the Father, but He could not add, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." ‡ That the revelation may be complete, the Son must be, in one sense, distinct from God, as well as one with Him. Apparently this is the notion conveyed in the metaphor of the "image." Both truths are stated together in the words of Christ: "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." § If the Son is more than an effulgence, if He is "the very image" of God's essence, nothing in God will remain unrevealed. Every feature of His moral nature will be delineated in the Son. If the Son is the exact likeness of God and has a distinct mode of subsisting, He is capable of all the modifications in His form of subsisting which may be necessary, in order to make a complete revelation of God intelligible to men. It is possible for Him to become man Himself. He is capable of obedience, even of learning obedience by suffering, and of acquiring power to succour by being tempted. He can taste death. We might add, if we were studying one of St. Paul's Epistles (which we are not at present doing), that this distinction from God, involved in His very Sonship, made Him capable of emptying Himself of the Divine form of subsisting and taking upon Him instead of it the form of a servant. This power of meeting man's actual condition confers upon the Son the prerogative of being the complete and final revelation of God.

3. He upholds all things by the word of His power. This must be closely connected with the previous statement. If the Son is the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His essence, He is not a creature, but is the Creator. The Son is so from God that He is God. He so emanates from Him that He is a perfect and complete representation of His being. He is not in such a manner an effulgence as to be only a manifestation of God, nor in such a manner an image as to be a creature of God. But, in fellowship of nature, the essence of God is communicated to the Son in the distinctness of His mode of subsisting. The Apostle's words fully justify—perhaps they suggested—the expressions in the Nicene and still earlier creeds, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." If this is His relation to God, it determines His relation to the universe, and the relation of the universe to God. Philo had described the Word as an effulgence, and spoken also of Him as distinct from God. But in Philo these two statements are inconsistent. For the former means that the Word is an attribute of God, and the latter means that He is a creature. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that the Word is not an attribute, but a perfect representation of God's essence. He says also that He is not a creature, but the Sustainer of all things. These statements are consistent. The one, in fact, implies the other; and both together express the same conception which we find in St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." * It is also the teaching of St. Paul: "In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and in Him all things consist." †

But the Apostle has a further motive in referring to the Son as Upholder of all things. As Creator and Sustainer He reveals God. He upholds all things by the word of His power. "The invisible things of God are perceived through the things which are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity." ‡ There is a revelation of God prior even to that given in the prophets.

4. Having made purification of sins, He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. We come now, at last, to the special revelation of God which forms the subject of the Epistle. The Apostle here states his central truth on its two sides. The one side is Christ's priestly offering; the other is His kingly exaltation. We shall see as we proceed that the entire structure of the Epistle rests on this

* Rom. x. 6-8.
† Newman, "Arians," p. 182 (ed. 1883).
‡ John xiv. 6, 9.
§ John v. 26.

* John i. 1, 3. † Col. i. 16, 17. ‡ Rom. i. 20.

great conception,—the Son of God, the eternal Priest-King. By introducing it at this early stage, the author gives his readers the clue to what will very soon prove a labyrinth. We must hold the thread firmly, if we wish not to be lost in the maze. The subject of the treatise is here given us. It is "The Son as Priest-King the Revealer of God." The revelation is not in words only, nor in external acts only, but in love, in redemption, in opening heaven to all believers. It is well termed a revelation. For the Priest-King has rent the thick veil and opened the way to men to enter into the true holiest place, so that they know God by prayer and communion.

CHAPTER II.

THE SON AND THE ANGELS.

HEBREWS i. 4-ii. 18.

THE most dangerous and persistent error against which the theologians of the New Testament had to contend was the doctrine of emanations. The persistence of this error lay in its affinity with the Christian conception of mediation between God and men; its danger sprang from its complete inconsistency with the Christian idea of the person and work of the Mediator. For the Hebrew conception of God, as the "I Am," tended more and more in the lapse of ages to sever Him from all immediate contact with created beings. It would be the natural boast of the Jews that Jehovah dwelt in unapproachable light. They would point to the contrast between Him and the human gods of the Greeks. An ever-deepening consciousness of sin and spiritual gloom would strengthen the conviction that the Lord abode behind the veil, and their conception of God would of necessity react on their consciousness of sin. If, therefore, God is the absolute Being—so argued the Gnostics of the day—He cannot be the actual Creator of the world. We must suppose the existence of an emanation or a series of emanations from God, every additional link in the chain being less Divine, until we arrive at the material universe, where the element of Divinity is entirely lost. These emanations are the angels, the only possible mediators between God and men. Some theories came to a stand at this point; others took a further step, and worshipped the angels, as the mediators also between men and God. Thus the angels were regarded as messengers or apostles from God and reconcilers or priests for men. St. Paul has already rejected these notions in his Epistle to the Colossians. He teaches that the Son of God's love is the visible image of the invisible God, prior to all creation and by right of primogeniture Heir of all, Creator of the highest angels, Himself being before they came into existence. Such He is before His assumption of humanity. But it pleased God that in Him, also as God-Man, all the plenitude of the Divine attributes should dwell; so that the Mediator is not an emanation, neither human nor Divine, but is Himself God and Man.*

Recent expositors have sufficiently proved that there was a Judaic element in the Colossian heresy. We need not, therefore, hesitate to admit that the Epistle to the Hebrews contains references to the same error. Our author acknowledges the existence of angels. He declares that the Law was given through angels, which is a point not touched upon more than once in the Old Testament, but seemingly taken for granted, rather than expressly announced, in the New. Stephen reproaches the Jews, who had received the Law as the ordinances of angels, with having betrayed and murdered the Righteous One, of Whom the Law and the prophets spake.* St. Paul, like the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, argues that the Law differs from the promise in having been ordained through angels, as mediators between the Lord and His people Israel, whereas the promise was given by God, not as a compact between two parties, but as the free act of Him Who is one.† The main purpose of the first and second chapters of our Epistle is to maintain the superiority of the Son to the angels, of Him in Whom God has spoken unto us to the mediators through whom He gave the Law.

The defect of the doctrine of emanations was twofold. They are supposed to consist of a long chain of intermediate beings. But the chain does not connect at either end. God is still absolutely unapproachable by man; man is still inaccessible to God. It is in vain new links are forged. The chain does not, and never will, bring man and God together. The only solution of the problem must be found in One Who is God and Man; and this is precisely the doctrine of our author,—on the one hand, that the Revealer of God is Son of God; and, on the other hand, that the Son of God is our brother-man. The former statement is proved, and a practical warning based upon it, in the section that extends from chap. i. 4 to chap. ii. 4. The latter is the subject of the section from chap. ii. 5 to chap. ii. 18.

I. THE REVEALER OF GOD SON OF GOD.

"Having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time,

> "Thou art my Son,
> This day have I begotten Thee?

and again,

> "I will be to him a Father,
> And He shall be to Me a Son?

And when He again bringeth in the Firstborn into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He saith

> "Who maketh His angels winds,
> And His ministers a flame of fire:

but of the Son 'He saith,'

> "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;
> And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.
> Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;
> Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee
> With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

And

> "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth,
> And the heavens are the works of Thy hands:
> They shall perish; but Thou continuest:
> And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
> And as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up,
> As a garment, and they shall be changed:
> But Thou art the same,
> And Thy years shall not fail.

* Col. i. 15, 19.

* Acts vii. 53. † Gal. iii. 19.

But of which of the angels hath He said at any time,

"Sit Thou on My right hand,
Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet?

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (Heb. i. 4-ii. 4. R. V.).

Christ is Son of God, not in the sense in which angels, as a class of beings, are designated by this name, but as He Who has taken His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. The greatness of His position is proportionate to the excelency of the name of Son. This name He has not obtained by favour nor attained by effort, but inherited by indefeasible right. Josephus says that the Essenes forbade their disciples to divulge the names of the angels. But He Who has revealed God has been revealed Himself. He is Son. Which of the angels was ever so addressed? To speak of the angels as sons and yet say that not one of them individually is a son may be self-contradictory in words, but the thought is consistent and true.

From the pre-existent Son, regarded as the idealised theocratic King, the Apostle passes to the incarnate Christ, returning to the world which He has redeemed, and out of which He brings * many sons of God unto glory. God brings Him also in as the First-begotten among these many brethren. But our Lord Himself describes His coming. "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the angels with Him."† In allusion to this saying of Christ, the Apostle applies to His second advent the words which in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament are a summons to all the angels to worship Jehovah. They are the Son's ministers. Like swift winds, they convey His messages; or they carry destruction at His bidding, like a flame of fire. But the Son is enthroned God for ever. The sceptre of righteousness, by whomsoever borne, is the sceptre of His kingdom; all thrones and powers, human and angelic, hold sway under Him. They are His fellows, and participate only in His royal gladness, Whose joy surpasses theirs.

The author reverts to the Son's pre-incarnate existence. The Son created earth and heaven, and for that reason He remains when the works of His hand wax old, as a garment. Creation is the vesture of the Son. In all the changes of nature the Son puts off a garment, while He remains unchanged Himself.

Finally, our author glances at the triumphant consummation, when God will do for His Son what He will not do for the angels. For He will make His enemies the footstool of His feet, as the reward of His redemptive work. The angels have no enemy to conquer. Neither are they the authors of our redemption. Yea, they are not even the redeemed. The Son is the Heir of the throne. Men are the heirs of salvation. Must we, then, quite exclude the angels from all present activity in the kingdom of the Son? Do they altogether belong to a past epoch in the development of God's revelation? Must we say of them, as astronomers speak of the moon, that they are dead worlds? Shall we not rather find a place for them in the spirit-world corresponding to the office filled in the sphere of nature by the works of God's hands? God has His earthly ministers. Are not the angels ministering spirits? The Apostle puts the question tentatively. But the pious instinct of the Church and of good men has answered, Yes. For salvation has created a new form of service for which nature is not fitted. The narrative of the Son's own life on earth suggests the same reply. For an angel appeared unto Him in Gethsemane and strengthened Him.* It is true that the Son Himself is the Minister of the sanctuary. He alone serves in the holiest place. But may not the angels be sent forth to minister? Salvation is the work of the Son. But shall we not say that the angels perform a service for the Son, which is possible only because of men who are now on the eve of inheriting that salvation?

We must beware of minimising the significance of the Apostle's words. If he means by "Son" merely an official designation, where is the difference between the Son and the angels? The only definition of "Son" that will satisfy the argument is "God the Revealer of God." Sabellius said, "The Word is not the Son." The contrary doctrine is necessary to give any value to the reasoning of our Epistle. The Revealer is Son; and the Son, in order to be the full Revealer, must be "of the essence of the Father," inasmuch as God only can perfectly reveal God. This is so vital to the Apostle's argument that he need not hesitate to use a term in reference to the Son which in another connection might be liable to be misunderstood, as if it expressed the theory of emanation. The Son is "the effulgence" of the Father's glory, or, in the words of the Nicene Creed, He is "Light out of Light." It is safe to use such words when our very argument demands that He should also be "the distinct impress of His substance,"—"very God out of very God."

The Apostle has now laid the foundation of his great argument. He has shown us the Son as the Revealer of God. This done, he at once introduces his first practical warning. It is his manner. He does not, like St. Paul, first conclude the argumentative portion of his Epistle, and afterwards heap precept on precept in words of warning, sympathy, or encouragement. Our author alternates argument with exhortation. The Epistle wears to a superficial reader the appearance of a mosaic. The truth is that no book in the New Testament is more thoroughly or more skilfully welded into one piece from beginning to end. But the danger was imminent, and urgent warning was needed at every step. One truth was better fitted to drive home one lesson, and another argument to enforce another.

The first danger of the Hebrew Christians would arise from indifference. The first warning of the Apostle is, Take care that you do not drift. In the Son as the Revealer of God we have a sure anchorage. Let us fasten the vessel to its moorings. That the Son has revealed God is beyond question. The fact is well as-

* ἀγαγόντα. † Matt. xxv. 31.

* Luke xxii. 43. The genuineness of the verse is somewhat doubtful.

sured. For the message of salvation has been proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Himself. It has run its course down to the writer of the Epistle and his readers through the testimony of eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses. God Himself has borne witness with these faithful men by signs and wonders and divers manifestations of power, yea by giving the Holy Ghost to each one severally according to His own will. The last words are not to be neglected. The apparent arbitrariness of His sovereign will in the distribution of the Spirit lends force to the proof, by pointing to the direct, personal action of God in this great concern.

But the warning is based, not simply on the fact of a revelation, but on the greatness of the Revealer. The Law was given through angels, and the Law was not transgressed with impunity. How, then, shall we escape God's anger if we contemptuously neglect a salvation so great that no one less than the Son could have wrought or revealed it?

Observe the emphatic notions. Salvation is contrasted with law. It is a greater sin to despise God's free, merciful offer of eternal life than to transgress the commandments of His justice. There may be emphasis also on the certainty of the proof. The word spoken by angels was firmly assured, and, because no man could shelter under the plea that the heavenly authority of the message was doubtful, disobedience met with unsparing retribution. But the Gospel is proved to be of God by still more abundant evidence,—the personal testimony of the Lord Jesus, the witness of those who heard Him, and the cumulative argument of gifts and miracles. While these truths are emphatic, more important than all is the fact that the Son is the Giver of this salvation. The thought seems to be that God is jealous for the honour of His Son. Our Lord Himself teaches this, and the form which it assumes in His parable implies that He speaks, not as a speculative moralist, but as One Who knows God's heart. "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son." But when Christ asks His hearers what the lord of the vineyard will do unto those wicked husbandmen, the manner of their reply shows that they only half understand His meaning or else pretend not to see the point of His question. They acknowledge the husbandmen's wickedness, but profess that it consists largely in not rendering to the owner the fruits in their season, as if, forsooth, their wickedness in killing their master's son had not thrust their dishonesty quite out of sight.* The Apostle, too, appeals to his readers,† evidently in the belief that they would at once feel the force of his argument, whether trampling under foot the Son of God did not deserve sorer punishment than despising the law of Moses. Christ and the Apostle speak in the spirit of the second Psalm: "Thou art My Son. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. . . . Kiss the Son!" Now, if Christ adopts this language, it is not mere metaphor, but is a truth concerning God's moral nature. Resentment must, in some sense or other, belong to God's Fatherhood. The doctrine of the Trinity implies the necessary and eternal altruism of the Divine nature. It would not be true to say that the God of the Christians was less jealous than the God of the Hebrews. He is still the living God. It is a fearful thing to fall into His hands. He will still vindicate the majesty of His law. But now He has spoken unto us in One Who is Son. The Judge of all is not a mere official Administrator, but a Father. The place occupied in the Old Testament by the Law is now filled by the Son.

* Matt. xxi. 33, sqq. † Heb. x. 29.

II. The Son the Representative of Man.

"For not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak. But one hath somewhere testified, saying,

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?
Thou madest him a little lower than the angels:
Thou crownedst him with glory and honour,
And didst set him over the works of Thy hands:
Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet.

For in that He subjected all things unto him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, *even* Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every *man*. For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

"I will declare Thy name unto My brethren,
In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise."

And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not of angels doth He take hold, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. ii. 5–8, R. V.).

The Son is better than the angels, not only because He is the Revealer of God, but also because He represents man. We have to do with more than spoken promises. The salvation through Christ raises man to a new dignity, and bestows upon him a new authority. God calls into existence a "world to come," and puts that world in subjection, not to angels, but to man.

The passage on the consideration of which we now enter is difficult, because the interpretation offered by some of the best expositors, though at first sight it has the appearance of simplicity, really introduces confusion into the argument. They think the words of the Psalmist,* as applied by the Apostle, refer to Christ only. But the Psalmist evidently contrasts the frailty of man with the authority bestowed upon him by Jehovah. Mortal man has been set over the works of God's hand. Man is for a little inferior to the angels; yet he is crowned with glory and honour. The very contrast between his frailty and his dignity exalts the name of his Creator, Who judges not as we judge. For He confronts His blasphemers with the lisping of children, and weak man He crowns king of creation, in order to put to shame the wisdom of the world.†

* Ps. viii. 4. † Ps. viii. 2.

We cannot suppose that this is said of Christ, the Son of God. But there are two expressions in the Psalm that suggested to St. Paul and the author of this Epistle a Messianic reference. The one is the name "Son of man;" the other is the action ascribed to God: "Thou hast made him lower than the angels." The word used by the Seventy, whose translation the Apostle here and elsewhere adopts, means, not, as the Hebrew, "to create lower," but "to bring from a more exalted to a humbler condition." Christ appropriated to Himself the title of "Son of man;" and "to lower from a higher to a less exalted position" applies only to the Son of God, Whose pre-existence is taught by the Apostle in chap. i. The point of the Apostle's application of the Psalm must, therefore, be that in Christ alone have the Psalmist's words been fulfilled. The Psalmist was a prophet, and testified. In addition to the witnesses previously mentioned, the Apostle cites the evidence from prophecy. An inspired seer, "seeing this beforehand, spake of Christ," not primarily, but in a mystery now explained in the New Testament. The distinction also between crowning with glory and putting all things under his feet holds true only of Christ. The Psalmist, we admit, appears to identify them. But the relevancy of the Apostle's use of the Psalm lies in the distinction between these two things. The creature man may be said to be crowned with glory and honour by receiving universal dominion and by the subjection of all things under his feet. "But we see not yet all things put under him;" and, consequently, we see not man crowned with glory and honour. The words of the Psalmist have apparently failed of fulfilment or were at best only poetical exaggeration. But Him Who was actually translated from a higher to a lower place than that of angels, from heaven to earth—that is to say, Jesus, the meek and lowly Man of Nazareth—we see crowned with glory and honour. He has ascended to heaven and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. So far the prophecy has come true, but only so far. All things have not yet been put under Him. He is still waiting till He has put all enemies, even the last enemy, which is death, under His feet. As, then, the glory and honour are bestowed on man through his Representative, Jesus, so also dominion is given him only through Jesus; and the glory comes only with the dominion. Every honour that falls to man's share is won for him by the victory of Christ over an enemy. This is the nearest approach in our Epistle to the Pauline conception of Christ as the second Adam.

But is there any connection between Christ's victory and His being made lower than the angels? When the Psalmist describes the great dignity conferred on frail man, he sees only the contrast between the dignity and the frailty. He can only wonder and worship in observing the incomprehensible paradox of God's dealings with man. The Apostle, on the other hand, fathoms this mystery. He gives the reasons for the strange connection of power and feebleness, not indeed in reference to man as a creature, but in reference to the Man Christ Jesus. Apart from Christ the problem that struck the Psalmist with awe remains unsolved. But in Christ's incarnation we see why man's glory and dominion rest on humiliation.

1. Christ's humiliation involved a propitiatory death for every man, and He is crowned with glory and honour that His propitiation may prove effectual: "that He may have tasted death for every man." By His glory we must mean the self-manifestation of His person. Honour is the authority bestowed upon Him by God. Both are the result of His suffering death, or rather the suffering of His death. He is glorified, not simply because He suffered, but because His suffering was of a certain kind and quality. It was a propitiatory suffering. Christ Himself prayed His Father to glorify Him with His own self with the glory He had with the Father before the world was.* This glory was His by right of Sonship. But He receives from His Father another glory, not by right, but by God's grace. It consists in having His death accepted and acknowledged as an adequate propitiation for the sins of men. In this verse the great conception of atonement, which hereafter will fill so large a place in the Epistle, is introduced, not at present for its own sake, but in order to show the superiority of Christ to the angels. He is greater than they because He is the representative Man, to Whom, and not to the angels, the world to come has been put in subjection. But the Psalmist has taught us that man's greatness is connected with humiliation. This connection is realised in Christ, Whose exaltation is the Divine acceptance of the propitiation wrought in the days of His humiliation, and the means of giving it effect.

2. Christ's glory consists in being Leader of His people, and for such leadership He was fitted by the discipline of humiliation. There is no incongruity in the works of God because He is Himself the ground of their being and the instrument of His own action. Every adaptation of means to an end would not become God, though it might befit man. But this became Him for Whom and through Whom are all things. When He crowns man with glory and honour, He does this, not by an external ordinance merely, but by an inward fitness. He deals, not with an abstraction, but with individual men, whom He makes His sons and prepares for their glory and honour by the discipline of sons. "For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" Thus it is more true to say that God leads His sons to glory than to say that He bestows glory upon them. It follows that the representative Man, through Whom these many sons are glorified, must Himself pass through like discipline, that, on behalf of God, He may become their Leader and the Captain of their salvation. It became God to endow the Son, in Whose Sonship men are adopted as sons of God, with inward fitness, through sufferings, to lead them on to their destined glory. Perhaps the verse contains an allusion to Moses or Joshua, the leaders of the Lord's redeemed to the rich land and large. If so, the author is preparing his readers for what he has yet to say.

3. Christ's glory consists in power to consecrate men to God, and this power springs from His consciousness of brotherhood with them. But, first of all, the author thinks it necessary to prove that Christ has a deep consciousness of brotherhood with men. He cites Christ's own words from prophetic Scripture. For Christ has vowed unto the Lord, Who has de-

* John xvii. 5.

livered Him, that He will declare God's name unto His brethren. Here the pith of the argument is quite as much in the vow to reveal God to them as in His giving them the name of brethren. He is so drawn in love to them that He is impelled to speak to them about the Father. Yea, in the midst of the Church, as if He were one of the congregation, He will praise God. They praise God for His Son; the Son joins in the praise, as being thankful for the privilege of being their Saviour, while they offer their thanks for the joy of being saved. That is not all. Christ puts His trust in God. So human is He that, conscious of other weakness, He leans on God, as the feeblest of His brethren. Finally, His triumphant joy at the safety of His redeemed ones arises from this consciousness of brotherhood. "Behold, I and the children" (of God) "which God hath given Me."* The Apostle does not fear to apply to Christ what Isaiah† spoke in reference to himself and his disciples, the children of the prophet. Christ's brotherhood with men assumes the form of identifying Himself with His prophetic servants. Evidently He is not ashamed of His brethren, though, like Joseph, He has reason to be ashamed of them for their sin. The expression means that He glories in them, because His assumption of humanity has consecrated them. For this consecration springs from union. We do not, for our part, understand this as a general proposition, of which the sanctifying power of Christ is an illustration. No other instance of such a thing exists. Yet the Apostle does not prove the statement. He appeals to the intelligence and conscience of his readers to acknowledge its truth. Whether we understand the word "sanctification" in the sense of moral consecration through an atonement or in the sense of holy character, it springs from union. Christ cannot sanctify by a creative word or by an act of power. Neither can His power to sanctify be transmitted by God to the Son externally, in the same way in which the Creator bestows on nature its vital, fertilising energy. Christ must derive His power to sanctify through His Sonship, and men must become sons of God that they may be sanctified through the Son. Our passage adds Christ's brotherhood. He that consecrates, therefore, and they that are consecrated are united together, first, by being born of the same Divine Father, and, second, by having the same human nature. Here, again, the chain connects at both ends: on the side of God and on the side of man. Now to have dwelling in Him the power of consecrating men to God is so great an endowment that Christ may dare even to glory in the brotherhood that brings with it such a gift.

4. Christ's glory manifests itself in the destruction of Satan, who had the power of death, and his destruction is accomplished through death.‡ The children of God have every one his share of blood and flesh, which means vital, mortal humanity. Blood signifies life, and flesh the mortality of that life. They are, therefore, subject to disease and death. But to the Hebrews disease and death involved vastly more than physical suffering and the termination of man's earthly existence. They had their angel, by which is meant that they had a moral significance. They were spiritual forces, wielded by a messenger of God. This angel was Satan. But, following the lead of the later Jewish theology, our author explains who Satan really is. He identifies him with the evil spirit, who from envy, says the Book of Wisdom, brought death into the world. To make clear this identification, he adds the words, "that is, the devil." The reference to Satan is sufficient to show that the writer of the Epistle means by "the power of death" power to inflict it and keep men in its terrible grasp. But the difficulty is to understand how the devil is destroyed through death. Evidently the death of Christ is meant; we may paraphrase the Apostle's expression by rendering, "through His death." At first glance, the words, taken in connection with the reference to Christ's humanity, seem to favour the doctrine, propounded by many writers in the early ages of the Church, that God delivered His Son to Satan as the price of man's release from his rightful possession. Such a notion is utterly inconsistent with the dominant idea of the Epistle: the priestly character of Christ's death. A Hebrew Christian could not conceive the high-priest entering the holiest place to offer a redemptive sacrifice to the spirit of evil. Indeed, the advocates of this strange theory of the Atonement admitted as much when they described Christ as outwitting the devil or escaping from his hands by persuasion. But the doctrine is quite as inconsistent with the passage before us, which represents the death of Christ as the destruction of the Evil One. Power faces power. Christ is the Captain of salvation. His leadership of men implies conflict with their enemy and ultimate victory. Death was a spiritual conception. Here lay its power. Deliverance from the crushing bondage of its fear could come only through the great High-priest. Priesthood was the basis of Christ's power. We shall soon see that Christ is the Priest-King. The Apostle even now anticipates what he has hereafter to say on the relation of the priesthood to the kingly power. For as Priest Christ delivers men from guilt of conscience and, by so doing, delivers them from their fear of death; as King He destroys him who had the power to destroy. He is "death of death and hell's destruction." It has been well said that the two terrors from which none but Christ can deliver men are guilt of sin and fear of death. The latter is the offspring of the former. When the conscience of sin is no more, dread of death yields to peace and joy.

In these four ways is the glory of Christ connected with humiliation, and thus will the prophecy of the Psalmist find its fulfilment in the representative Man, Jesus. His humiliation implied propitiation, moral discipline, conscious brotherhood, and subjection to him who had the power of death. His glory consisted in the effectiveness of the propitiation, in leadership of His people, in consecration of His brethren, in the destruction of the devil.

But an interesting view of the passage has been proposed by Hofmann, and accepted by at least one thoughtful theologian of our country. They consider that the Apostle identifies the humiliation and the glory. In the words of Dr. Bruce,* "Christ's whole state of exinanition was not only worthy to be rewarded by a subsequent state of exaltation, but was in itself invested with moral sublimity and dignity." The

* Chap. ii. 13. † Isa. viii. 18. ‡ Chap. ii. 14.

* "Humiliation of Christ," p. 46.

idea has considerable fascination. We cannot set it aside by saying that it is modern, seeing that the Apostle himself speaks of the office of high-priest as an honour and a glory.* Yet we are compelled to reject it as an explanation of the passage. The Apostle is showing that the Psalmist's statement respecting man is realised only in the Man Christ Jesus. The difficulty was to connect man's low estate and man's glory and dominion. But if the Apostle means that voluntary humiliation for the sake of others is the glory, some men besides Jesus Christ might have been mentioned in whom the words of the Psalm find their accomplishment. The difference between Jesus and other good men would only be a difference of degree. Such a conclusion would very seriously weaken the force of the Apostle's reasoning.

In bringing his most skilful and original argument to a close, the Apostle recapitulates. He has said that the world to come,—the world of conscience and of spirit,—has been put in subjection to man, not to angels, and that this implies the incarnation of the Son of God. This thought the Apostle repeats in another, but very striking, form: "For verily He taketh not hold of angels, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." Though the old versions were incorrect in so rendering the words as to make them express the fact of the Incarnation, the verse is a reference to the Incarnation, described, however, as Christ's strong grasp of man. By becoming man He takes hold of humanity, as with a mighty hand, and that part by which He grasps humanity is the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise was made.

Four points of connection between the glory of Christ and His humiliation have been mentioned. In his recapitulation, the Apostle sums all up in two. The one is that Christ is Priest; the other is that He succours them that are tempted. His propitiatory death and His bringing to naught the power of Satan are included in the notion of priesthood. The moral discipline that made Him our Leader and the sense of brotherhood that made Him Sanctifier render Him able to succour the tempted. Even this also, as will be fully shown by the Apostle in a subsequent chapter, is contained in His priesthood. For He only can make propitiation, Whose heart is full of tender pity and steeled only against pity for Himself by reason of His dauntless fidelity to others.

Thus is the Son better than the angels.

CHAPTER III.

FUNDAMENTAL ONENESS OF THE DISPENSATIONS.

HEBREWS iii. 1-iv. 13 (R. V.).

THE broad foundation of Christianity has now been laid in the person of the Son, God-Man. In the subsequent chapters of the Epistle this doctrine is made to throw light on the mutual relations of the two dispensations.

The first deduction is that the Mosaic dispensation was itself created by Christ; that the threats and promises of the Old Testament live on into the New; that the central idea of the Hebrew religion, the idea of the Sabbath rest, is realised in its inmost meaning in Christ only; that the word of God is ever full of living energy. Hereafter the Apostle will not be slow to expose the wide difference between the two dispensations. But it is equally true and not less important that the old covenant was the vesture of truths which remain when the garment has been changed.

At the outset the writer's tone is influenced by this doctrine. He turns his treatise unconsciously into an epistle. He addresses his readers as brethren, holy indeed, but not holy after the pattern of their former exclusiveness; for their holiness is inseparably linked with their common brotherhood. They are partakers with the Gentile Churches in a heavenly call. Startling words! Hebrews holy in virtue of their sharing with Greeks and barbarians, bond and free, in a common call from high Heaven, which sees all earth as a level plain beneath! The middle wall of partition has been broken down to the ground. Yet soothing words, and full of encouragement! The Apostle and his readers were standing near the end of the Apostolic age, when the Hebrew Christians were despondent, weak, and despised, both by reason of national calamities and because of their inferiority to their sister Churches among the Gentiles. The Apostle does not bluntly assure them of their equality, but gently addresses them as partakers of a heavenly call. His words are the reverse of St. Paul's language to the Ephesians, who are reminded that the Gentiles are partakers in the privileges of Israel. Those who sometime were far off have been made nigh; the strangers and sojourners are henceforth fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Here, on the contrary, Hebrew Christians are encouraged with the assurance that they partake in the privileges of all believers. If the wild olive tree has been grafted in among the branches and made partaker of the root, the branches, broken off that the wild olive might be grafted in, are themselves in consequence grafted into their own olive tree. Through God's mercy to the Gentiles, Israel also has obtained mercy.

The Apostle addresses them with affection. But his behest is sharp and urgent: "Consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Jesus." Consider intently, or, to borrow a modern word that has sometimes been abused, Realise Jesus. Dwell not with abstractions and theories. Fear not imaginary dangers. Make Jesus Christ a reality before the eyes of your mind. To do this well will be more convincing than external evidences. To behold the glory of the temple, linger not to admire the strong buttresses without, but enter. Realisation of Christ may be said to be the gist of the whole Epistle.

This spiritual vision is not ecstasy. We realise Christ as Apostle and as High-priest. We behold Him when His words are a message to us from God, and when He carries our supplications to God. Revelation and prayer are the two opposite poles of communion with the Father. The dispensation of Moses rested on these two pillars,—apostleship and priesthood. But the fundamental conceptions of the Old Testament centre in Jesus. Though our author has distinguished between God's revelation in the prophets and His revelation in a Son, he teaches also that even the prophets received

* Chap. v. 4, 5.

their message through the Son. Though he contrasts in what follows of the Epistle the high-priesthood of Aaron with Christ's, still he regards Aaron's office as utterly meaningless apart from Christ. The words "Apostle and High-priest" pave the way, therefore, to the most prominent truth in this section of the Epistle: that whatever is best in the Old Testament has been assimilated and inspired with new energy by the Gospel.

1. To begin, we must understand the actual position of the founders of the two dispensations. Neither Moses nor Christ set about originating, designing, constructing, from his own impulse and for his own purposes. Both acted for God, and were consciously under His directing eye.* "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."† They have but to obey, and leave the unity and harmony of the plan to another. To use an illustration, every house is built by some one or other.‡ The design has been conceived in the brain of the architect. He is the real builder, though he employs masons and joiners to put the materials together according to his plan. This applies to the subject in hand; for God is the Architect of all things. He realises His own ideas as well through the seeming originality of thinkers as through the willing obedience of workers. Now, the dispensation of the old covenant was one part of God's design. To build this portion of the house He found a faithful servant in Moses. The dispensation of the new covenant is but another, though more excellent, part of the same design; and Jesus was not less faithful to finish the structure. The unity of the design was in the mind of God.

Moses was faithful when he refused the treasures of Egypt, and chose affliction with the people of God and the reproach of His Christ. He was faithful when he chid the people in the wilderness for their unbelief, and when he interceded for them again with God. Christ also was faithful to His God when He despised the shame and endured the Cross.

Yet we must acknowledge a difference. God has accounted Jesus worthy of greater honour than Moses, inasmuch as Moses was part of the house, and that part the pre-existent Christ erected. Moses was "made" all that he became by Christ, but Christ was "made"§ all that He became—God-Man—by God. Moreover, though Moses was greater than all the other servants of God before Christ, because they were placed in subordinate positions, while he was faithful in the whole house, yet even he was but a servant, whereas Christ was Son. Moses was in the house, it is true; but the Son was placed over the house. The work which Moses had to do was to uphold the authority of the Son, to witness, that is, to the things which would afterwards be spoken unto us by God in His Son, Jesus Christ.‖

The Apostle seems to delight in his illustration of the house, and continues to use it with a fresh meaning. This house, or, if you please, this household, are we Christians. We are the house in which Moses showed the utmost faithfulness as servant. We are the circumcision, we the true Israel of God. If, then, we turn away from Christ to Moses, that faithful servant himself will have none of us. That we may be God's house, we must lay fast hold of our Christian confidence and the boasting of our hope out-and-out to the end.

2. Again, the threatenings of the Old Testament for disobedience to God apply with full force to apostasy from Christ. They are the authoritative voice of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle is reminded by the words which he has just used, "We are God's house," of the Psalmist's joyful exclamation, "He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."* Then follows in the Psalm a warning, which the Apostle considers it equally necessary to address to the Hebrew Christians: "To-day, if indeed you still hear His voice (for it is possible He may no longer speak), harden not your hearts, as you did in Meribah, rightly called,—the place of contention. Your fathers, far from trusting Me when I put them to the test, turned upon Me and put Me to the test, and that although they saw My works during forty years." Forty years,—ominous number! The readers would at once call to mind that forty years within a little had now passed since their Lord had gone through the heavens to the right hand of the Father. What if, after all, the old belief proves true that He returns to judgment after waiting for precisely the same period for which He had patiently endured their fathers' unbelief in the wilderness! God is still living, and He is the same God. He Who sware in His wrath that the fathers should not enter into the rest of Canaan is the same in His anger, the same in His mercy. Exhort one another. In the wilderness God dealt with individuals. He does so still. See that there be no evil heart, which is unbelief, in any one of you at any time while the call "To-day!" is sounded in your ears. For sin weakens the sense of individual guilt, and thus deceives men by hardening their hearts.† All that came out of Egypt provoked God to anger. But they provoked Him, not in the mass, but one by one, and one by one, with palsied limbs, they fell in the wilderness, as men fall exhausted on the march. Thus, for their persistent unbelief, God sware they should not enter into His rest—"His," for He kept the key still in His own hand. But persistent unbelief made them incapable of entering. If God were still willing to cut off for them the waters of Jordan, they could not enter in because of unbelief.

3. Similarly, the promises of God are still in force. Indeed, the steadfastness of the threatenings involves the continuance of the promises, and the rejection of the promises ensures the fulfilment of every threatening. As much as this is expressed in the opening words of chap. iv.: "A promise being left to us, let us therefore fear."

To prove the identity of the promises under the two dispensations, the Apostle singles out one promise which may be considered most significant of the national no less than the religious life of Israel. The Greek mind was ever on the alert for something new. Its character was movement. But the ideal of the Old Testament is rest. Christ came into touch with the people at once when He began His public ministry with an invitation to the weary and heavy-laden to come unto Him, and with the promise that He would give them rest. Near the close of His ministry He explained and fulfilled the

* Chap. iii. 2. † 1 Cor. iv. 2. ‡ Chap. iii. 4.
§ ποιήσαντι. ‖ Chap. iii. 5.

* Ps. xcv. 7, sqq. † Chap. ii. 13.

promise by giving to His disciples peace. The object of our author, in the difficult chapter now under consideration, is to show that the idea most characteristic of the old covenant finds its true and highest realisation in Christ. After the manner of St. Paul, who, in more than one passage, teaches that through the fall of Israel salvation is come unto the Gentiles, the writer of this Epistle also argues that the promise of rest still remains, because it was not fulfilled under the Old Testament in consequence of Israel's unbelief. The word of promise was a gospel to them, as it is to us. But it did not profit them, because they did not assimilate the promise by faith. Their history from the beginning consists of continued renewals of the promise on the part of God and persistent rejections on the part of Israel, ending in the hardening of their hearts. Every time the promise is renewed, it is presented in a higher and more spiritual form. Every rejection inevitably leads to grosser views and more hopeless unbelief. So entirely false is the fable of the Sibyl! God does not burn some of the leaves when His promises have been rejected, and come back with fewer offers at a higher price. His method is to offer more and better on the same conditions. But it is the nature of unbelief to cause the heart to wax gross, to blind the spiritual vision, until in the end the rich, spiritual promises of God and the earthly, dark unbelief of the sinner stand in extremest contrast.

At first the promise is presented in the negative form of rest from labour. Even the Creator condescended thus to rest. But what such rest can be to God it were vain for man to try to conceive. We know that, as soon as the foundations of the world were laid and the work of creation was ended, God ceased from this form of activity. But when this negative rest had been attained, it was far from realising God's idea of rest either for Himself or for man. For, though these works of God, the material universe, were finished from the laying of the world's foundations to the crowning of the edifice,* God still speaks of another rest, and threatens to shut some men out for their unbelief. Our Lord told the Pharisees, whose notion of the Sabbath was the negative one, that He desired His Sabbath rest to be like that of His Father, Who "worketh hitherto." The Jewish Sabbath, it appears, therefore, is the most crude and elementary form of God's promised rest.

The promise is next presented as the rest of Canaan.† This is a stage in advance in the development of the idea. It is not mere abstention from secular labour, and the consecration of inactivity. The rest now consists in the enjoyment of material prosperity, the proud consciousness of national power, the growth of a peculiar civilisation, the rise of great men and eminent saints, and all this won by Israel under the leadership of their Jesus, who was in this respect a type of ours. But even in this second garden of Eden Israel did not attain unto God's rest. Worldliness became their snare.

But God still called to them by the mouth of the Psalmist, long after they had entered on the possession of Canaan. This only proves that the true rest was still unattained, and God's promise not yet fulfilled. The form which the rest of God now assumed is not expressly stated in our passage. But we have not far to go in search of it. The first Psalm, which is the introduction to all the Psalms, declares the blessedness of contemplation. The Sabbath is seldom mentioned by the Psalmist. Its place is taken by the sanctuary, in which rest of soul is found in meditating on God's law and beholding the Lord's beauty.* The call is at last urgent. "To-day!" It is the last invitation. It lingers in the ears in ever fainter voice of prophet after prophet, until the prophet's face turns towards the east to announce the break of dawn and the coming of the perfect rest in Jesus Christ. God's promise was never fulfilled to Israel, because of their unbelief. But shall their unbelief make the faithfulness of God of none effect? God forbid. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The promise that has failed of fulfilment in the lower form must find its accomplishment in the higher. Even a prayer is the more heard for every delay. God's mill grinds slowly, but for that reason grinds small. What is the inference? Surely it is that the Sabbath rest still remains for the true people of God. This Sabbath rest St. Paul prayed that the true Israel, who glory, not in their circumcision, but in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, might receive: "Peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."†

The faithfulness of God to fulfil His promise in its higher form is proved by His having accomplished it in its more elementary forms to every one that believed. "For he that entered into God's rest did actually rest from his works"‡—that is to say, received the blessings of the Sabbath—as truly as God rested from the work of creation. The Apostle's practical inference is couched in language almost paradoxical: "Let us strive to enter into God's rest"—not indeed into the rest of the Old Testament, but into the better rest which God now offers in His Son.

The oneness of the dispensations has been proved. They are one in their design, in their threatenings, in their promises. If we seek the fundamental ground of this threefold unity, we shall find it in the fact that both dispensations are parts of a Divine revelation. God has spoken, and the word of God does not pass away. "Think not," said our Lord, "that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the Law till all things be accomplished."§ On another occasion He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."‖ These passages teach us that the words of God through Moses and in the Son are equally immutable. Many features of the old covenant may be transient; but, if it is a word of God, it abides in its essential nature through all changes. For "the word of God is living,"¶ because He Who speaks the word is the living God. It acts with mighty energy, like the silent laws of nature, which destroy or save alive according as men obey or disobey them. It cuts like a sword whetted on each side of the blade, piercing through to the place where the natural life of the soul divides from,

* Chap. iv. 3. † Chap. iv. 8.

* Ps. xxvii. 4. † Gal. vi. 16. ‡ Chap. iv. 10. § Matt. 17, 18. ‖ Matt. xxiv. 35. ¶ Chap. iv. 12.

or passes into, the supernatural life of the spirit. For it is revelation that has made known to man his possession of the spiritual faculty. The word "spirit" is used by heathen writers. But in their books it means only the air we breathe. The very conception of the spiritual is enshrined in the bosom of God's word. Revelation has separated between the life of heathenism and the life of the Church, between the natural man and the spiritual, between the darkness that comprehended it not and the children of the light who received it and thus became children of God. Further, the word of God pierces to the joints that connect the natural and the supernatural. It does not ignore the former. On the contrary, it addresses itself to man's reason and conscience, in order to erect the supernatural upon nature. Where reason stops short, the word of God appeals to the supernatural faculty of faith; and when conscience grows blunt, the word makes conscience, like itself, sharper than any two-edged sword. Once more, the word of God pierces to the marrow. It reveals to man the innermost meaning of his own nature and of the supernatural planted within him. The truest morality and the highest spirituality are both the direct product of God's revelation.

But all this is true in its practical application to every man individually. The power of the word of God to create distinct dispensations and yet maintain their fundamental unity, to distinguish between masses of men and yet cause all the separate threads of human history to converge and at last meet, is the same power which judges the inmost thoughts and inmost purposes of the heart. These it surveys with critical judgment. If its eye is keen, its range of vision is also wide. No created thing but is seen and manifest. The surface is bared, and the depth within is opened up before it. As the upturned neck of the sacrificial beast lay bare to the eye of God, so are we exposed to the eye of Him to Whom we have to give our account.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GREAT HIGH-PRIEST.

HEBREWS iv. 14-v. 10 (R. V.).

THE results already gained are such as these: that the Son, through Whom God has spoken unto us, is a greater Person than the angels; that Jesus, Whom the Apostle and the Hebrew Christians acknowledge to be Son of God, is the representative Man, endowed, as such, with kingly authority; that the Son of God became man in order that He might be constituted High-priest to make reconciliation for sin; and, finally, that all the purposes of God revealed in the Old Testament, though they have hitherto been accomplished but partially, will not fall to the ground, and will remain in higher forms under the Gospel.

The writer gathers these threads to a head in chap. iv. 14. The high-priest still remains. If we have the high-priest, we have all that is of lasting worth in the old covenant. For the idea of the covenant is reconciliation with God, and this is embodied and symbolised in the high-priest, inasmuch as he alone entered within the veil on the day of atonement. Having the high-priest in a greater Person, we have all the blessings of the covenant restored to us in a better form. The Epistle to the Hebrews is intended to encourage and comfort men who have lost their all. Judaism was in its death-throes. National independence had already ceased. When the Apostle was writing, the eagles were gathering around the carcase. But when all is lost, all is regained if we "have" the High-priest.

The secret of His abiding for ever is His own greatness. He is a great High-priest; for He has entered into the immediate presence of God, not through the Temple veil, but through the very heavens. In chap. viii. 1 the Apostle declares this to be the head and front of all he has said: "We have such an High-priest" as He must be "Who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." He is a great High-priest because He is a Priest on a throne. As the representative Man, Jesus is crowned. His glory is kingly. But the glory bestowed on the Man as King has brought Him into the audience-chamber of God as High-priest. The kingship of Jesus, to Whom all creation is subjected, and Who sits above all creation, has made His priestly service effectual. His exaltation is much more than a reward for His redemptive sufferings. He entered the heaven of God as the sanctuary of which He is Minister. For if He were on earth, He would not be a Priest at all, seeing that He is not of the order of Aaron, to which the earthly priesthood belongs according to the Law.* But Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, but into the very heaven, now to be manifested before the face of God for us.† The Apostle has said that Christ is Son over the house of God. He is also High-priest over the house of God, having authority over it in virtue of His priesthood for it, and administering His priestly functions effectually through His kingship.‡

The entire structure of the Apostle's inferences rests on the twofold argument of the first two chapters. Jesus Christ is a great High-priest; that is, King and High-priest in one, because He unites in His own person Son of God and Son of man.

One is tempted to find an intentional antithesis between the awe-inspiring description of the word of God in the previous verse and the tender language of the verse that follows. Is the word a living, energising power? The High-priest too is living and powerful, great and dwelling above the heavens. Does the word pierce to our innermost being? The High-priest sympathises with our weaknesses, or, in the beautiful paraphrase of the English Version, "is touched with a feeling of our infirmities." Does the word judge? The High-priest can be equitable, inasmuch as He has been tempted like as we are tempted, and that without sin.§

On the last-mentioned point much might be said. He was tempted to sin, but withstood the temptation. He had true and complete humanity, and human nature, as such and alone, is capable of sin. Shall we, therefore, admit that Jesus was capable of sin? But He was Son of God. Christ was Man, but not a human

* Chap. viii. 4.
† Chap. ix. 24.
‡ *Cf.* chap. x. 21.
§ Chap. iv. 15.

Person. He was a Divine Person, and therefore absolutely and eternally incapable of sin; for sin is the act and property of a person, not of a mere nature apart from the persons who have that nature. Having assumed humanity, the Divine person of the Son of God was truly tempted, like as we are. He felt the power of the temptation, which appealed in every case, not to a sinful lust, but to a sinless want and natural desire. But to have yielded to Satan and satisfied a sinless appetite at his suggestion would have been a sin. It would argue want of faith in God. Moreover, He strove against the tempter with the weapons of prayer and the word of God. He conquered by His faith. Far from lessening the force of the trial, His being Son of God rendered His humanity capable of being tempted to the very utmost limit of all temptation. We dare not say that mere man would certainly have yielded to the sore trials that beset Jesus. But we do say that mere man would never have felt the temptation so keenly. Neither did His Divine greatness lessen His sympathy. Holy men have a wellspring of pity in their hearts, to which ordinary men are total strangers. The infinitely holy Son of God had infinite pity. These are the sources of His power to succour the tempted,—the reality of His temptations as He was Son of man, the intensity of them as He was Son of God, and the compassion of One Who was both Son of God and Son of man.

Our author is wont to break off suddenly and intersperse his arguments with affectionate words of exhortation. He does so here. It is still the same urgent command: Do not let go the anchor. Hold fast your profession of Christ as Son of God and Son of man, as Priest and King. Let us draw nearer, and that boldly, unto this great High-priest, Who is enthroned on the mercy-seāt, that we may obtain the pity which, in our sense of utter helplessness, we seek, and find more than we seek or hope for, even His grace to help us. Only linger not till it be too late. His aid must be sought in time. "To-day" is still the call.

Pity and helping grace, sympathy and authority—in these two excellences all the qualifications of a high-priest are comprised. It was so under the old covenant. Every high-priest was taken from among men that he might sympathise, and was appointed by God that he might have authority to act on behalf of men.

1. The high-priest under the Law is himself beset by the infirmities of sinful human nature, the infirmities at least for which alone the Law provides a sacrifice, sins of ignorance and inadvertence. Thus only can he form a fair and equitable judgment when men go astray. The thought wears the appearance of novelty. No use is apparently made of it in the Old Testament. The notion of the high-priest's Divine appointment overshadowed that of his human sympathy. His sinfulness is acknowledged, and Aaron is commanded to offer sacrifice for himself and for the sins of the people. But the author of this Epistle states the reason why a sinful man was made high-priest. He has told us that the Law was given through angels. But no angel interposed as high-priest between the sinner and God. Sympathy would be wanting to the angel. But the very infirmity that gave the high-priest his power of sympathy made sacrifice necessary for the high-priest himself. This was the fatal defect. How can he bestow forgiveness who must seek the like forgiveness?

In the case of the great High-priest, Jesus the Son of God, the end must be sought in another way. He is not so taken from the stock of humanity as to be stained with sin. He is not one of many men, any one of whom might have been chosen. On the contrary, He is holy, innocent, stainless, separated in character and position before God from the sinners around Him. He has no need to offer sacrifice for any sin of His own, but only for the sins of the people; and this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law makes mere men, beset with sinful infirmity, priests; but the word of the oath makes the Son Priest, Who has been perfected for His office for ever. In this respect He bears no resemblance to Aaron. Yet God did not leave His people without a type of Jesus in this complete separateness. The Psalmist speaks of Him as a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and concerning Christ as the Melchizedek Priest the Apostle has more to say hereafter.

The question returns, How, then, can the Son of God sympathise with sinful man? He can sympathise with our sinless infirmities because He is true Man. But that He, the sinless One, may be able to sympathise with sinful infirmities, He must be made sin for us and face death as a sin-offering. The High-priest Himself becomes the sacrifice which He offers. Special trials beset Him. His life on earth is pre-eminently "days of the flesh," * so despised is He, a very Man of sorrows. When He could not acquire the power of sympathy by offering atonement for Himself, because He needed it not, He offered prayers and supplications with a strong cry and tears to Him Who was able to save Him out of death. But why the strong cries and bitter weeping? Can we suppose for a moment that He was only afraid of physical pain? Or did He dread the shame of the Cross? Our author elsewhere says that He despised it. Shall we say that Jesus Christ had less moral courage than Socrates or His own martyr-servant, St. Ignatius? At the same time, let us confine ourselves strictly to the words of Scripture, lest by any gloss of our own we ascribe to Christ's death what is required by the exigencies of a ready-made theory. "Being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." † Is this the attitude of a martyr? The Apostle himself explains it. "Though He was a Son," to Whom obedience to His Father's command that He should lay down His life was natural and joyful, yet He learned His obedience, special and peculiar as it was, by the things which He suffered. ‡ He was perfecting Himself to be our High-priest. By these acts of priestly offering He was rendering Himself fit to be the sacrifice offered. Because there was in His prayers and supplications, in His crying and weeping, this element of entire self-surrender to His Father's will, which is the truest piety, His prayers were heard. He prayed to be delivered out of His death. He prayed for the glory

* Chap. v. 7.
† Luke xxii. 44. The genuineness of the verse is not quite certain.
‡ *Cf.* John x. 18.

which He had with His Father before the world was. At the same time He piously resigned Himself to die as a sacrifice, and left it to God to decide whether He would raise Him from death or leave His soul in Hades. Because of this perfect self-abnegation, His sacrifice was complete; and, on the other hand, because of the same entire self-denial, God did deliver Him out of death and made Him an eternal Priest. His prayers were not only heard, but became the foundation and beginning of His priestly intercession on behalf of others.

2. The second essential qualification of a high-priest was authority to act for men in things pertaining to God, and in His name to absolve the penitent sinner. Prayer was free to all God's people and even to the stranger that came out of a far country for the sake of the God of Israel's name. But guilt, by its very nature, involves the need, not merely of reconciling the sinner, but primarily of reconciling God. Hence the necessity of a Divine appointment. For how can man bring his sacrifice to God or know that God has accepted it unless God Himself appoints the mediator and through him pronounces the sinner absolved? It is true, if man only is to be reconciled, a Divinely appointed prophet will be enough, who will declare God's fatherly love and so remove the sinner's unbelief and slay his enmity. But the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that God appoints a high-priest. This of itself is fatal to the theory that God needs not to be reconciled. In the sense of having this Divine authorisation, the priestly office is here said to be an honour, which no man takes upon himself, but accepts when called thereunto by God.

How does this apply to the great High-priest Who has passed through the heavens? He also glorified not Himself to become High-priest. The Apostle has changed the word. To Aaron it was an honour to be high-priest. He was authorised to act for God and for men. But to Christ it was more than an honour, more than an external authority conferred upon Him. It was part of the glory inseparable from His Sonship. He Who said to Him, "Thou art My Son," made Him thereby potentially High-priest. His office springs from His personality, and is not, as in the case of Aaron, a prerogative superadded. The author has cited the second Psalm in a previous passage to prove the kingly greatness of the Son, and here again he cites the same words to describe His priestly character. His priesthood is not "from men," and, therefore, does not pass away from Him to others; and this eternal, independent priesthood of Christ is typified in the king-priest Melchizedek. Before He began to act in His priestly office God said to Him, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." When He has been perfected and learned His obedience by the things which He suffered, God still addresses Him as a High-priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER V.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF RENEWAL

HEBREWS v. 11-vi. 8 (R. V.).

IN one of the greatest and most strange of human books the argument is sometimes said "to veil itself," and the sustained image of a man battling with the waves betrays the writer's hesitancy. When he has surmounted the first wave, he dreads the second. When he has escaped out of the second, he fears to take another step, lest the third wave may overwhelm him. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has proved that Christ is Priest-King. But before he starts anew, he warns his readers that whoever will venture on must be prepared to hear a hard saying, which he himself will find difficult to interpret and few will receive. Hitherto he has only shown that whatever of lasting worth was contained in the old covenant remains and is exalted in Christ. Even this truth is an advance on the mere rudiments of Christian doctrine. But what if he attempts to prove that the covenant which God made with their fathers has waxed old and must vanish away to make room for a new and better one? For his part, he is eager to ascend to these higher truths. He has yet much to teach about Christ in the power of His heavenly life.* But his readers are dull of hearing and inexperienced in the word of righteousness.

The commentators are much divided and exercised on the question whether the Apostle means that the argument should advance or that his readers ought to make progress in spiritual character.† In a way he surely means both. What gives point to the whole section now to be considered is the connection between development of doctrine and a corresponding development of the moral nature. "For the time ye ought to be teachers."‡ They ought to have been teachers of the elementary truths, in consequence of having discovered the higher truths for themselves, under the guidance of God's Spirit. It ought to have been unnecessary for the Apostle to explain them. At this time the "teachers" in the Church had probably consolidated into a class formally set apart, but had not yet fallen to the second place, as compared with the "prophets," which they occupy in the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." A long time had elapsed since the Church of Jerusalem, with the Apostles and elders, had sat in judgment on the question submitted to their decision by such men as Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James. Since then the Hebrew Christians had degenerated, and now needed somebody—it mattered little who it might be—to teach them the alphabet of Christian doctrine.

Philo had already emphasised the distinction between the child in knowledge and the man of full age and mature judgment. St. Paul had said more than once that such a distinction holds among Christians. Many are carnal; some are spiritual. In his writings the difference is not an external one, nor is the line between the two classes broad and clear. The one shades into the other. But, though we may not be able to determine where the one begins and the other ends, both are tendencies, and move in opposite directions. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the distinction resembles the old doctrine of habit taught by Aristotle. Our organs of sense are trained by use to distinguish forms and colours. In like manner, there are inner organs of the spirit, which distinguish good from evil, not by mathematical demonstration, but by long-continued exercise in

* Chap. v. 11. † Chap. vi. 1. ‡ Chap. v. 12.

hating evil and in loving holiness. The growth of this spiritual sense is connected by our author with the power to understand the higher doctrine. He only who discerns, by force of spiritual insight, what is good and what is evil, can also understand spiritual truths. The difference between good and evil is not identical with "the word of righteousness." But the moral elevation of character that clearly discerns the former is the condition of understanding also the latter.

"Wherefore"—that is, inasmuch as solid food is for full-grown men—"let us have done with the elementary doctrines, and permit ourselves to be borne strongly onwards towards full growth of spiritual character." The Apostle has just said that his readers needed some one to teach them the rudiments. We should have expected him, therefore, to take it in hand. But he reminds them that the defect lies deeper than intellectual error. The remedy is not mere teaching, but spiritual growth. Apart from moral progress there can be no revelation of new truths. Ever-recurring efforts to lay the foundation of individual piety will result only in an apprehension of what we may designate personal and subjective doctrines.

The Apostle particularises. Repentance towards God and faith in God are the initial graces. For without sorrow for sin and trust in God's mercy God's revelation of Himself in His Son will not be deemed worthy of all acceptation. If this is so, the doctrines suitable to the initial stage of the Christian life will be —(1) the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and (2) the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. Repentance and faith accept the gospel of forgiveness, which is symbolised in baptism, and of absolution, symbolised in the laying on of hands. Again, repentance and faith realise the future life and the final award; the beginning of piety reaching forth a hand, as runners do, as if to grasp the furthest goal before it touches the intermediate points. Yet every intermediate truth, when apprehended, throws new light on the soul's eschatology. In like manner civilisation began with contemplation of the stars, long before it descended to chemical analysis, but at last it applies its chemistry to make discoveries in the stars.

This, then, is the initial stage in the Christian character,—repentance and faith; and these are the initial doctrines,—baptism, absolution, resurrection, and judgment. How may they be described? They all centre in the individual believer. They have all to do with the fact of his sin. One question, and one only, presses for an answer. It is, "What must I do to be saved?" One result, and one only, flows from the salvation obtained. It is the final acquittal of the sinner at the last day. God is known only as the merciful Saviour and the holy Judge. The whole of the believer's personal existence hovers in mid-air between two points: repentance at some moment in the past and judgment at the end of the world. Works are "dead," and the reason why is that they have no saving power. There is here no thought of life as a complete thing or as a series of possibilities that ever spring into actuality, no thought of the individual as being part of a greater whole. The Church exists for the sake of the believer, not the believer for the sake of the Church. Even Christ Himself is nothing more to him than his Saviour, Who by an atoning death paid his debt. The Apostle would rise to higher truths concerning Christ in the power of His heavenly life. This is the truth which the story of Melchizedek will teach to such as are sufficiently advanced in spirituality to understand its meaning.

But, before he faces the rolling wave, the Apostle tells his readers why it is that, in reference to Christian doctrine, character is the necessary condition of intelligence. It is so for two reasons.

First, the word spoken by God in His Son has for its primary object, not speculation, but "righteousness."* Theology is essentially a practical, not a merely theoretical, science. Its purpose is to create righteous men; that is, to produce a certain character. When produced, this lofty character is sustained by the truths of the Gospel as by a spiritual "food," milk or strong meat. Christianity is the art of holy living, and the art is mastered only as every other art is learned: by practice or experience. But experience will suggest rules, and rules will lead to principles. The art itself creates a faculty to transform it into a science. Religion will produce a theology. The doctrine will be understood only by the possessor of that goodness to which it has itself given birth.

Second, the Apostle introduces the personal action of God into the question. Understanding of the higher truths is God's blessing on goodness,† and destruction of the faculty of spiritual discernment is His way of punishing moral depravity.‡ This is the general sense and purport of an extremely difficult passage. The threatened billow is still far away. But before it rolls over us, we seem to be already submerged under the waves. Our only hope lies in the Apostle's illustration of the earth that bears here thorns and there good grain.

Expositors go quite astray when they explain the simile as if it were intended to describe the effect on moral character of rightly or wrongly using our faculty of knowledge. The meaning is the reverse. The Apostle is showing the effect of character on our power to understand truth. Neither soil is barren. Both lands drink in the rain that often comes upon them. But the fatness of the one field brings forth thorns and thistles, and this can only mean that the man's vigour of soul is itself an occasion of moral evil. The richness of the other land produces plants fit for use by men, who are the sole reason for its tillage. This, again, must mean that, in the case of some men, God blesses that natural strength which itself is neither good nor evil, and it becomes a source of goodness. We come now to the result in each case. The soil that brings forth useful herbs has its share of the Creator's first blessing. What the blessing consists in we are not here told, and it is not necessary to pursue this side of the illustration further. But the other soil, which gives its natural strength to the production of noxious weeds, falls under the Creator's primal curse and is nigh unto burning. The point of the parable evidently is that God blesses the one, that God destroys the other. In both cases the Apostle recognises the Divine action, carrying into effect a Divine threat and a Divine promise.

* Chap. v. 13. † Chap. vi. 7. ‡ Chap. v. 8.

Let us see how the simile is applied. The terrible word "impossible" might indeed have been pronounced, with some qualification, over a man who had fallen under the power of evil habits. For God sets His seal to the verdict of our moral nature. To such a man the only escape is through the strait gate of repentance. But here we have much more than the ordinary evil habits of men, such as covetousness, hypocrisy, carnal imaginations, cruelty. The Apostle is thinking throughout of God's revelation in His Son. He refers to the righteous anger of God against those who persistently despise the Son. In the second chapter * he has asked how men who neglect the salvation spoken through the Lord can hope to shun God's anger. Here he declares the same truth in a stronger form. How shall they escape His wrath who crucify afresh the Son and put Him to an open shame? Such men God will punish by hardening their hearts, so that they cannot even repent. The initial grace becomes impossible.

The four parts of the simile and of the application correspond.

First, drinking in the rain that often comes upon the land corresponds to being once enlightened, tasting of the heavenly gift, being made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasting the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. The rain descends on all the land and gives it its natural richness. The question whether the Apostle speaks of converted or unconverted men is entirely beside the purpose, and may safely be relegated to the limbo of misapplied interpretations. No doubt the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians concerning final perseverance and the possibility of a fall from a state of grace is itself vastly important. But the question whether the gifts mentioned are bestowed on an unconverted man is of no importance to the right apprehension of the Apostle's meaning. We must be forgiven for thinking he had it not in his mind. It is more to the purpose to remind ourselves that all these excellences are regarded by the Apostle as gifts of God, like the oft-descending rain, not as moral qualities in men. He mentions the one enlightenment produced by the one revelation of God in His Son. It may be compared to the opening of blind eyes or the startled waking of the soul by a great idea. To taste the heavenly gift is to make trial of the new truth. To be made partakers of the Holy Ghost is to be moved by a supernatural enlightening influence. To taste the good word of God is to discern the moral beauty of the revelation. To taste the powers of the world to come is to participate in the gifts of power which the Spirit divides to each one severally even as He will. All these things have an intellectual quality. Faith in Christ and love to God are purposely excluded. The Apostle brings together various phases of our spiritual intelligence,—the gift of illumination, which we sometimes call genius, sometimes culture, sometimes insight, the faculty that ought to apprehend Christ and welcome the revelation in the Son. If these high gifts are used to scoff at the Son of God, and that with the persistence that can spring only from the pride and self-righteousness of unbelief, renewal is impossible.

* Chap. ii. 3.

Second, the negative result of not bringing forth any useful herbs corresponds to falling away. God has bestowed His gift of enlightenment, but there is no response of heart and will. The soul does not lay hold, but drifts away.

Third, the positive result of bearing thorns and thistles corresponds to crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame. The gifts of God have been abused, and the contrary of what He, in His care for men, intended the earth to produce, is the result. The Divine gift of spiritual enlightenment has been itself turned into a very genius of cynical mockery. The Son of God has already been once crucified amid the awful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. The agony and bloody sweat, the cry of infinite loneliness on the Cross, the tender compassion of the dying Jesus, the power of His resurrection—all this is past. One bitterness yet remains. Men use God's own gift of spiritual illumination to crucify the Son afresh. But they crucify Him only for themselves. When the sneer has died away on the scoffer's lips, nothing is left. No result has been achieved in the moral world. When Christ was crucified on Calvary, His death changed for ever the relations of God and men. When He is crucified in the reproach of His enemies, nothing has been accomplished outside the scoffer's little world of vanity and pride.

Fourth, to be nigh unto a curse and to be given in the end to be burned corresponds to the impossibility of renewal. The illustration requires us to distinguish between "falling away" and "crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame." The land is doomed to be burned because it bears thorns and thistles. God renders men incapable of repentance, not because they have fallen away once or more than once, but because they scoff at the Son, through Whom God has spoken unto us. The terrible impossibility of renewal here threatened applies, not to apostasy (as the early Church maintained) nor to the lapsed (as the Novatianists held), but to apostasy combined with a cynical, scoffing temper that persists in treading the Son of God under foot. Apostasy resembles the sin against the Son of man; cynicism in reference to the Son of man comes very near the sin against the Holy Ghost. This sin is not forgiven, because it hardens the heart and makes repentance impossible. It hardens the heart, because God is jealous of His Son's honour, and punishes the scoffer with the utter destruction of the spiritual faculty and with absolute inability to recover it. This is not the mere force of habit. It is God's retribution, and the Apostle mentions it here because the text of the whole Epistle is that God has spoken unto us in His Son.

But the Hebrew Christians have not come to this. The Apostle is persuaded better things of them, and things that are nigh, not unto a curse, but unto ultimate salvation. Yet they are not free from the danger. If we may appropriate the language of an eminent historian, "the worship of wealth, grandeur, and dominion blinded the Jews to the form of spiritual godliness; the rejection of the Saviour and the deification of Herod were parallel manifestations of the same engrossing delusion." That the Christian Hebrews may not fall under the curse impending over their race, the Apostle urges them to press

on unto full growth of character. And this he and they will do—he ranks himself among them, and ventures to make reply in their name. But He must add an "if God permit." For there are men whom God will not permit to advance a jot higher. Because they have abused His great gift of illumination to scoff at the greater gift of the Son, they are doomed to forfeit possession of both. The only doomed man is the cynic.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF FAILURE.

HEBREWS vi. 9-20 (R. V.).

SOLEMN warning is followed by words of affectionate encouragement. Impossibility of renewal is not the only impossibility within the compass of the Gospel. Over against the descent to perdition, hope of the better things grasps salvation with the one hand and the climbing pilgrim with the other, and makes his failure to reach the summit impossible. Both impossibilities have their source in God's justice. He is not unjust to forget the deed of love shown towards His name, when the only-begotten Son ministered to men and still ministers. Contempt of this love God will punish. Neither is He unjust to forget the love that ministered to His poor saints in days of persecution, when the Hebrew Christians became partakers with their fellow-believers in their reproaches and tribulations, showed pity towards their brethren in prisons, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. The stream of brotherly kindness was still flowing. This love God rewards. But the Apostle desires them to show, not only faithfulness in ministering to the saints, but also Christian earnestness generally, until they attain the full assurance of hope. The older expositors understand the words to express the Apostle's wish that his readers should continue to minister to the saints. But Calvin's view has, especially since the time of Bengel, been generally accepted: that the Apostle urges his readers to be as diligent in seeking the full assurance of hope as they are in ministering to the poor. This is most probably the meaning, but with the addition that he speaks of "earnestness" generally, not merely of active diligence. Their religion was too narrow in range. Care for the poor has sometimes been the piety of sluggish despondency and bigotry. But spiritual earnestness is the moral discipline that works hope, a hope that makes not ashamed, but leads men on to an assured confidence that the promise of God will be fulfilled, though now black clouds overspread their sky.

An incentive to faith and endurance will be found in the example of all inheritors of God's promise. The Apostle is on the verge of anticipating the splendid record of the eleventh chapter. But he arrests himself, partly because, at the present stage of his argument he can speak of faith only as the deep fountain of endurance. He cannot now describe it as the realisation and the proof of things unseen. He wishes, moreover, to dwell on the oath made by God to Abraham. Even this, if not an anticipation of what is still to come, is at least a preparation of the reader for the distinction hereafter effectively handled between the high-priest made without an oath and the High-priest made with an oath. But, in the present section, the emphatic notion is that the promise made to Abraham is the same promise which the Apostle and his brethren wait to see fulfilled, and that the confirmation of the promise by oath to Abraham is still in force for their strong encouragement. It is true that Abraham received the fulfilment of the promise in his lifetime, but only in a lower form. The promise, like the Sabbath rest, has become more and still more elevated, profound, spiritual, with the long delay of God to make it good. It is equally true that the saints under the Old Testament received not the fulfilment of the promise in its highest meaning, and were not perfected apart from believers of after-ages. God's words never grow obsolete. They are never left behind by the Church. If they seem to pass away, they return laden with still choicer fruit. The coursing moon in the high heavens is never outstripped by the belated traveller. The hope of the Gospel is ever set before us. God swears to Abraham in the spring-time of the world that we, on whom the ends of the ages have come, may have a strong incentive to press onwards.

But, if the oath of God to Abraham is to inspire us with new courage, we must resemble Abraham in the eager earnestness and calm endurance of his faith. The passage has often been treated as if the oath had been intended to meet the weakness of faith. But unbelief is logician enough to argue that God's word is as good as His bond; yea, that we have no knowledge of His oath except from His word. The Apostle refers to the greatest instance of faith ever shown even by Abraham, when he withheld not his son, his beloved son, on Moriah. The oath was made to him by God, not before he gave up Isaac, in order to encourage his weakness, but when he had done it, as a reward of his strength. Philo's fine sentence, which indeed the sacred writer partly borrows, is intended to teach the same lesson: that, while disappointments are heaped on sense, an endless abundance of good things has been given to the earnest soul and the perfect man. It is to Abraham when he has achieved his supreme victory of faith that God vouchsafes to make oath that He will fulfil His promise. This gives us the clue to the purport of the words. Up to this final test of Abraham's faith God's promise is, so to speak, conditional. It will be fulfilled if Abraham will believe. Now at length the promise is given unconditionally. Abraham has gone triumphantly through every trial. He has not withheld his son. So great is his faith that God can now confirm His promise with a positive declaration, which transforms a promise made to a man into a prediction that binds Himself. Or shall we retract the expression that the promise is now given unconditionally? The condition is transferred from the faith of Abraham to the faithfulness of God. In this lies the oath. God pledges His own existence on the fulfilment of His promise. He says no longer, "If thou canst believe," but "As true as I live." Speaking humanly, unbelief on the part of Abraham would have made the promise of God of none

effect; for it was conditioned on Abraham's faith. But the oath has raised the promise above being affected by the unbelief of some, and itself includes the faith of some. St. Paul can now ask, "What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith" (no longer merely the promise) "of God without effect?" Our author also can speak of two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie. The one is the promise, the immutability of which means only that God, on His part, does not retract, but casts on men the blame if the promise is not fulfilled. The other is the oath, in which God takes the matter into His own hands and puts the certainty of His fulfilling the promise to rest on His own eternal being.

The Apostle is careful to point out the wide and essential difference between the oath of God and the oaths of men. "For men swear by the greater;" that is, they call upon God, as the Almighty, to destroy them if they are uttering what is false. They imprecate a curse upon themselves. If they have sworn to a falsehood, and if the imprecation falls on their heads, they perish, and the matter ends. And yet an oath decides all disputes between man and man. Though they appeal to an Omnipotence that often turns a deaf ear to their prayer against themselves; though, if the Almighty were to fling retribution on them, the wheels of nature would whirl as merrily as before; though, if their false swearing were to cause the heavens to fall, the men would still exist and continue to be men;—yet, for all this, they accept an oath as final settlement. They are compelled to come to terms; for they are at their wits' end. But it is very different with the oath of God. When He swears by Himself, He appeals, not to His omnipotence, but to His truthfulness. If any jot or tittle of God's promise fails to the feeblest child that trusts Him, God ceases to be. He has been annihilated, not by an act of power, but by a lie.

We have said that the oath met, not the weakness, but the strength, of Abraham's faith. If so, why was it given him?

First, it simplified his faith. It removed all tendency to morbid introspection and filled his spirit with a peaceful reliance on God's faithfulness. He had no more need to try himself whether he was in the faith. Anxious effort and painful struggle were over. Faith was now the very life of his soul. He could leave his concerns to God, and wait. This is the thought expressed in the word "enduring."

Second, it was a new revelation of God to him, and thus elevated his spiritual nature. The moral character of the Most High, rather than His natural attribute of omnipotence, became the resting-place of his spirit. Even the joy of God's heart was made known and communicated to his. God was pleased with Abraham's final victory over unbelief, and wished to show him more abundantly His counsel and the immutability of it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."

Third, it was intended also for our encouragement. It is strange, but true, that the promises of God are confirmed to us by the victorious faith of a nomad chief from Ur of the Chaldees, who, in the morning of the world's history, withheld not his son. After all, we are not disconnected units. God only can trace the countless threads of influence. Abraham's strong faith evoked the oath that now sustains the weakness of ours. Because he believed so well, the promise comes to us with all the sanction of God's own truth and unchangeableness.

The oath made to Abraham was linked with a still more ancient, even an eternal, oath, made to the Son, constituting Him Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The priesthood of Melchizedek is said by the Apostle to be a type of the priesthood founded on an oath. It was becoming that the man who acknowledged the priesthood of Melchizedek and received its blessing should have that blessing fulfilled to him in the confirmation by oath of God's promise. Thus the promises that have been fulfilled through the eternal priesthood of the true Melchizedek are confirmed to us by an oath made to him who acknowledged that priesthood in the typical Melchizedek.

Yet, notwithstanding these vital points of contact, Abraham and the Hebrew Christians are in some respects very unlike. They have left his serene and contemplative life far behind. The souls of men are stirred with dread of the threatened end of all things. Abraham had no need to flee for refuge from an impending wrath. His religion even was not a fleeing from any wrath to come, but a yearning for a better fatherland. He never heard the midnight cry of Maranatha, but longed to be gathered to his fathers. If any similitude to the Christian's fleeing from the wrath to come must be sought in ancient days, it will be found in the history of Lot, not of Abraham. Whether the Apostle's thoughts rested for a moment on Lot's flight from Sodom, it is impossible to say. His mind is moving so rapidly that one illustration after another flits before his eye. The notion of Abraham's strong faith, reaching out a hand to the strong grasp of God's oath, reminds him of men fleeing for refuge, perhaps into a sanctuary, and laying hold of the horns of the altar, with a reminiscence of the Baptist's taunting question, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" and a side glance at the approaching destruction of the holy city, if indeed the catastrophe had not already befallen the doomed people. The thought suggests another illustration. Our hope is an anchor cast into the deep sea. The anchor is sure and steadfast—"sure," for, like Abraham's faith, it will neither break nor bend; "steadfast," for, like Abraham's faith again, it bites the eternal rock of the oath. Still another metaphor lends itself. The deep sea is above all heavens in the sanctuary within the veil, and the rock is Jesus, Who has entered into the holiest place as our High-priest. Yet another thought. Jesus is not only High-priest, but also Captain, of the redeemed host, leading us on, and opening the way for us to enter after Him into the sanctuary of the promised land.

Thus, with the help of metaphor heaped on metaphor in the fearless confusion delightful to conscious strength and gladness, the Apostle has at last come to the great conception of Christ in the sanctuary of heaven. He has hesitated long to plunge into the wave; and even now he will not at once lift the veil from the argument. The allegory of Melchizedek must prepare us for it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ALLEGORY OF MELCHIZEDEK

HEBREWS vii. 1-28 (R. V.).

JESUS has entered heaven as our Forerunner, in virtue of His eternal priesthood. The endless duration and heavenly power of His priesthood is the "hard saying" which the Hebrew Christians would not easily receive, inasmuch as it involves the setting aside of the old covenant. But it rests on the words of the inspired Psalmist. Once already an inference has been drawn from the Psalmist's prophecy. The meaning of the Sabbath rest has not been exhausted in the Sabbath of Judaism; for David, so long after the time of Moses, speaks of another and better day. Similarly in the seventh chapter the Apostle finds an argument in the mysterious words of the Psalm, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

The words are remarkable because they imply that in the heart of Judaism there lurked a yearning for another and different kind of priesthood from that of Aaron's order. It may be compared to the strange intrusion now and again of other gods than the deities of Olympus into the religion of the Greeks, either by the introduction of a new deity or by way of return to a condition of things that existed before the young gods of the court of Zeus began to hold sway. But, to add to the mysterious character of the Psalm, it gives utterance to a desire for another King also, Who should be greater than a mere son of David: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Yet the Psalmist is David himself, and Christ silenced the Pharisees by asking them to explain the paradox: "If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?" Delitzsch observes "that in no other psalm does David distinguish between himself and Messiah;" that is, in all his other predictions Messiah is David himself idealised, but in this Psalm He is David's Lord as well as his Son. The Psalmist desires a better priesthood and a better kingship.

These aspirations are alien to the nature of Judaism. The Mosaic dispensation pointed indeed to a coming priest, and the Jews might expect Messiah to be a King. But the Priest would be the antitype of Aaron, and the King would be only the Son of David. The Psalm speaks of a Priest after the order, not of Aaron, but of Melchizedek, and of a King Who would be David's Lord. To increase the difficulty, the Priest and the King would be one and the same Person.

Yet the Psalmist's mysterious conception comes to the surface now and again. In the Book of Zechariah the Lord commands the prophet to set crowns upon the head of Joshua the high-priest, and proclamation is made "that he shall be a priest upon his throne." The Maccabean princes are invested with priestly garments. Philo has actually anticipated the Apostle in his reference to the union of the priesthood and kingship in the person of Melchizedek. We need not hesitate to say that the Apostle borrows his allegory from Philo, and finds his conception of the Priest-King in the religious insight of the profounder men, or at least in their earnest groping for better things. All this notwithstanding, his use of the allegory is original and most felicitous. He adds an idea fraught with consequences to his argument. For the central thought of the passage is the endless duration of the priesthood of Melchizedek. The Priest-King is Priest for ever.

We have spoken of Melchizedek's story as an allegory, not to insinuate doubt of its historical truth, but because it cannot be intended by the Apostle to have direct inferential force. It is an instance of the allegorical interpretation of Old Testament events, similar to what we constantly find in Philo, and once at least in St. Paul. Allegorical use of history has just as much force as a parable drawn from nature, and comes just as near a demonstration as the types, if it is so used by an inspired prophet in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This is precisely the difference between our author and Philo. The latter invents allegories and lets his fancy run wild in weaving new coincidences, which Scripture does not even suggest. But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews keeps strictly within the lines of the Psalm. We must also bear in mind that the story of Melchizedek sets forth a feature of Christ's priesthood which cannot be figured by a type of the ordinary form. Philo infers from the history of Melchizedek the sovereignty of God. The Psalmist and the Apostle teach from it the eternal duration of Christ's priesthood. But how can any type represent such a truth? How can the fleeting shadow symbolise the notion of abiding substance? The type by its very nature is transitory. That Christ is Priest for ever can be symbolically taught only by negations, by the absence of a beginning and of an end, in some such way as the hieroglyphics represent eternity by a line turning back upon itself. In this negative fashion, Melchizedek has been assimilated to the Son of God. His history was intentionally so related by God's spirit that the sacred writer's silence even is significant. For Melchizedek suddenly appears on the scene, and as suddenly vanishes, never to return. Hitherto in the Bible story every man's descent is carefully noted, from the sons of Adam to Noah, from Noah down to Abraham. Now, however, for the first time, a man stands before us of whose genealogy and birth nothing is said. Even his death is not mentioned. What is known of him wonderfully helps the allegorical significance of the intentional silence of Scripture. He is king and priest, and the one act of his life is to bestow his priestly benediction on the heir of the promises. No more appropriate or more striking symbol of Christ's priesthood can be imagined.

His name even is symbolical. He is "King of righteousness." By a happy coincidence, the name of his city is no less expressive of the truth to be represented. He is King of Salem, which means "King of peace." The two notions of righteousness and peace combined make up the idea of priesthood. Righteousness without peace punishes the transgressor. Peace without righteousness condones the transgression. The kingship of Melchizedek, it appears, involves that he is priest.

This king-priest is a monotheist, though he is

not of the family of Abraham. He is even priest of the Most High God, though he is outside the pale of the priesthood afterwards founded in the line of Aaron. Judaism, therefore, enjoys no monopoly of truth. As St. Paul argues that the promise is independent of the Law, because it was given four hundred years before, so our author hints at the existence of a priesthood distinct from the Levitical. What existed before Aaron may also survive him.

Further, these two men, Melchizedek and Abraham, were mutually drawn each to the other by force of their common piety. Melchizedek went out to meet Abraham on his return from the slaughter of the kings, apparently not because he was indebted to him for his life and the safety of his city (for the kings had gone their way as far as Dan after pillaging the Cities of the Plain), but because he felt a strong impulse to bestow his blessing on the man of faith. He met him, not as king, but as priest. Would it be too fanciful to conjecture that Abraham had that mysterious power, which some men possess and some do not, of attracting to himself and becoming a centre, around which others almost unconsciously gather? It is suggested by his entire history. Whether it was so or not, Melchizedek blessed him, and Abraham accepted the blessing, and acknowledged its priestly character by giving him the priest's portion, the tenth of the best spoils. How great must this man have been, who blessed even Abraham, and to whom Abraham, the patriarch, paid even the tenth! But the less is blessed of the greater. In Abraham the Levitical priesthood itself may be said to acknowledge the superiority of Melchizedek.*

Wherein lay his greatness? He was not in the priestly line. Neither do we read that he was appointed of God. Yet no man taketh this honour unto himself. God had made him king and priest by conferring upon him the gift of innate spiritual greatness. He was one of nature's kings, born to rule, not because he was his father's son, but because he had a great soul. It is not in record that he bequeathed to his race a great idea. He created no school, and had no following. So seldom is mention made of him in the Old Testament, that the Psalmist's passing reference to his name attracts the Apostle's special notice. He became a priest in virtue of what he was as man. His authority as king sprang from character.

Such men appear on earth now and again. But they are never accounted for. All we can say of them is that they have neither father nor mother nor genealogy. They resemble those who are born of the Spirit, of whom we know neither whence they come nor whither they go. It is only from the greatest one among these kings and priests of men that the veil is lifted. In Him we see the Son of God. In Christ we recognise the ideal greatness of sheer personality, and we at once say of all the others, as the Apostle says of Melchizedek, that they have been "made like," not unto ancestors or predecessors, but unto Him Who is Himself like His Divine Father.

Such priests remain priests for ever. They live on by the vitality of their priesthood. They have no beginning of days or end of life. They have never been set apart with outward ritual to an official distinction, marked by days and years. Their acts are not ceremonial, and wait not on the calendar. They bless men, and the blessing abides. They pray, and the prayer dies not. If their prayer lives for ever, can we suppose that they themselves pass away? The king-priest is heir of immortality, whoever else may perish. He at least has the power of an endless life. If he dies in the flesh, he lives on in the spirit. An eternal heaven must be found or made for such men with God.

Now this is the gist and kernel of the Apostle's beautiful allegory. The argument points to the Son of God, and leads up to the conception of His eternal priesthood in the sanctuary of heaven. Let us see how the parable is interpreted and applied.

That Jesus is a great High-priest has been proved by argument after argument from the beginning of the Epistle. But this is not enough to show that the priesthood after the order of Aaron has passed away. The Hebrew Christians may still maintain that the Messiah perfected the Aaronic priesthood and added to it the glory of kingship. Transference of the priesthood must be proved; and it is symbolised in the history of Melchizedek. But transference of the priesthood involves much more than what has hitherto been mentioned. It implies, not merely that the priesthood after the order of Aaron has come to an end, but that the entire dispensation of law, the old covenant, is replaced by a new covenant and a better one, inasmuch as the Law was erected on the foundation of the priesthood. It was a religious economy. The fundamental conceptions of the religion were guilt and forgiveness. The essential fact of the dispensation was sacrifice offered for the sinner to God by a priest. The priesthood was the article of a standing or a falling Church under the Old Testament. Change of the priesthood of itself abrogates the covenant.

What, then, is the truth in this matter? Has the priesthood been transferred? Let the story of Melchizedek, interpreted by the inspired Psalmist, supply the answer.

First, Jesus sprang from the royal tribe of Judah, not from the sacerdotal tribe of Levi. The Apostle intentionally uses a term that glances at the prophet Zechariah's prediction concerning Him Who shall arise as the dawn, and be a Priest upon His throne. We shall, therefore, entitle Him "Lord," and say that "our Lord" has risen out of Judah. He is Lord and King by right of birth. But this circumstance, that He belongs to the tribe of Judah, hints, to say the least, at a transference of the priesthood. For Moses said nothing of this tribe in reference to priests, however great it became in its kings. The kingship of our Lord is foreshadowed in Melchizedek.

Second, it is still more evident that the Aaronic priesthood has been set aside if we recall another feature in the allegory of Melchizedek. For Jesus is like Melchizedek as Priest, not as King only. The priesthood of Melchizedek sprang from the man's inherent greatness. How much more is it true of Jesus Christ that His greatness is personal! He became what He is, not by force of law, which could create only an external, carnal commandment, but by innate power, in virtue of which He will live on and His life will be indestructi-

*Chap. vii. 6-10.

ble. The commandment that constituted Aaron priest has not indeed been violently abrogated; but it has been thrust aside in consequence of its own inner feebleness and uselessness. That it has been weak and unprofitable to men is evident from the inability of the Law, as a system erected upon that priesthood, to satisfy conscience. Yet this carnal, decayed priesthood was permitted to linger on and work itself out. The better hope, through which we do actually come near unto God, did not forcibly put an end to it, but was superadded. Christ never formally abolished the old covenant. We cannot date its extinction. We must not say that it ceased to exist when the Supper was instituted, or when the true Passover was slain, or when the Spirit descended. The Epistle to the Hebrews is intended to awaken men to the fact that it is gone. They can hardly realise that it is dead. It has been lost, like the light of a star, in the spreading "dawn" of day. The sun of that eternal day is the infinitely great personality of Jesus Christ, born a crownless King; crowned at His death, but with thorns. Yet what mighty power He has wielded! The Galilean has conquered. Since He has passed through the heavens from the eyes of men, thousands in every age have been ready to die for Him. Even to-day the Christianity of the greatest part of His followers consists more in profound loyalty to a personal King than in any intellectual comprehension of the Teacher's dogmatic system. Such kingly power cannot perish. Untouched by the downfall of kingdoms and the revolutions of thought, such a King will sit upon His moral throne from age to age, yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever.

Third, the entire system or covenant based on the Aaronic priesthood has passed away and given place to a better covenant,—better in proportion to the firmer foundation on which the priesthood of Jesus rests. Beyond question, the promises of God were steadfast. But men could not realise the glorious hope of their fulfilment, and that for two reasons. First, difficult conditions were imposed on fallible men. The worshipper might transgress in many points of ritual. His mediator, the priest, might err where error would be fatal to the result. Worshipper and priest, if they were thoughtful and pious men, would be haunted with the dread of having done wrong they knew not how or where, and be filled with dark forebodings. Confidence, especially full assurance, was not to be thought of. Second, Christ found it necessary to urge His disciples to believe in God. The misery of distrusting God Himself exists. Men think that He is such as they are; and, as they do not believe in themselves, their faith in God is a reed shaken by the wind. These wants were not adequately met by the old covenant. The conditions imposed perplexed men, and the revelation of God's moral character and Fatherhood was not sufficiently clear to remove distrust. The Apostle directs attention to the strange absence of any swearing of an oath on the part of God when He instituted the Aaronic priesthood, or on the part of the priest at his consecration. Yet the kingship was confirmed by oath to David. In the new covenant, on the other hand, all such fears may be dismissed. For the only condition imposed is faith. In order to make faith easy and inspire men with courage, God appoints a Surety for Himself. He offers His Son as Hostage, and thus guarantees the fulfilment of His promise. As the Man Jesus, the Son of God was delivered into the hands of men. "Of the better covenant Jesus is the Surety." This will explain a word in the sixth chapter, which we were compelled at the time to put aside. For it is there said that God "mediated" with an oath. We now understand that this means the appointment of Christ to be Surety of the fulfilment of God's promises. The old covenant could offer no guarantee. It is true that it was ordained in the hands of a mediator. But it is also true that the mediator was no surety, inasmuch as those priests were made without an oath. Christ has been made Priest with an oath. Therefore He is, as Jesus, the Surety of a better covenant. In what respects the covenant is better, the Apostle will soon tell us. For the present, we only know that the foundation is stronger in proportion as the oath of God reveals more fully His sincerity and love, and renders it an easier thing for men laden with guilt to trust the promise.

Before we dismiss the subject, it may be well to remind the reader that this mention of a Surety by our author is the *locus classicus* of the Federalist school of divines. Cocceius and his followers present the whole range of theological doctrines under the form of covenant. They explain the words "Surety of a better covenant" to mean that Christ is appointed by God to be a Surety on behalf of men, not on behalf of God. The course of thought in the passage is, we think, decisive against this interpretation. At the same time, we readily admit that their doctrine is a just theological inference from the passage. If God swears that His gracious purposes will be fulfilled and ordains Jesus to be His Surety to men, and if also the fulfilment of the Divine promise depends on the fulfilment of certain conditions on the part of men, the oath of God will involve His enabling men to fulfil those conditions, and the Surety will become in eventual fact a Surety on behalf of men. But this is only an inference. It is not the meaning of the Apostle's words, who only speaks of the Surety on the part of God. The validity of the inference now mentioned depends on other considerations extraneous to this passage. With those considerations, therefore, we have at present nothing to do.

Fourth, the climax of the argument is reached when the Apostle infers the endless duration of Christ's one priesthood. The number of men who had been successively high-priests of the old covenant increased from age to age. Dying one after another, they were prevented from continuing as high-priests. But Melchizedek had no successor; and the Jews themselves admitted that the Christ would abide for ever. The ascending argument of the Apostle proves that He ever liveth, and has, therefore, an immutable priesthood. For, first, He is of the royal tribe, and the oath of God to David guarantees that of his kingdom there shall be no end. Again, in the greatness of His personality, He is endowed with the power of an endless life. Moreover, as Priest He has been established in His office by oath. He is, therefore, Priest for ever.

A question suggests itself. Why is the end-

less life of one high-priest more effective than a succession, conceivably an endless succession, of high-priests? The eternal priesthood involves two distinct, but mutually dependent, conceptions,—power to save and intercession. In the case of any man, to live for ever means power. Even the body of our humiliation will be raised in power. Can the spirit, therefore, in the risen life, its own native home, be subject to weakness? What, then, shall we say of the risen and glorified Christ? The difference between Him and the high-priests of earth is like the difference between the body that is raised and the body that dies. In Aaron priesthood is sown in corruption, dishonour, weakness; in Christ priesthood is raised in incorruption, in glory, in power. In Aaron it is sown a natural priesthood; in Christ it is raised a spiritual priesthood. It must be that the High-priest in heaven has power to save continually and completely. Whenever help is needed, He is living. But He ever lives that He may intercede. Apart from intercession on behalf of men, His power is not moral. It has no greatness, or joy, or meaning. Intercession is the moral content of His powerful existence. Whenever help is needed, He is living, and is mighty to save from sin, to rescue from death, to deliver from its fear.

To prove that Christ's eternal priesthood involves power and intercession is the purpose of the next verses. Such a High-priest, powerful to save and ever living to intercede, is the only One befitting us, who are at once helpless and guilty. The Apostle triumphantly unfolds the glory of this conception of a high-priest. He means Christ. But he is too triumphant to name Him. "Such a high-priest befits us." The power of His heavenly life implies the highest development of moral condition. He will address God with holy reverence. He will succour men without a tinge of malice, which is but another way of saying that He wishes them well from the depth of His heart. He must not be sullied by a spot of moral defilement (for purity only can face God or love men). He must be set apart for His lofty function from the sinners for whom He intercedes. He must enter the true holiest place and stand in awful solitariness above the heavens of worlds and angels in the immediate presence of God. Further, He must not be under the necessity of leaving the holiest place to renew His sacrifice, as the high-priests of the old covenant had need to offer, through the priests, new sacrifices every day through the year for themselves and for the people—yea, for themselves first, then for the people—before they dared re-enter within the veil.* For Christ offered Himself. Such a sacrifice, once offered, was sufficient for ever.

To sum up.† The Law appoints men high-priests; the word, which God has spoken unto us in His Son, appoints the Son Himself High-priest. The Law appoints men high-priests in their weakness; the word appoints the Son in His final and complete attainment of all perfection. But the Law will yield to the word. For the word, which had gone before the Law in the promise made to Abraham, was not superseded by the Law, but came also after it in the stronger form of an oath, of which the old covenant knew nothing.

* Chap. vii. 27. † Chap. vii. 28.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NEW COVENANT.

HEBREWS viii. 1-6 (R. V.).

THE Apostle has interpreted the beautiful story of Melchizedek with wonderful felicity and force. The point of the whole Epistle, he now tells us, lies there. He has brought forth the headstone of the corner, the keystone of the arch. It is, in short, that we have such a High-priest. Country, holy city, ark of the covenant, all are lost. But if we have the High-priest, all are restored to us in a better and more enduring form. Jesus is the High-priest and King. He has taken His seat once for all, as King, on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty, and, as Priest, is also Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. The indefinite and somewhat unusual term "minister" or "public servant" is intentionally chosen, partly to emphasise the contrast between Christ's kingly dignity and His priestly service, partly because the author wishes to explain at greater length in what Christ's actual work as High-priest in heaven consists. For Christ's heavenly glory is a life of service, not of selfish gratification. Every high-priest serves.* He is appointed for no other purpose than to offer gifts and sacrifices. The Apostle's readers admitted that Christ was High-priest. But they were forgetting that, as such, He too must necessarily minister and have something which He can offer. Our theology is still in like danger. We are sometimes prone to regard Christ's life in heaven as only a state of exaltation and power, and, consequently, to speak more of the saints' happiness than of their service. It is the natural result of superficial theories of the Atonement that little practical use is made by many Christians of the truth of Christ's priestly intercession. The debt has been paid, the debtor discharged, and the transaction ended. Christ's present activity towards God is acknowledged and—neglected. Protestants are confirmed in this baneful worldliness of conception by their just desire to keep at a safe distance from the error in the opposite extreme: that Christ presents to God the Church's sacrifices of the Mass.

The truth lies midway between two errors. On the one hand, Christ's intercession is not itself the making or constituting of a sacrifice; on the other, it is not mere pleading and prayer. The sacrifice was made and completed on the Cross, as the victims were slain in the outer court. But it was through the blood of those victims the high-priest had authority to enter the holiest place; and when he had entered, he must sprinkle the warm blood, and so present the sacrifice to God. Similarly Christ must enter a sanctuary in order to present the sacrifice slain on Calvary. The words of the Apostle John, "We have an Advocate with the Father," express only one side of the truth. But he adds the other side of the conception in the same verse, "And He is the propitiation," which is a very different thing from saying, "His death was the propitiation." But what sanctuary shall He enter? He could not approach the holiest place in the earthly temple.

* Chap. viii. 3.

For if He were on earth, He would not be a Priest at all, seeing there are men ordained by the Law to offer the appointed gifts on earth.* The Jewish priests have satisfied and exhausted the idea of an earthly priesthood. Even Melchizedek could not found an order. If he may be regarded as an attempt to acclimatise on earth the priesthood of personal greatness, the attempt was a failure. It always fails, though it is always renewed. On earth there can be no order of goodness. When a great saint appears among men, he is but a bird of passage, and is not to be found, because God has translated him. If it is so of His saints, what of Christ? Christ on earth through the ages? Impossible! And what is impossible to-day will be equally inconceivable at any point of time in the future. A correct conception of Christ's priestly intercession is inconsistent with the dream of a reign of Christ on earth. It may, or may not, be consistent with His kingly office. But His priesthood forbids. We infer that Christ has transformed the heaven of glory into the holiest place of a temple, and the throne of God into a shrine before which He, as High-priest, presents His sacrifice.

The Jewish priesthood itself teaches the existence of a heavenly sanctuary. All the arrangements of tabernacle and ritual were made after a pattern shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. The priests, in the tabernacle and through their ritual, ministered to the holiest place, as the visible image and outline of the real holiest place—that is, heaven—which the Lord pitched, not man.

Now Christ's more excellent ministry as High-priest in heaven carries in its bosom all that the Apostle contends for,—the establishment of a new covenant which has set aside for ever the covenant of the Law. "He has obtained a ministry the more excellent by how much He is the Mediator of a better covenant." These words contain in a nutshell the entire argument, or series of arguments, that extends from the sixth verse of the eighth chapter to the eighteenth verse of the tenth. The course of thought may be divided as follows:—

1. That the Lord intends to establish a new covenant is first of all shown by a citation from the prophet Jeremiah (viii. 7-13).

2. A description of the tabernacle and of the entrance of the priests and high-priests into it teaches that the way into the holiest place was not yet open to men. This is contrasted with the entering of Christ into heaven through His own blood, which proves that He has obtained for us an eternal redemption and is Mediator of a new covenant, founded on His death (ix. 1-18).

3. The frequent entering of the high-priest into the holiest place is contrasted with the one death of Christ and His entering heaven once. This proves the power of His sacrifice and intercession to bring in the better covenant and set aside the former one (ix. 25-x. 18).

I. A NEW COVENANT PROMISED THROUGH JEREMIAH.

"For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He saith,

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

* Chap. viii. 4.

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers
In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt;
For they continued not in My covenant,
And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put My laws into their mind,
And on their heart also will I write them:
And I will be to them a God,
And they shall be to Me a people:
And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,
And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:
For all shall know Me,
From the least to the greatest of them.
For I will be merciful to their iniquities,
And their sins will I remember no more.

In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away."—Heb. viii. 7-13 (R. V.).

The more spiritual men under the dispensation of law anticipated a new and better era. The Psalmist had spoken of another day, and prophesied of the appearance of a Priest after the order of Melchizedek and a Son of David Who would also be David's Lord. But Jeremiah is very bold, and says * that the covenant itself on which the hope of his nation hangs will pass away, and his dream of a more spiritual covenant, established on better promises, will at some distant day come true. It is well to bear in mind that this discontent with the present order lodged in the hearts, not of the worst, but of the best and greatest, sons of Judaism. It was the salt of their character, the life of their inspiration, the message of their prophecy. In days of national distress and despair, this star shone the brighter for the darkness. The terrible shame of the Captivity and the profound agony that followed it were lit up with the glorious vision of a better future in store for the people of God. On the quivering lips of the prophet that "sat weeping," as he is described in the Septuagint, this strong hope found utterance. He had washed the dust of worldliness from his eyes with tears, and, therefore, saw more clearly than the men of his time the threatened downfall of Judah and the bright dawn beyond. In reading his prophecy of the new covenant we almost cease to wonder that some persons thought Jesus was Jeremiah risen from the dead. The prophet's words have the same ring of undaunted cheerfulness, of intense compassion, of prophetic faith; and Christ, as well as the Apostle, cites His prediction that all shall be taught of God.

Jeremiah blames the people. But the Apostle infers that the covenant itself was not faultless, inasmuch as the prophet seeks, in his censure of the people, to make room for another covenant. We have already been told that there was on earth no room for the priesthood of Christ.† Similarly, in the sphere of earthly nationality, there was no room for a covenant other than that which God had made with His people Israel when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. But the earthly priesthood could not give efficacy to its ministering, and thus room is found for a heavenly priesthood. So also, the covenant on which the earthly priesthood rested being inadequate, the prophet makes room for the introduction of a new and better covenant.

Now the peculiar character of the old covenant was that it dealt with men in the aggre-

* Jer. xxxi. 31-34. † Chap. viii. 4.

gate which we call the nation. Nationalism is the distinctive feature of the old world, within the precincts of Judaism and among the peoples of heathendom. Even the prophets could not see the spiritual truth, which they themselves foretold, except through the medium of nationality. The Messiah was the national king idealised, even when He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. In the passage before us the prophet Jeremiah speaks of God's promise to write His law on the heart as made to the house of Judah and the house of Israel, as if he were not aware that, in so speaking, he was really contradicting himself. For the blessing promised was a spiritual and, consequently, personal one, with which nationality cannot possibly have any sort of connection. It is a matter of profound joy to every lover of his people to witness and share in the uprising of a national consciousness. Some among us are beginning to know now for the first time that a national ideal is possible in thought, and sentiment, and life. But there must not, cannot, be a nationality in religion. A moral law in the heart does not recognise the quality of the blood that circulates through. This truth the prophets strove to utter, often in vain. Yet the breaking up of the nation into Judah and Israel helped to dispel the illusion. The loss of national independence prepared for the universalism of Jesus Christ and St. Paul. Now also, when an epistle is written to the Hebrew Christians, the threatened extinction of nationality drives men to seek the bond of union in a more stable covenant, which will save them, if anything can, from the utter collapse of all religious fellowship and civil society. It is the glory of Christianity that it creates the individual and at the same moment keeps perfectly clear of individualism. Its blessings are personal, but they imply a covenant. If nationalism has been dethroned, individualism has not climbed to the vacant seat. How it achieves this great result will be understood from an examination of Jeremiah's prophecy.

The new covenant deals with the same fundamental conceptions which dominated the former one. These are the moral law, knowledge of God, and forgiveness of sin. So far the two dispensations are one. Because these great conceptions lie at the root of all human goodness, religion is essentially the same thing under both covenants. There is a sense in which St. Augustine was right in speaking of the saints under the Old Testament as "Christians before Christ." Judaism and Christianity stand shoulder to shoulder over against the religious ideas and practices of all the heathen nations of the world. But in Judaism these sublime conceptions are undeveloped. Nationalism dwarfs their growth. They are like seeds falling on the thorns, and the thorns grow up and choke them. God, therefore, spoke unto the Jews in parables, in types and shadows. Seeing, they saw not; and hearing, they heard not, neither did they understand.

Because the former covenant was a national one, the conceptions of the moral law, of God, of sin and its forgiveness, would be narrow and external. The moral law would be embedded in the national code. God would be revealed in the history of the nation. Sin would consist either in faults of ignorance and inadvertence or in national apostasy from the theocratic King. In these three respects the new covenant excels,—in respect, that is, of the moral law, knowledge of God, and forgiveness of sin, which yet may be justly regarded as the three sides of the revelation given under the former covenant.

1. The moral law will either forget its own holiness, righteousness, and goodness, and degenerate into national rules of conduct, or else, by the innate force of its spirituality, create in men a consciousness of sin and a strong desire for reconciliation with God. Men will resist, and, when resistance is vain, will chafe against its terrible strength. "The Law came in beside, that the trespass might abound." * But it often happens that guilt of conscience is the alarum that awakens moral self-consciousness out of sleep, never to fall asleep again when holiness has found entrance into the soul. Beyond this the old covenant advanced not a step. The promise of the new covenant is to put the Law into the mind, not in an ark of shittim wood, and to write it in the heart, not on tables of stone. The Law was given on Sinai as an external commandment; it is put into the mind as a knowledge of moral truth. It was written on the two tables in the weakness of the letter; on the heart it is written as a principle and a power of obedience. The power of God to command becomes the strength of man to obey. In this way the new covenant realises what the former covenant demanded. The new covenant is the old covenant transformed, made spiritual. God is become the God of His people; and this was the promise of the former covenant. They are no more children, as they were when God took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. Instead of the external guidance, they have the unction within, and know all things. Renewed in the spirit of their mind, they put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and the holiness of truth.

2. So also of knowing God. The moral attributes of the Most High are revealed under the former covenant, and the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New. Abraham knows Him as the everlasting God. Elisha understands that there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Balaam declares that God is not a man that He should lie. The Psalmist confesses to God that he cannot flee from His presence. The father of believers fears not to ask, "Shall not the Judge of the earth do right?" Moses recognises that the Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression. Isaiah hears the seraphim crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." But nationalism distorted the image. The conception of God's Fatherhood is most indistinct. When, however, Christ taught His disciples to say in prayer, "Our Father," He could then at once add the words "Who art in heaven." The spirit of man rose immediately with a mighty upheaval above the narrow bounds of nationalism. The attributes of God became more lofty as well as more amiable to the eyes of His children. The God of a nation is not great enough to be our Father. The God Who is our Father is God in heaven.

Not only are God's attributes revealed, but the faculty to know Him is also bestowed. The

* Rom. v. 20.

moral law and a heart to love it are the two elements of a knowledge of God's nature. For God Himself is holiness and love. In vain will men cry one to another, saying, "Know the Lord." As well might they bid the blind behold the light, or the wicked love purity. Knowledge of nature can be taught. It can be parcelled in propositions, carried about, and handed to others. But the character of God is not a notion, and cannot be taught as a lesson or in a creed, however true the creed may be. The two opposite ends of all our knowledge are our sensations and God. In one respect the two are alike. Knowledge of them cannot be conveyed in words.

3. The only thing concerning God that can be known by a man who is not holy himself is that He will punish the impenitent, and can forgive. These are objective facts. They may be announced to the world, and believed. In the history of all holy men, under the Old Testament as well as under the New, they are their first lesson in spiritual theology. To say that penitent sinners under the Law could not be absolved from guilt or taste the sweetness of God's forgiving grace must be false. St. Paul himself, who describes the Law as a covenant that "gendereth to bondage," cites the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," to prove that God imputes righteousness without works.* When the Apostle Peter was declaring that all the prophets witness to Jesus Christ, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard the word. The very promise which Jeremiah says will be fulfilled under the future covenant Isaiah claims for his own days: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."†

On the other hand, it is equally plain that St. Paul and the author of this Epistle agree in teaching that the sacrifices of the old covenant had in them no virtue to remove guilt. They cannot take away sin, and they cannot remove the consciousness of sin.‡ The writer evidently considers it sufficient to state the impossibility, without labouring to prove it. His readers' consciences would bear him out in the assertion that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

It remains—and it is the only supposition left to us—that peace of conscience must have been the result of another revelation, simultaneous with the covenant of the Law, but differing from it in purpose and instruments. Such a revelation would be given through the prophets, who stood apart as a distinct order from the priesthood. They were the preachers. They quickened conscience, and spoke of God's hatred of sin and willingness to forgive. Every advance in the revelation came through the prophets, not through the priests. The latter represent the stationary side of the covenant, but the prophets hold before the eyes of men the idea of progress. What, then, was the weakness of prophecy in reference to forgiveness of sin when compared with the new covenant? The prophets predicted a future redemption. This was their strength. It was also their weakness. For that future was not balanced by an equally great past. However glorious the history of the nation had been, it was not strong enough to bear the weight of so transcendent a future. Every nation that believes in the greatness of its own future already possesses a great past. If not, it creates one. Mythology and hero-worship are the attempt of a people to erect their future on a sufficient foundation. But men had not experienced anything great enough to inspire them with a living faith in the reality of the promises which the prophets announced. Sin had not been atoned for. The Christian preacher can point to the wonderful but well-assured facts of the life and death of Jesus Christ. If he could not do this, or if he neglects to do it, feeble and unreal will sound his proclamation of the terrors and joys of the world to come. The Gospel has for one of its primary objects to appease the guilty conscience. How it achieves this purpose our author will tell us in another chapter. For the present all we learn is that knowledge of God is knowledge of His moral nature, and that this knowledge belongs to the man whose moral consciousness has been quickened. The Evangelical doctrine that the source of holiness is thankfulness was well meant, as an antidote to legalism on the one hand and to Antinomianism on the other. The sinner, we were told, once redeemed from the curse of the Law and delivered from the danger of perdition, begins to love the Christ Who redeemed and saved him. The doctrine contains a truth, and is applicable to this extent: that he to whom much is forgiven loveth much. But it would not be true to say that all good men have sought God's forgiveness because they feared hell torments. To some their guilt is their hell. Fear is too narrow a foundation of holiness. We cannot explain saintliness by mere gratitude. For "thankfulness" we must write "conscience," and substitute forgiveness and absolution from guilt for safety from future misery, if we would lay a foundation broad and firm enough on which to erect the sublimest holiness of man.

Our author infers from the words of Jeremiah that there was an inherent decay in the former covenant. It was itself ready to vanish away, and make room for a new and more spiritual one.*

* Rom. iv. 7. † Isa. xliii. 25. ‡ Chap. x. 2, 4.

II. A New Covenant Symbolized in the Tabernacle.

"Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak severally. Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high-priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a parable for the time now present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation. But Christ having come a High-priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle,

* Chap. viii. 13.

not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"—Heb. ix. 1–14 (R. V.).

With the words of a prophet the Apostle contrasts the ritual of the priests. Jeremiah prophesied of a better covenant, because he found the former one did not satisfy conscience. A description of the tabernacle, its furniture and ordinances of Divine service, follows. At first it appears strange that the author should have thought it necessary to enumerate in detail what the tabernacle contained. But to infer that he is a Hellenist, to whom the matter had all the charm of novelty, would be very precarious. His purpose is to show that the way of the holiest was not yet open. The tabernacle consisted of two chambers: the foremost and larger of the two, called the sanctuary, and an inner one, called the holiest of all. Now the sanctuary had its furniture and stated rites. It was not a mere vestibule or passage leading to the holiest. The eighth verse, literally rendered, expresses that the outer sanctuary "held a position." Its furniture was for daily use. The candelabrum supported the seven lamps, which gave light to the ministering priests. The showbread, laid on the table in rows of twelve cakes, was eaten by Aaron and his sons. Into this chamber the priests went always, accomplishing the daily services. Moreover, between the holy place and the holiest of all hung a thick veil. Into the holiest the high-priest only was permitted to enter, and he could only enter on the annual day of atonement. This chamber also had its proper furniture. To it belonged the altar of incense (for so we must read in the fourth verse, instead of "golden censer"), although its actual place was in the outer sanctuary. It stood in front of the veil that the high-priest might take the incense from it, without which he was not permitted to enter the holiest; and when he came out, he sprinkled it with blood as he had sprinkled the holiest place itself. In the inner chamber stood the ark of the covenant, containing the pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the two tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. On the ark was the mercy-seat, and above the mercy-seat were the cherubim. But there were no lamps to give light; there was no showbread for food. The glory of the Lord filled it, and was the light thereof. When the high-priest had performed the atoning rites, he was not permitted to stay within. It is evident that reconciliation through blood was the idea symbolised by the holiest place, its furniture, and the yearly rite performed within it. But the veil and the outer chamber stood between the sinful people and the mercy-seat. Our author ascribes this arrangement of the two chambers, the veil, and the one entrance every year of the high-priest into the inner shrine, to the Holy Spirit, Who teaches men by symbol that the way to God is not yet open. But He also teaches them through the ordinances of the outer sanctuary that access to God is a necessity of conscience, and yet that the gifts and sacrifices there offered cannot satisfy conscience, resting, as they do, only on meats and drinks and divers washings. All we can say of them is that they were the requirements of natural conscience, here termed "flesh," and that these demands of human consciousness of guilt were sanctioned and imposed on men by God provisionally, until the time came for restoring permanently the long-lost peace between God and men.

Contrast with all this the ministry of Christ. He made His appearance on earth as High-priest of the things which have now at length come to us. The blessings prophesied by Jeremiah have been realised. As High-priest He entered the true holiest place, a tabernacle greater and more perfect, even heaven itself. It is greater; that is, larger. The outer sanctuary has ceased to exist, because the veil has been rent in twain, and the holy place has been taken into the holiest place. The tabernacle has now only one chamber, and in that chamber God meets all His worshipping saints, who come to Him through and with Jesus, the High-priest. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell, as in the tabernacle, with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them. Yea, the holiest place has spread itself over Mount Zion, on which stood the king's palace, and over the whole city of Jerusalem, which lieth four-square, and is become the heavenly and holy city, having no temple, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. "And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it; for the glory of God lightens it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." The city and the holiest place are commensurate. So large, indeed, is the holiest that the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof. It is also more perfect. For Christ has entered into the presence of God for us. Such a tabernacle is not constructed of the materials of this world, nor fashioned with the hands of cunning artificers, Bezaleel and Aholiab. When Christ destroyed the sanctuary made with hands, in three days He built another made without hands. In a true sense it is not made at all, not even by the hands of Him Who built all things; for it is essentially God's presence. Into this holiest place Christ entered, to appear in the immediate presence of God. But the Apostle is not satisfied with saying that He entered within. Ten thousand times ten thousand of His saints will do this. He has done more. He went *through* the holiest. He has passed through the heavens. He has been made higher than the heavens. He has taken His seat on the right hand of God. The Melchizedek Priest has ascended to the mercy-seat and made it His throne. He is Himself henceforth the shechinah, and the manifested glory of the unseen Father. All this is expressed in the words "through a greater and more perfect tabernacle."

Moreover, the high-priest entered into the holiest place in virtue of the blood of goats and calves. Add, if you will, the ceremony of cleansing a person who had contracted defilement by touching a dead body. He also was cleansed by having the ashes of a heifer sprinkled upon his flesh. Why, the very defilement is unreal and artificial. To touch a dead body a sin! It may have been well to make it a

crime from sanitary considerations, and it may become a sin because God has forbidden it. So far it touched conscience. When Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child of the widow of Zarephath three times, and the soul of the child came into him again, or when Elisha put his mouth upon the mouth of the dead son of the Shunammite, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and the flesh of the child waxed warm, God's holy prophet was defiled! The mother and the child might bring their thank-offering to the sanctuary; but the prophet, who had done the deed of power and mercy, was excluded from joining in thanksgiving and prayer. If the defilement is unreal, what shall we think of the means of cleansing? To touch a dead child defiles, but the touch of the ashes of a burnt heifer cleanses! Yet natural conscience felt guilty when thus defiled, and recovered itself, in some measure, from its shame when thus made clean. Such men resemble the persons, referred to by St. Paul, who have "a conscience of the idol." Judaism enfeebled the conscience. A man of morbid religious sentiment is often defiled in his own eyes by what is not really wrong, and often finds peace and comfort in what is not really a propitiation or a forgiveness.

On the other hand, Christ entered the true holiest place by His own blood. He offered Himself. The High-priest is the sacrifice. Under the old covenant the victim must be "without spot." But the high-priest was not without blemish, and he offered for himself as well as for the errors of the people. But in the offering of Christ, the spotless purity of the Victim ensures that the High-priest Himself is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. For this reason it is said here * that He offered Himself "through an eternal spirit," or, as we should say in modern phrase, "through His eternal personality." He is the High-priest after the order of Melchizedek; and He invests the sacrifice with all the personal greatness of the High-priest. Is He "without beginning of days or end of life"? So also His sacrifice abides for ever. His power of an indissoluble life belongs to His atonement. Is He untouched by the rolling stream of time? His death was of infinite merit in reference to the past and to the future, though it took place historically at the end of the ages. His eternal personality made it unnecessary for Him to suffer often since the foundation of the world. Because of His personal greatness, it sufficed that He should suffer once only and enter once into the holiest place. The eternal High-priest in one transitory act of death offered a sacrifice that remains eternally, and obtains for us an eternal redemption. If, then, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of an heifer appease, in some measure, the weak, frightened conscience of unenlightened nature, how much more shall the conscious, voluntary sacrifice of this eternal, personal Son deliver the conscience of him who worships, not a phantom deity, but an eternal, personal, living God, from the guilt of dead works, and bring him to worship that living God with an eternal, living personality!

Mark the contrasted notions. The brute life, dragged to the altar, little knowing that its hot blood is to be a propitiation for human guilt, is contrasted with the blood of the Christ (for there is but one), Who, with the consciousness and strength of an eternal personality, willingly offers Himself as a sacrifice. Between these two lives are all the lives which God created, human and angelic. Yet the offering of a beast in some fashion and to some degree appeased conscience, unillumined by the fierce light of God's holiness and untouched by the pathos of Christ's death. With this imperfect and negative peace, or, to speak more correctly, truce, of conscience is contrasted the living, eager worship of him whose enlightened conscience has been purified from spiritual defilement by the blood of Christ. Such a man's entire service is worship, and his worship is the ministering of a priest.* He stands in the congregation of the righteous, and ascends unto God's holy hill. He enters the holiest place with Christ. He draws near with boldness to the mercy-seat, now the very throne itself of grace.

It will be seen, if we have rightly traced the line of thought, that the outer sanctuary no longer exists. The larger and more perfect tabernacle is the holiest place itself, when the veil has been removed, and the sanctuary and courts are all included in the expanded holiest. Several very able expositors deny this. They find an antitype of the holy place either in the body of Christ or in the created heavens, through which He has passed into the immediate presence of God. But this introduces confusion, adds nothing of value to the meaning of the type, and is inconsistent with our author's express statement that the way into the holiest was not yet open so long as the holy place stood.

III. A New Covenant Ratified in the Death of Christ.

"And for this cause He is the Mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death; for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth? Wherefore even the first covenant hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. And according to the Law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often; as the high-priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation. For the Law having a shadow of the good *things* to come, not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins? But in these *sacrifices* there is a remem-

* Chap. ix. 14.

* λατρεύειν (ix. 14).

brance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith,

"Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not,
But a body didst Thou prepare for Me;
In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou hadst no pleasure:
Then said I, Lo, I am come
(In the roll of the book it is written of Me)
To do Thy will, O God.

Saying above, Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the Law), then hath He said, Lo, I am come to do Thy will. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: but He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. For by one offering He had perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And the Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us: for after He hath said,

"This is the covenant that I will make with them
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put My laws on their heart,
And upon their mind also will I write them;

then saith He,

"And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."—Heb. ix. 15–x. 18 (R.V.).

The Apostle has proved that a new covenant was promised through the prophet and prefigured in the tabernacle. Christ is come to earth and entered into the holiest place of God, as High-priest. The inference is that His high-priesthood has abolished the old covenant and ratified the new. The priesthood has been changed, and change of the priesthood implies change of the covenant. In fact, to this priesthood the rites of the former covenant pointed, and on it the priestly absolution rested. Sins were forgiven, but not in virtue of any efficacy supposed to belong to the rites or sacrifices, all of which were types of another and infinitely greater death. For a death has taken place for the redemption of all past transgressions, which had been accumulating under the former covenant. Now at length sin has been put out of the way. The heirs of the promise made to Abraham, centuries before the giving of the Law, come at last into possession of their inheritance. The call has sounded. The hour has struck. For this inheritance they waited till Christ should die. The earthly Canaan may pass from one race to another race; but the unchangeable, eternal inheritance, into which none but the rightful heirs can enter, is incorruptible, undefiled, fading not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept for its possession.

Because possession of it was delayed till Christ died, it may be likened to an inheritance bequeathed by a testator in his last will. For when a person leaves property by will to another, the will is of no force, the transference is not actually made, the property does not change hands, in the testator's lifetime. The transaction takes place after and in consequence of his death. This may serve as an illustration. Its pertinence as such is increased by the fact, which in all probability suggested it to our author, that the same word would be used by a Hebrew, writing in Greek, for "covenant," and by a native of Greece for "a testamentary disposition of property." But it is only an illustration. We cannot suppose that it was intended to be anything more.

To return to argument, the blood of Christ may be shown to have ratified a covenant from the use of blood by Moses to inaugurate the former covenant. The Apostle has spoken before of the shedding and sprinkling of blood in sacrifice. When the high-priest entered into the holiest place, he offered blood for himself and the people. But, besides its use in sacrifice, blood was sprinkled on the book of the law, on the tabernacle, and on all the vessels of the ministry. Without a copious stream, a veritable "outflow" of blood, both as ratifying the covenant and as offered in sacrifice, there was under the Law no remission of sins. Now the typical character of all the arrangements and ordinances instituted by Moses is assumed throughout. Even the purification of the tabernacle and its vessels with blood must be symbolical of a spiritual truth. There is, therefore, in the new covenant a purification of the true holiest place. To make the matter still more evident, the author reminds his readers of a fact, which he has already mentioned, in reference to the construction of the tabernacle. Moses was admonished of God to make it a copy and shadow of heavenly things. "For, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." It appears, then, that not only the covenant was typical, but the tabernacle, its vessels, and the purifying of all with blood were a copy of things in the heavens, the true holiest place. And, inasmuch as the holiest place has now, in Christ, included within it the sanctuary, and every veil and wall of partition has been removed, the purification of the tabernacle corresponds to a purification, under the new covenant, of heaven itself.

Not that the heaven of God is polluted. Even the earthly shrine had not itself contracted defilement. The blood sprinkled on the tabernacle and its vessels was not different from the blood of the sacrifice. As sacrificial blood, it consecrated the place, and was also offered to God. Similarly the blood of Christ made heaven a sanctuary, erected there a holiest place for the appearing of the great High-priest, constituted the throne of the Most High a mercy-seat for men. By the same act it became an offering to God, enthroned on the mercy-seat. The two notions of ratifying the covenant and atoning for sin cannot be separated. For this reason our author says the heavenly things are purified with sacrifices. But as heaven is higher than the earth, as the true holiest place excels the typical, so must the sacrifices that purify heaven be better than the sacrifices that purified the tabernacle. But Christ is great enough to make heaven itself a new place, whereas He Himself remains unchanged, "yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever."

The thought of Christ's eternal oneness is apparently suggested to the Apostle by the contrast between Christ and the purified heaven. But it helps his argument. For the blood of Christ, when offered in heaven, so fully and perfectly ratified the new covenant that He remains for evermore in the holiest place and evermore offers Himself to God in one eternally unbroken act. He did not enter heaven to come out again, as the high-priests presented their offer-

ing repeatedly, year after year. They could not do otherwise, because they entered "with blood not their own," or, as we may render the word, "with alien blood." The blood of goats and bulls cannot take away sin. Consequently, the absolution obtained is unreal and, therefore, temporary in its effect. The blood of the beasts must be renewed as the annual day of atonement comes round. If Christ's offering of Himself had only a temporary efficacy, He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world. The forgiveness under the former covenant put off the retribution for one year. St. Paul expresses the same conception when he describes it as not a real forgiveness, but as "the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." The writer of the Epistle infers that, if Christ's sacrifice were meritorious for a time only, then He ought to have repeated His offering whenever the period for which it was efficacious came to an end; and, inasmuch as His atonement was not restricted to one nation, it would have been necessary for Him to appear on earth repeatedly, and repeatedly die, not from the time of Moses or of Abraham, but from the foundation of the world. But our author has long since said "that the works were finished from the foundation of the world." God Himself after the work of creation entered on His Sabbath rest. The Sabbath developed from initial creation to final atonement, and, because Christ's atonement is final, He has perfected the Sabbath eternally in the heavens. But the Sabbath of God would have been no Sabbath to the Son of God, but a constant recurrence of sufferings and deaths, if He did not finish transgression and atone for sin by His one death. "Once, at the end of the ages," when the tale of sin and woe has been all told, "hath He appeared," which proves that He has finally and for ever put away sin through His one sacrifice.*

The Apostle speaks as one who believed that the end of the world was at hand. He even builds an argument on this to him assured fact of the near future. True, the end of the world was not yet. But the argument is equally valid in its essential bearing. For the important point is that Christ appeared on earth only once. Whether His one death occurred at the beginning of human history, or at the end, or at the end of one period and the beginning of another, is immaterial.

Then follows a very original piece of reasoning, plainly intended to be an additional proof that Christ's dying once put away sin for ever. To appear on earth often, and to die often, would have been impossible for Him. He was true man, of woman born, not an apparition, not an angel assuming the appearance of humanity, not the Son of God really and man only seemingly. But it is appointed unto men once, and only once, to die. After their one death comes, sooner or later, judgment. To return to earth and make a new beginning to retrieve the errors and failures of a completed life, is not given to men. This is the Divine appointment. Exception to the Apostle's argument must not be taken from the resurrection of Lazarus and others who were restored to life. The Apostle speaks of God's usual course of action. So understood, it is difficult to conceive how any words can be more decisive against the doctrine of probation after death. For, however long judgment may tarry, our author acknowledges no possibility of changing any man's state or character between death and the final award. On this impossibility of retrieving the past the force of the argument entirely depends. If Christ, Who was true man, failed in His one life and one death, the failure is irretrievable. He cannot come again to earth and try anew. To Him, as to other men, it was appointed to die once only. In His case, as in the case of others, judgment follows death,—judgment irreversible on the things done in the body. To add emphasis to the notion of finality in the work of Christ's life on earth, the Apostle uses the passive verb, "was offered." The offering, it is true, was made by Christ Himself. But here the deed is more emphatic than the Doer: "He was offered once for all." The result of the offering is also emphasised: "He was offered so as to lift up sins, like a heavy burden, and bear them away for ever." Even the word "many" is not to be slurred over. It too indicates that the work of Christ was final; for the sins of many have been put away.

What will be the judgment on Christ's one redemptive death? Has it been a failure? The answer is that His death and His coming into the judgment have a closer relation to men than mere similarity. He entered into the presence of God as a sin-offering. He will be proved, at His second appearing, to have put away sin. For He will appear then apart from sin. God will pronounce that Christ's blood has been accepted, and that His work has been finished. His acquittal will be the acquittal of those whose sins He bare in His body on the tree.

Nor will His appearing be now long delayed. It was already the end of the ages when He first appeared. Therefore look out for Him with eager expectancy and upward gaze. For He will be once again actually beheld by human eyes, and the vision will be unto salvation.

We must not fail to note that, when the Apostle speaks in this passage of Christ's being once offered, he refers to His death. The analogy between men and Christ breaks down completely if the death of Christ was not the offering for sin. Faustus Socinus revived the Nestorian doctrine that our author represents the earthly life and death of Jesus as a moral preparation for the priesthood which was conferred upon Him at His ascension to the right hand of God. The bearing of this interpretation of the Epistle on the Socinian doctrine generally is plain. A moral preparation there undoubtedly was, as the Apostle has shown in the second chapter. But if Christ was not Priest on earth, His death was not an atoning sacrifice. If He was not Priest, He was not Victim. Moreover, if He fills the office of Priest in heaven only, His priesthood cannot involve suffering and, therefore, cannot be an atonement. But the view is inconsistent with the Apostle's express statement that, "as it is appointed unto men once to die, so Christ was once offered." Of course, we cannot acquiesce in the opposite view that His death was Christ's only priestly act, and that His life in heaven is such a state of exaltation as excludes the possibility of priestly service. For He is "a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." * The death of Christ

* Chap. ix. 26.

* Chap. viii. 2.

was a distinct act of priestly service. But it must not be separated from His entering into heaven. Aaron received into his hands the blood of the newly slain victim, and immediately carried the smoking blood into the holiest place. The act of offering the blood before God was as necessary to constitute the atonement as the previous act of slaying the animal. Hence it is that the shedding and the sprinkling of the blood are spoken of as one and the same action. Christ, in like manner, went into the true holiest through His death. Any other way of entering heaven than through a sacrificial death would have destroyed the priestly character of His heavenly life. But His death would have been insufficient. He must offer His blood and appear in the presence of God for us. To give men access unto God was the ultimate purpose of redemption. He must, therefore, consecrate through the veil of His flesh—a new and living way by which we may come unto God through Him.

Must we, therefore, say that Christ entered the holiest place at His death, not at His ascension? Does the Apostle refer only to the entrance of the soul into the invisible world? The question is not an easy one. If the Apostle means the Ascension, what doctrinal use does he make of the interval between the Crucifixion and the Ascension? Many of the fathers are evidently at a loss to know what to make of this interval. They think the Divine person, as well as the human soul, of Christ was conveyed to Hades to satisfy what they call the law of death. Does the Epistle to the Hebrews pass over in silence the descent into Hades and the resurrection? On the other hand, if our author means that Christ entered the holiest place immediately at His death, we are met by the difficulty that He leaves the holiest, to return finally at His ascension, whereas the Apostle has argued that Christ differs from the high-priests under the former covenant in that He does not enter repeatedly. Much of the confusion has arisen from the tendency of theologians, under the influence of Augustine, to construct their systems exclusively on the lines of St. Paul. In his Epistles atonement is a forensic conception. "Through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to the justification of life."* Consequently the death of Christ is contrasted with His present life. "For the death that He died, He died unto sin once; but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God."† But our author does not put his doctrine in a Pauline framework. Instead of forensic notions, we meet with terms pertaining to ritual and priesthood. What St. Paul speaks of as law is, in his language, a covenant, and what is designated justification in the Epistle to the Romans appears here as sanctification. Conscience is purified; the worshipper is perfected. The entering of the high-priest into the holiest place is as prominent as the slaying of the victim. These are two distinct, but inseparable, parts of one priestly action. All that lies between is ignored. It is as if it were not. Christ entered into the holiest through His death and ascension to the right hand of the Majesty. But the initial and the ultimate stages of the act must not be put asunder. Nothing comes between. Our author elsewhere speaks of Christ's resurrection as a historical fact.* But His resurrection does not form a distinct notion in the idea of His entrance into the holiest place.

The Apostle has spoken of the former covenant with surprising severity, not to say harshness. It was the law of a carnal commandment; it has been set aside because of its weakness and unprofitableness; it has grown old and waxed aged; it was nigh unto vanishing away. His austere language will compare with St. Paul's description of heathenism as a bondage to weak and beggarly elements.

The root of all the mischief was unreality. Our author brings his argument to a close by contrasting the shadow and the substance, the unavailing sacrifices of the Law, which could only renew the remembrance of sins, and the sacrifice of the Son, which has fulfilled the will of God.

The Law had only a shadow.† He is careful not to say that the Law was itself but a shadow. On the contrary, the very promise includes that God will put His laws in the heart and write them upon the mind. This was one of "the good things to come." Endless repetition of sacrifice after sacrifice year by year in a weary round of ceremonies only made it more and more evident that men were walking in a vain show and disquieting themselves in vain. The Law was holy, righteous, and good; but the manifestation of its nature in sacrifices was unreal, like the dark outline of an object that breaks the stream of light. Nothing more substantial, as a revelation of God's moral character, was befitting or possible in that stage of human development, when the purposes of His grace also not seldom found expression in dreams of the night and apparitions of the day.

To prove the unreal nature of these ever-recurring sacrifices, the writer argues that otherwise they would have ceased to be offered, inasmuch as the worshippers, if they had been once really cleansed from their guilt, would have had no more conscience of sins.‡ The reasoning is very remarkable. It is not that God would have ceased to require sacrifices, but that the worshipper would have ceased to offer them. It implies that, when a sufficient atonement for sin has been offered to God, the sinner knows it is sufficient, and, as the result, has peace of conscience. The possibility of a pardoned sinner still fearing and doubting does not seem to have occurred to the Apostle. One difference apparently between the saints under the Old Testament and believers under the New is the joyful assurance of pardon which the latter receive, whereas the former were all their lifetime subject to bondage from fear of death, and that in the one case the sacrifice was offered by the worshipper himself through the priest, but in the latter case by Another, even Christ, on his behalf. And we must not ask the Apostle such questions as these: Are we not in danger of deceiving ourselves? How is the assurance created and kept alive? Does it spring spontaneously in the heart, or is it the acceptance of the authoritative absolution of God's ministers? Such problems were not thought of when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. They belong to a later and more subjective state of mind. To men who cannot leave off introspection and forget themselves in the

* Rom. v. 18. † Rom. vi. 10.

* Chap. xiii. 20. † Chap. x. 1. ‡ Chap. x. 2.

joy of a new faith, the Apostle's argument will have little force and perhaps less meaning.

If the sacrifices were unreal, why, we naturally inquire, were they continually repeated? The answer is that there were two sides to the sacrificial rites of the old covenant. On the one hand, they were, like the heathen gods, "nothings;" on the other, their empty shadowiness itself fitted them to be a Divinely appointed means to call sins to remembrance. They represented on the one side the invincible, though always baffled, effort of natural conscience. For conscience was endeavouring to purify itself from a sense of guilt. But God also had a purpose in awakening and disciplining conscience. The worshipper sought to appease conscience through sacrifice, and God, by the same sacrifice, proclaimed that reconciliation had not been effected. The Apostle's judgment on the subject* is not different from St. Paul's answer to the question, What then is the Law? "It was added because of transgressions. . . . The Scripture hath shut up all things under sin. . . . We were kept in ward under the Law. . . . We were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world." In allusion to this idea, that the sacrifices were instituted by God in order to renew the remembrance of sins every year, Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me,"—of Him Who hath put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself.

Such then was the shadow, at once unreal and dark. In contrast to it, the Apostle designates the substance as "the very image of the objects." Instead of repeating the indefinite expression "good things to come," he speaks of them as "objects," individually distinct, substantial, true. The image of a thing is the full manifestation of its inmost essence, in the same sense in which St. Paul says that the Son of God's love, in Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, is the image of the invisible God. Indeed, it is extremely questionable whether our author too does not refer allusively to the same truth. For, in the verses that follow, he contrasts with the sacrifices of the former covenant the coming of Jesus Christ into the world to accomplish the work which they had failed to do. When the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, inasmuch as it was an unreal atonement, God prepared a body for His own eternal Son. The Son responded to the Divine summons and, in accordance with the prophecies of Scripture concerning Him, came from heaven to earth to give Himself as the sufficient sacrifice for sin. The contrast, as heretofore, is between the vanity of animal sacrifices and the greatness of the Son, Who offered Himself. His assumption of humanity had for its ultimate end to enable the Son to do the will of God. The gracious purpose of God is to forgive sin, and this was accomplished by the infinite humiliation of the infinite Son. God's will was to sanctify us; that is, to remove our guilt.† We have actually been thus sanctified through the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ. The sacrifices of the Law are taken out of the way in order to establish the sacrifice of the Son.‡

It will be observed that the Apostle is not contrasting sacrifice and obedience. His meaning is not precisely the same as the prophet Samuel's: that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."* It is perfectly true that the sacrifice of the Son involved obedience,—a conscious, deliberate, willing obedience, which the beasts to be slain in sacrifice could not offer. The idea pervades these verses, as an atmosphere. But it is not the idea expressed. The dominant thoughts of the passage are the greatness of the Person Who obeyed and the greatness of the sacrifice from which His obedience did not shrink. The Son is here represented as existing and acting apart from His human nature.† He comes into the world, and is not originated in the world. The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews is identical in this vital point with that of St. Paul. The purpose of the Son's coming is already formed. He comes to offer His body, and we have been taught in a previous chapter that He did this with an eternal spirit.‡ For the will of God means our sanctification, in the meaning attached to the word "sanctification" in this Epistle, the removal of guilt, the forgiveness of sins. But the fulfilment of this gracious will of God demands a sacrifice, even a sacrificial death, and that not the death of beasts, but the infinite self-sacrifice and obedience unto death of the Son of God. This is implied in the expression "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ."§

The superstructure of argument has been raised. Christ as High-priest has been proved to be superior to the high-priests of the former covenant. It remains only to lay the topstone in its place. This brings us back to our starting point. Jesus Christ, the eternal High-priest, is for ever King. For the priests under the Law stand while they perform the duties of their ministry.‖ They stand because they are only priests. But Christ has taken His seat, as King, on the right hand of God.¶ They offer the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins, and wait, and wait, but in vain. Though they are priests of the true God, yet they wait, like the priests of Baal, from morning until midday is past and until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there is neither voice nor any to answer. Christ also waits, but not to renew an ineffectual sacrifice. He waits eagerly** to receive from God the reward of His effective sacrifice in the subjugation of His enemies. The priests under the Law had no enemies. Their persons were sacred. They incurred no hatred, inspired no love. Our High-priest goes out to war, the most hated, the most loved, of all captains of men.

The foundation of this kingly power is in two things: first, He has perfected men for ever by His one offering; second, He has put the law of God into the hearts of His people. The final conclusion is that the sacrifices of the Law have passed away, because they are no longer needed. "For where there is forgiveness, there is no more an offering for sin."

* Chap. x. 3. † Chap. x. 10. ‡ Chap. x. 9.

* 1 Sam. xv. 22. § Chap. x. 10.
† Chap. x. 7. ‖ Chap. x. 11.
‡ Chap. ix. 14. ¶ Chap. x. 13.
** ἐκδεχόμενος (x. 13).

CHAPTER IX.

AN ADVANCE IN THE EXHORTATION.

HEBREWS x. 19-39 (R. V.).

THE argument is closed. Christ is the eternal Priest and King, and every rival priesthood or kingship must come to an end. This is the truth won by the Apostle's original and profound course of reasoning. But he has in view practical results. He desires to confirm the Hebrew Christians in their allegiance to Christ. We shall be better able to understand the precise bearing of his exhortation if we compare it with the appeal previously made to his readers in the earlier chapters of the Epistle.* At the very outset he plunged into the midst of his subject and proved that Jesus Christ is Son of God and representative Man. The union in Christ of these two qualifications constituted Him a great High-priest. He is able to succour the tempted; He is faithful as a Son, Who is set over the house of God; He has experienced the bitter humiliation of life; He is perfected as our Saviour, and has passed through the heavens. The exhortation, based on these truths, is that we must lay fast hold of our confidence.

Then come the big wave, the hesitation to face it, the allegory of Melchizedek, the appeal to the prophet Jeremiah, the comparison between the old covenant and the new. But the argument triumphs and advances. Jesus not only is a great High-priest, but this is interpreted as meaning that He is Priest and King, and that His priesthood and power will never pass away. Their eternal duration involves the setting aside of every other priesthood, the destruction of every opposing force. Christ has entered into the true holiest place and enthroned Himself on the mercy-seat.

This being so, the Apostle no longer urges his readers to be confident. He now appeals to them as having confidence, in virtue of the blood of Jesus, so that they tarry not in the precincts, but enter themselves into the holiest. The high-priest alone dared enter under the former covenant, and he approached with fear and trembling, lest he also, like others before him, should fall down dead in the presence of God. The exhortation now is, not to confidence, but to sincerity. Let their confidence become more objective. They had the boasting of hope. Let them seek the silent, unboasting assurance that is grounded on faith, on the realisation of the invisible. Instead of believing because they hoped, let them hope because they believed. In the earlier chapters the exhortation rested mainly on what Jesus was as Son over God's house. Now, however, the Apostle speaks of Him as a great Priest over God's house. His authority over the Church springs, not only from His relation to God, but also from His relation to men. He is King of His Church because He prays for it and blesses it. Through His priesthood our hearts are cleansed by the sprinkling of His blood from the consciousness of sin. But this blessing of the individual believer is now closely connected by the Apostle with the idea of the Church, over which Christ is King in virtue of His priesthood on its behalf. In addition to the cleansing of our hearts from an evil conscience, our bodies have been washed with pure water. The Apostle alludes primarily in both clauses to the rite of priestly consecration. "Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water." He also "took of the blood which was upon the altar and sprinkled it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon his sons' garments with him, and sanctified Aaron, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him." * The meaning of our author seems certainly to be that the worshippers have the privilege of the high-priest himself. They lose their priestly character only in the more excellent glory and greatness of that High-priest through Whom they have received their priesthood. In comparison with Him, they are but humble worshippers, and He alone is Priest. In contrast to the world around them, they also are priests of God. But the words of the Apostle contain another allusion. Both clauses refer to baptism. The mention of washing the "body" renders it, we think, unquestionable that baptism is meant. But baptism is not here said to be the antitype of the priestly consecration of the old covenant. One rite cannot be the type of another rite, which is itself an external action. The solution of this apparent difficulty is simply that both clauses together mean baptism, which is invariably represented in the New Testament as much more than an outward rite. The external act may be performed without its being a true baptism. For the meaning of baptism is the forgiveness of sin, the cleansing of the heart or innermost consciousness from guilt, and the reception of the absolved sinner into the Church of God. "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word."

In an earlier chapter our author told his readers that they were the house of God if they held fast their confidence. He does not repeat it. The Church consciousness has sprung up within them. They were previously taught to look steadfastly at Jesus as the Apostle and High-priest of their confession. They are now urged to look steadfastly at one another as fellow-confessors of the same Apostle and High-priest, and to sharpen one another's love and activity even to the point of jealousy. In the earlier exhortation no mention was made of the Church assemblies. Here prominence is given them. Importance is attached to the words of encouragement addressed at these gatherings of believers. Christian habits were at this time forming and consolidating into customs of the Church. Occasional and eccentric manifestations of the religious life and temperament were yielding to the slow, normal growth of true vitality. As faithfulness in frequenting the Church assemblies began to rank among the foremost virtues, unfaithfulness would, by force of contrast, harden into habitual neglect of the house of prayer: "As the custom of some is."

The chief of all reasons for exhorting the readers to habitual attendance on the Church assemblies the writer of the Epistle finds in the expectation of the Lord's speedy return. They could see for themselves that the day was at hand. The signs of the Son of man's coming were multiplying and thrusting themselves on

* Chaps. ii. i-5; iii. 1, 6; iv. 11, 16; vi

* Lev. viii. 6, 30.

the notice of the Church. Perhaps the voice of Joshua, the son of Hanan, had already been heard in the streets, exclaiming, "Woe to Jerusalem!" The holy city was plainly doomed. But Christ will come to His Church, not to individuals. He will not be found in the wilderness, nor in the inner chambers. "As the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man." *

The day of Christ is a day of judgment. The two meanings of the word "day,"—day in contrast to night, and day as a fixed time for the transaction of public business,—coalesce in the New Testament usage. The second idea seems to have gradually superseded the former.

The author proceeds to unfold the dreadful character of this day of judgment. Here, again, the precise force of his declarations will best appear by comparison with the warnings of the first part of the Epistle in reference to the sin and to the punishment.

First, the sin referred to here has a wider range than the transgression spoken of in the second chapter. For there he mentions the special sin of neglecting so great salvation. But in the present passage his words seem to imply that rejection of Christ has given birth to a progeny of evil through the self-abandonment of those who wilfully persist in sinning, as if from reckless bravado. The special guilt, too, of rejecting Christ is here painted in darker hues. For in the earlier passage it is indifference; here it is contempt. In the former case it is ingratitude to a merciful Saviour; in the latter it is treason against the majesty of God's own Son. "To trample under foot" means to desecrate. Christ is the holy High-priest of God, and is now ministering in the true holiest place. Therefore to choose Judaism, with its dead rites, and to reject the living Christ, is no longer the action of a holy zeal for God's house. Quite the reverse. The sanctuary of Judaism has been shorn of its glory, and its sacredness transferred to the despised Nazarene. To tread under foot the Son of God is to trample with revel rout on the hallowed floor of the holiest place. Further, the Apostle's former warnings contained no allusion to the covenant. Now he reminds his readers that they have been sanctified—that is, cleansed from guilt—through the blood of the covenant. Is the cleansing blood itself unclean? Shall we deem the reeking gore of a slain beast or the grey ashes of a burnt heifer holy, and consider the blood of the Christ, Who with an eternal spirit offered Himself without spot to God, unholy and defiling? Moreover, that eternal spirit in the Son of God is a spirit of grace towards men. But His infinite compassion is spurned. And thus the Apostle brings us once more in sight of the hopeless character of cynicism.

Second, the punishment is partly negative. A sacrifice for sins is no more left to men who have spurned the sacrifice of the Son. Here again we notice an advance in the thought. The Apostle told his readers before that it is impossible to renew to repentance those who crucify afresh the Son of God and put Him to an open shame. But the impossibility consists in hardness of heart and spiritual blindness. The result also is subjective,—they cannot repent. He now adds the impossibility of finding another propitiation than the offering of Christ or of finding in His offering a different kind of propitiation, seeing that He is the final revelation of God's forgiving grace. Then, further, the punishment has a positive side. After hardness of heart comes stinging remorse, arising from a vague, but on that account all the more fearful, expectation of the judgment. The abject terror is amply justified. For the fury of a fire, already kindling around the doomed city, warns the Hebrew backsliders that the Christ so wilfully scoffed at is at the door. Observe the contrast. The law of Moses is on occasion set aside. The matter is almost private. Only two or three persons witnessed it. Its evil influence did not spread, and when the criminal was led out to be stoned to death, they who passed by went their way unheeding. The Christ of God is put to an open shame; the covenant, for ever established on the sure foundation of God's oath and Christ's death, and the spirit of all grace that filled the heart of Christ are mocked. Of how much sorer punishment shall Christ at His speedy coming deem the scorner worthy? The answer is left by the Apostle to his readers. They knew with Whom they had to do. It was not with angels, the swift messengers and flaming ministers of His power. It was not with Moses, who himself exceedingly feared and quaked. It was not with the blind pressure of fate. They had to do with the living God Himself directly. He will lay upon them His living hand,—the hand that might and, if they had not spurned it, would have protected and saved. Retribution descends swift and resistless. It can only be likened to a sudden falling into the very hands of a waiting avenger. He will not entrust the work of vengeance to another. No extraneous agent shall come between the smiting hand and the heart that burns with the anger of the sincere against the false, of the compassionate against the pitiless. Does not Scripture teach that the Lord will execute judgment on behalf of His people? If on behalf of His people, will He not enter into judgment for His Son?

From the terrible expectation of future judgment the Apostle turns away, to recall to his readers the grounds of hope supplied by their steadfastness in the past. He has already spoken of their work and the love which they had shown in ministering to the saints. God's justice would not forget their brotherly kindness. Now, however, His purpose in bidding them remember the former days is something different. He writes to convince them that they needed no other and greater confidence to face the future than had carried them triumphantly through conflicts in days of yore. They had endured sufferings; let them conquer their own indifference and put away their cynicism with the lofty disdain of earnest faith. The courage that could do the former can also do the latter.

From the first break of day in their souls they had felt the confidence of men who walk, not in darkness, not knowing whither they go and fearing to take another step, but in the light, so that they trod firmly and stepped boldly onward. Their confidence was based on conviction and understanding of truth. For that reason it inspired them with the courage of athletes, when they had to endure also the shame of the arena. Made a gazing-stock to a scoffing theatre, they had not turned pale at the

* Matt. xxiv. 27.

roar of the wild beasts. Instead of tamely submitting, they had turned their sufferings into a veritable contest against the world, and maintained the conflict long. Taunted by the spectators, torn by the lions, reproaches and afflictions alike had been ineffectual to break their spirit. When they witnessed the prolonged tortures of their brethren, whose Christian life was one martyrdom, they had not shrunk from the like usage. They had pitied the brethren in prisons and visited them. They had taken joyfully the spoiling of their substance, knowing that now they had themselves, as a better and an abiding possession. If they had lost the world, they had gained for themselves their souls. As true athletes, therefore, let them not throw away their sword, which is no other than their old, undaunted confidence. There was none like that sword. Their victory was assured. Their reward would be, not the plaudits of the fickle onlookers, but the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. They had need of endurance, because in enduring they were doing the will of God. But the Deliverer would be with them in a twinkling. He had delayed His chariot wheels, but He would delay no more. Hear ye not His voice? It is He that speaks in the words of the prophet, "Those whom I deny will perish out of the way. But I have My righteous ones here and there, unseen by the world, and out of their faith will be wrought for them eternal life. But let even Mine own beware of lowering sail. My soul will have no delight even in him if he draws back."

The Apostle reflects on the words of Christ in the prophecy of Habakkuk. But he has an assured hope that he and his readers would repudiate the thought of drawing back. They were men of faith, bent on winning the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and the prize would be their own souls. May we not conjecture that the Apostle's fervid appeal prevailed with the Christians within the doomed city "to break the last bands of patriotism and superstition which attached them to the Temple and the altar, and proclaim themselves missionaries of the new faith, without a backward glance of lingering reminiscence"?

CHAPTER X.

FAITH AN ASSURANCE AND A PROOF.

HEBREWS xi. 1-3 (R. V.).

IT is often said that one of the greatest difficulties in the Epistle to the Hebrews is to discover any real connection of ideas between the author's general purpose in the previous discussion and the splendid record of faith in the eleventh chapter. The rhetorical connection is easy to trace. His utterances throughout have been incentives to confidence. "Let us hold fast our confession." Let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace." "Show diligence unto the full assurance of hope." "Cast not away your boldness." Any of these exhortations would sufficiently describe the Apostle's practical aim from the beginning of the Epistle. But he has just cited the words of Habakkuk, and the prophet speaks of faith. How, then, does the prophet's declaration that the righteous man of God will escape death by his faith bear on the Apostle's arguments or help his strong appeals? The first verse of the eleventh chapter is the reply. Faith is assurance, with emphasis on the verb.

But this is only a rhetorical connection, or at best a justification of the use the author has made of the prophet's words. Indeed, he has already in several places identified confidence with faith, and the opposite of confidence with unbelief. "Take heed lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief; . . . for we are become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end." "They could not enter in because of unbelief; . . . let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience." "Be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holy place, . . . let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith."

Why, therefore, does the author formally state that faith is confidence? The difficulty is a real one. We must suppose that, when this Epistle was written, the word "faith" was already a well-known and almost technical term among Christians. We infer as much as this also from St. James's careful and stringent correction of abuses in the application of the word. It is unnecessary to say who was the first to perceive the vital importance of faith in the life and theology of Christianity. But in the preaching of St. Paul faith is trust in a personal Saviour, and trust is the condition and instrument of salvation. Faith, thus represented, is the opposite of works. Such a doctrine was liable to abuse, and has been abused to the utter subversion of morality on the one hand and to the extinction of all unselfish greatness of soul on the other. Not, most certainly, that St. Paul himself was one-sided in teaching or in character. To him Christ is a heavenly ideal: "The Lord is the Spirit;" and to him the believer is the spiritual man, who has the moral intellect of Christ. But it must be confessed—and the history of the Church abundantly proves the truth of the statement—that the good news of eternal salvation on the sole condition of trust in Christ is one of the easiest of all true doctrines to be fatally abused. The Epistle of St. James and the Epistle to the Hebrews seem to have been written to meet this danger. The former represents faith as the inner life of the spirit, the fountain of all active goodness. "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith."

St. James contends against the earliest phases of Antinomianism. He reconciles faith and morality, and maintains that the highest morality springs out of faith. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews contends against legalism,—the proud, self-satisfied, indifferent, hard, slothful, contemptuous, cynical spirit, which is quite as truly and as often an abuse of the doctrine of salvation through faith. It is the terrible plague of those Churches which have never risen above individualism. When men are told that the whole of religion consists in securing the soul's eternal safety, and that this salvation

is made sure once for all by a moment's trust in Christ, their after-life will harden into a worldliness, not gross and sensual, but pitiless and deadening. They will put on the garb of religious decorum; but the inner life will be eaten by the canker of covetousness and self-righteous pride. These are the men described in the sixth chapter of our Epistle, who have, after a fashion, repented and believed, but whose religion has no recuperative power, let alone the growth and richness of deep vitality.

Our author addresses men whose spiritual life was thus imperilled. Their condition is not that of the heathen world in its agony of despair. He does not call his readers, in the words of St. Paul to the jailor at Philippi, to trust themselves into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be saved. Yet he too insists on faith. He is anxious to show them that he is not preaching another gospel, but unfolding the meaning of the same conception of faith, which is the central principle of the Gospel revealed at the first by Christ to their fathers, and applied to the wants of the heathen by the Apostle of the Gentiles.

If so, it goes without saying that the writer does not intend to give a scholastic definition of faith. The New Testament is not the book in which to seek formal definitions. For his present purpose we require only to know that, whatever else faith includes, confidence in reference to the objects of our hope must find a place in it. Faith bridges over the chasm between hope and the things hoped for. It saves us from building castles in the air or living in a fool's paradise. The phantoms of worldliness and the phantoms of religion (for they too exist) will not deceive us. In the course of his discussion in the Epistle the author has used three different words to set forth various sides of the same feeling of confidence. One refers to the freedom and boldness with which the confidence felt manifests its presence in words and action. Another signifies the fulness of conviction with which the mind when confident is saturated. The third word, which we have in the present passage, describes confidence as a reality, resting on an unshaken foundation, and contrasted with illusions. He has urged Christians to boldness of action and fulness of conviction. Now he adds that faith is that boldness and that wealth of certitude in so far as they rest upon reality and truth.

We can now in some measure estimate the value of the Apostle's description of faith as an assurance concerning things hoped for, and apply it to give force to the exhortations of the Epistle. The evil heart of unbelief is the moral corruption of the man whose soul is steeped in sensual imaginations and never realises the things of the Spirit. They who came out of Egypt by Moses could not enter into rest because they did not descry, beyond the earthly Canaan, the rest of the spirit in God. Others inherit the promises, because on earth they lifted their hearts to the heavenly country. In short, the Apostle now tells his readers that the true source of Christian constancy and boldness is the realisation of the unseen world.

But faith is this assurance concerning things hoped for because it is a proof of their existence, and of the existence of the unseen generally. The latter part of the verse is the broad foundation on which faith rests in all the rich variety of its meanings and practical applications. Here St. Paul, St. James, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews meet in the unity of their conception. Whether men trust unto salvation, or develop their inner spiritual life, or enter into communion with God and lift the weapon of unflinching boldness in the Christian warfare, trust, character, confidence, all three derive their being and vitality from faith, as it demonstrates the existence of the unseen.

The Apostle's language is a seeming contradiction. Proof is usually supposed to dispense with faith and compel us to accept the inference drawn. He intentionally describes faith as occupying in reference to spiritual realities the place of demonstration. Faith in the unseen is itself a proof that the unseen world exists. It is so in two ways.

First, we trust our own moral instincts. Malebranche observes that our passions justify themselves. How much more is this true of intellect and conscience! In like manner, some men have firm confidence in a world of spiritual realities, which eye has not seen. This confidence is itself a proof to them. How do I know that I know? It is a philosopher's enigma. For us it may be sufficient to say that to know and to know that we know are one and the same act. How do we justify our faith in the unseen? The answer is similar. It is the same thing to trust and to trust our trust. Scepticism wins a cheap victory when it arraigns faith as a culprit caught in the very act of stealing the forbidden fruit of paradise. But when, like a guilty thing, faith blushes for its want of logic, its only refuge is to look in the face of the unseen Father. He who has most faith in his own spiritual instincts will have the strongest faith in God. To trust God is to trust ourselves. To doubt ourselves is to doubt God. We must add that there is a sense in which trust in God means distrust of self.

Second, faith fastens directly on God Himself. We believe in God because we impose implicit confidence in our own moral nature. With equal truth we may also say that we believe all else because we believe in God. Faith in God Himself immediately and personally is the proof that the promises are true, that our life on earth is linked to a life above, that patient well-doing will have its reward, that no good deed can be in vain, and ten thousand other thoughts and hopes that sustain the drooping spirit in hours of conflict. It may well happen that some of these truths are legitimate inferences from premises, or it may be that a calculation of probabilities is in favour of their truth. But faith trusts itself upon them because they are worthy of God. Sometimes the silence of God is enough, if an aspiration of the soul is felt to be such that it became Him to implant it and will be glorious in Him to reward the heaven-sent desire.

An instance of faith as a proof of the unseen is given by our author in the third verse. We may paraphrase it thus: "By faith we know that the ages have been constructed by the word of God, and that even to this point of assurance: that the visible universe as a whole came not into being out of things that do appear."

The author began in the previous verse to unroll his magnificent record of the elders.

But from the beginning men found themselves in the presence of a mystery of the past before they received any promise as to the future. It is the mystery of creation. It has pressed heavily on men in all ages. The Apostle himself has felt its power, and speaks of it as a question which his readers and himself have faced. How do we know that the development of the ages had a beginning? If it had a beginning, how did it begin? The Apostle replies that we know it by faith. The revelation which we have received from God addresses itself to our moral perception and our confidence in God's moral nature. We have been taught that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and that "God said, Let there be light." Faith demands this revelation. Is faith trust? That trust in God is our proof that the framework of the world was put together by His creative wisdom and power. Is faith the inner life of righteousness? Morality requires that our own consciousness of personality and freedom should be derived from a Divine personality as the Originator of all things. Is faith communion with God? Those who pray know that prayer is an absolute necessity of their spiritual nature, and prayer lifts its voice to a living Father. Faith demonstrates to him who has it, though not to others, that the universe has come to its present form, not by an eternal evolution of matter, but by the action of God's creative energy.

The somewhat peculiar form of the clause seems certainly to suggest that the Apostle ascribes the origin of the universe, not only to a personal Creator, but to that personal Creator acting through the ideas of His own mind. "The visible came into being, not out of things that appear." We catch ourselves waiting till he finishes the sentence with the words, "but out of things that do not appear." Most expositors fight shy of the inference and explain it away by alleging that the negative has been misplaced. But is it not true that the universe is the manifestation of thought in the unity of the Divine purpose? This is the very notion required to complete the Apostle's statement concerning faith as a proof. If faith demonstrates, it acts on principles. If God is personal, those principles are ideas, thoughts, purposes, of the Divine mind.

So long, therefore, as our spiritual nature can trust, can unfold a morality, can pray, the simple soul need not much bewail its want of logic and its loss of arguments. If the famous ontological argument for the being of God has been refuted, we shall not, on that account, tremble for the ark. We shall not lament though the argument from the watch has proved treacherous. Our God is not a mere infinite mechanician. Indeed, such a phrase is a contradiction in terms. A mechanician must be finite. He contrives, and as the result produces, not what is absolutely best, but what is the best possible under the circumstances and with the materials at his disposal. But if we have lost the mechanician, we have not lost the God that thinks. We have gained the perfectly righteous and perfectly good. His thoughts have manifested themselves in nature, in human freedom, in the incarnation of His Son, in the redemption of sinners. But the intellect that knows these things is the good heart of faith.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM.

HEBREWS xi. 8-19 (R. V.).

WE have learned that faith is the proof of the unseen. We must not exclude even from this clause the other thought that faith is an assurance of things hoped for. It is not stated, but it is implied. The conception of a personal God requires only to be unfolded in order to yield a rich harvest of hope. The author proceeds to show that by faith the elders had witness borne to them in God's confession of them and great rewards. He recounts the achievements of a long line of believers, who as they went handed the light from one to another. In them is the true unity of religion and revelation from the beginning. For the poor order of high-priests the writer substitutes the glorious succession of faith.

We choose for the subject of this chapter the faith of Abraham. But we shall not dismiss in silence the faith of Abel, Enoch, and Noah. The paragraph in which Abraham's deeds are recorded will most naturally divide itself into three comparisons between their faith and his. We venture to think that this was in the writer's mind and determined the form of the passage. From the eighth to the tenth verse the Apostle compares Abraham's faith with that of Noah; after a short episode concerning Sarah, he compares Abraham's faith with Enoch's, from the thirteenth verse to the sixteenth; then, down to the nineteenth verse, he compares Abraham's faith with that of Abel. Noah's faith appeared in an act of obedience, Enoch's in a life of fellowship with God, Abel's in his more excellent sacrifice. Abraham's faith manifested itself in all these ways. When he was called, he obeyed; when a sojourner, he desired a better country, that is, a heavenly, and God was not ashamed to be called his God; being tried, he offered up Isaac.

Two points of surpassing worth in his faith suggest themselves. The one is largeness and variety of experience; the other is conquest over difficulties. These are the constituents of a great saint. Many a good man will not become a strong spiritual character because his experience of life is too narrow. Others, whose range is wide, fail to reach the higher altitudes of saintliness because they have never been called to pass through sore trials, or, if they have heard the summons, have shrunk from the hardships. Before Abraham faith was both limited in its experience and untested with heaven-sent difficulties. Abraham's religion was complex. His faith was "a perfect cube," and, presenting a face to every wind that blows, came victorious out of every trial.

Let us trace the comparisons.

First, Noah obeyed a Divine command when he built an ark to the saving of his house. He obeyed by faith. His eyes saw the invisible, and the vision kindled his hopes of being saved through the very waters that would destroy every living substance. But this was all. His faith acted only in one direction: he hoped to be saved. The Apostle Peter* compares his faith to the initial grace of those who seek

* 1 Peter iii. 20.

baptism, and have only crossed the threshold of the spiritual life. It is true that he overcame one class of difficulties. He was not in bondage to the things of sense. He made provision for a future belied by present appearances. But the influence of the senses is not the greatest difficulty of the human spirit. As the lonely ship rode on the heaving waste of waters, all within was gladness and peace. No heaven-sent temptations tried the patriarch's faith. He overcame the trials that spring out of the earth; but he knew not the anguish that rends the spirit like a lightning-stroke descending from God.

With Abraham it was otherwise. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." He leaves his father's house and his father's gods. He breaks for ever with the past, even before the future has been revealed to him. The thoughts and feelings that had grown up with him from childhood are once for all put away. He has no sheltering ark to receive him. A homeless wanderer, he pitches his tent to-day at the well, not knowing where his invisible guide may bid him stretch the cords on the morrow. His departure from Ur of the Chaldees was a family migration. But the writer of this Epistle, like Philo, describes it as the man's own personal obedience to a Divine call. Submitting to God's will, possessed with the inspiration and courage of faith, obeying daily new intimations, he bends his steps this way or that, not knowing whither he goes. True, he went right into the heart of the land of promise. But, even in his own heritage, he became a sojourner, as in a land not his own. God "gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on." Possessor of all in promise, he purchased a sepulchre, which was the first ground he could call his own. The cave of Machpelah was the small beginning of the fulfilment of God's promise, which the spirit of Abraham is even now receiving in a higher form. It is still the same. The bright dawn of heaven often breaks upon the soul at an open grave. But he journeyed on, and trusted. For a time he and Sarah only; afterwards Isaac with them; at last, when Sarah had been laid to rest, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the three together, held on bravely, sojourning with aching hearts, but ever believing. The Apostle brings in the names of Isaac and Jacob, not to describe their faith—this he will do subsequently,—but to show the tenacity and patience of "the friend of God."

His faith, thus sorely tried by God's long delay, is rewarded, not with an external fulfilment of the promise, but with larger hopes, wider range of vision, greater strength to endure, more vivid realisation of the unseen. "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose Architect and Maker is God." * In the promise not a word is said about a city. Apparently he was still to be a nomad chief of a large and wealthy tribe. When God deferred again and again the fulfilment of His promise to give him "this land," His trusting servant bethought him what the delay could mean. This was his hill of difficulty, where the two ways part. The worldly wisdom of unbelief would argue from God's tardiness that the reality, when it comes, will fall far short of the promise. Faith, with higher wisdom, makes sure that the delay has a purpose. God intends to give more and better things than He promised, and is making room in the believer's heart for the greater blessings. Abraham cast about to imagine the better things. He invented a blessing, and, so to speak, inserted it for himself in the promise.

This new blessing has an earthly and a heavenly meaning. On its earthly side it represents the transition from the nomadic life to a fixed abode. Faith bridged the gulf that separates a wandering horde from the cultured greatness of civilisation. The future grandeur of Zion was already held in the grasp of Abraham's faith. But the invented blessing had also a heavenly side. The more correct rendering of the Apostle's words in the Revised Version expresses this higher thought: "He looked for the city which hath the foundations"—*the* city; for, after all, there is but one that hath the eternal foundations. It is the holy city,* the heavenly Jerusalem, seen by the faith of Abraham in the early morning of revelation, seen again in vision by the Apostle John at its close. The expression cannot mean anything that comes short of the Apostle's description of faith as the assurance of things hoped for in the unseen world. Abraham realised heaven as an eternal city, in which after death he would be gathered to his fathers. A sublime conception!—eternity not the dwelling-place of the solitary spirit, the joy of heaven consisting in personal fellowship for ever with the good of every age and clime. There the past streams into the present, not, as here, the present into the past. All are contemporaries there, and death is no more. Whatever makes civilisation powerful or beautiful on earth—laws, arts, culture—all is there etherealised and endowed with immortality. Such a city has God only for its Architect, God only for its Builder. He Who conceived the plan can alone execute the design and realise the idea.

Of this sort was Abraham's obedience. He continued to endure in the face of God's delay to fulfil the promise. His reward consisted, not in an earthly inheritance, not in mere salvation, but in larger hopes and in the power of a spiritual imagination.

Second, Abraham's faith is compared with Enoch's, whose story is most sweetly simple. He is the man who has never doubted, across whose placid face no dark shadow of unbelief ever sweeps. A virgin soul, he walks with God in a time when the wickedness of man is great in the earth and the imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually, as Adam walked with God in the cool of the evening before sin had brought the hot fever of shame to his cheek. He walks with God, as a child with his father; "and God takes him" into His arms. Enoch's removal was not like the entrance of Elijah into heaven: a victorious conqueror returning into the city in his triumphal car. It was the quiet passing away, without observation, of a spirit of heaven that had sojourned for a time on earth. Men sought him, because they felt the loss of his presence among them. But they knew that God had taken him. They inferred his story from his character. In Enoch we have an instance of faith as the faculty of realising the unseen, but not as a power to conquer difficulties.

Compare this faith with Abraham's. "These,"

* Chap. xi. 10.

* Rev. xxi. 10.

—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,—"all died in faith," or, as we may render the word, "according to faith,"—according to the faith which they had exhibited in their life. Their death was after the same pattern of faith. Enoch's contemplative life came to a fitting end in a deathless translation to higher fellowship with God. His way of leaving life became him. Abraham's repeated conflicts and victories closed with quite as much becomingness in a last trial of his faith, when he was called to die without having received the fulfilment of the promises. But he had already seen the heavenly city and greeted it from afar. He saw the promises, as the traveller beholds the gleaming mirage of the desert. The illusiveness of life is the theme of moralists when they preach resignation. It is faith only that can transform the illusions themselves into an incentive to high and holy aspirations. All profound religion is full of seeming illusions. Christ beckons us onward. When we climb this steep, His voice is heard calling to us from a higher peak. That height gained reveals a soaring mass piercing the clouds, and the voice is heard above still summoning us to fresh effort. The climber falls exhausted on the mountain-side and lays him down to die. Ever as Abraham attempted to seize the promise, it eluded his grasp. The Tantalus of heathen mythology was in Tartarus, but the Tantalus of the Bible is the man of faith, who believes the more for every failure to attain.

Such men "declare plainly that they seek a country of their own." Let not the full force of the words escape us. The Apostle does not mean that they seek to emigrate to a new country. He has just said that they confess themselves to be "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They are "pilgrims," because they are journeying through on their way to another country; they are "strangers," because they have come hither from another land. His meaning is that they long to return home. That he means this is evident from his thinking it necessary to guard himself against the possibility of being understood to refer to Ur of the Chaldees. They were not mindful of the earthly home, the cradle of their race, which they had left for ever. Not once did they cast a wistful look back, like Lot's wife and the Israelites in the wilderness. Yet they yearned for their fatherland. Plato imagined that all our knowledge is a reminiscence of what we learned in a previous staté of existence; and Wordsworth's exquisite lines, which cannot lose their sweet fragrance however often they are repeated, are a reflection of the same visionary gleam,—

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
> From God, Who is our home."

Our author too suggests it; and it is true. We need not maintain it as an external fact in the history of the soul, according to the old doctrine, resuscitated in our own times, of Traducianism. The Apostle represents it rather as a feeling. There is a Christian consciousness of heaven, as if the soul had been there and longed to return. And if it is a glorious attainment of faith to regard heaven as a city, more consoling still is the hope of returning there, storm-tossed and weather-beaten, as to a home, to look up to God as to a Father, and to love all angels and saints as brethren in the household of God, over which Christ is set as a Son. Such a hope renders feeble, sinful men not altogether unworthy of God's Fatherhood. For He is not ashamed to be called their God, and Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren. The proof is, that God has prepared for them a settled abode in the eternal city.

Third, the faith of Abraham is compared with the faith of Abel. In the case of Abel faith is more than a realisation of the unseen. For Cain also believed in the existence of an invisible Power, and offered sacrifice. We are expressly told in the narrative that "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." Yet he was a wicked man. The Apostle John says that "Cain was of the Evil One." He had the faith which St. James ascribes to the demons, who "believe there is one God, and shudder." He was possessed with the same hatred, and had also the same faith. It was the union of the two things in his spirit that made him the murderer of his brother. Our author points out very clearly the difference between Cain and Abel. Both sacrificed, but Abel desired righteousness. He had a conscience of sin, and sought reconciliation with God through his offering. Indeed, some of the most ancient authorities, for "God bearing witness in respect to his gifts," read "he bearing witness to God on the ground of his gifts;" that is, Abel bore witness by his sacrifice to God's righteousness and mercy. He was the first martyr, therefore, in two senses. He was God's witness, and he was slain for his righteousness. But, whether we accept this reading or the other, the Apostle presents Abel before us as the man who realised the great moral conception of righteousness. He sought, not the favours of an arbitrary Sovereign, not the mere mercy of an omnipotent Ruler, but the peace of the righteous God. It was through Abel that faith in God thus became the foundation of true ethics. He acknowledged the immutable difference between right and wrong, which is the moral theory accepted by the greater saints of the Old Testament, and in the New Testament forms the groundwork of St. Paul's forensic doctrine of the Atonement. Moreover, because Abel witnessed for righteousness by his sacrifice, his blood even cried from the ground unto God for righteous vengeance. For this is unquestionably the meaning of the words "and through his faith he being dead yet speaketh;" and in the next chapter the Apostle speaks of "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh a better thing than that of Abel." It was the blood of one whose faith had grasped firmly the truth of God's righteousness. His blood, therefore, cried to the righteous God to avenge his wrong. The Apostle speaks as if he were personifying the blood and ascribing to the slain man the faith which he had manifested before. The action of Abel's faith in life and, as we may safely assume, in the very article of death, retained its power with God. Every mouthing wound had a tongue. In like manner, says the writer of the Epistle, the obedience of Jesus up to and in His death made His blood efficacious for pardon to the end of time.

But Abraham's faith excelled. Abel was prompted to offer sacrifice by natural religiousness and an awakened conscience; Abraham sternly resolved to obey a command of God. He prepared to do that against which nature revolted, yea that which conscience forbade. Had not the story of Abel's faith itself loudly proclaimed the sacredness of human life? Would not Abraham, if he offered up Isaac, become another Cain? Would not the dead child speak, and his blood cry from the ground to God for vengeance? It was the case of a man to whom "God is greater than conscience." He resolved to obey at all hazards. Hereby he assured his heart—that is, his conscience—before God in that matter wherein his heart may have condemned him. We, it is true, in the light of a better revelation of God's character, should at once deny, without more ado, that such a command had been given by God; and we need not fear thankfully and vehemently to declare that our absolute trust in the rightness of our own moral instincts is a higher faith than Abraham's. But he had no misgiving as to the reality of the revelation or the authority of the command. Neither do the sacred historian and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews question it. We also need not doubt. God met His servant at that stage of spiritual perception which he had already attained. His faith was strong in its realisation of God's authority and faithfulness. But his moral nature was not sufficiently educated to decide by the character of a command whether it was worthy of God or not. He calmly left it to Him to vindicate His own righteousness. Those who deny that God imposed such a hard task on Abraham must be prepared to solve still greater difficulties. For do not we also, in reference to some things, still require Abraham's faith that the Judge of all the earth will do right? What shall we say of His permitting the terrible and universal sufferings of all living things? What are we to think of the still more awful mystery of moral evil? Shall we say He could not have prevented it? Or shall we take refuge in the distinction between permission and command? Of the two it were easier to understand His commanding what He will not permit, as in the sacrifice of Isaac, than to explain His permission of what He cannot and will not command, as in the undoubted existence of sin.

But let us once more repeat that the greatest faith of all is to believe, with Abel, that God is righteous, and yet to believe, with Abraham, that God can justify His own seeming unrighteousness, and also to believe, with the saints of Christianity, that the test which God imposed on Abraham will nevermore be tried, because the enlightened conscience of humanity forbids it and invites other and more subtle tests in its place.

We must not suppose that Abraham found the command an easy one. From the narrative in the Book of Genesis we should infer that he expected God to provide a substitute for Isaac: "And Abraham said, My Son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together." But the Apostle gives us plainly to understand that Abraham offered his son because he accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead. Both answers are true. They reveal to us the anxious tossings of his spirit, seeking to account to itself for the terrible command of Heaven. At one moment he thinks God will not carry matters to the bitter end. His mind is pacified with the thought that a substitute for Isaac will be provided. At another moment this appeared to detract from the awful severity of the trial, and Abraham's faith waxed strong to obey, even though no substitute would be found in the thicket. Another solution would then offer itself. God would immediately bring Isaac back to life. For Isaac would not cease to be, nor cease to be Isaac, when the sacrificial knife had descended. "God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him."* Besides, the promise had not been withdrawn, though it had not yet been confirmed by an oath; and the promise involved that the seed would be called in Isaac, not in another son. Both solutions were right. For a ram was caught in a thicket by the horns, and Abraham did receive his son back from the dead, not literally indeed, but in a parable.

Most expositors explain the words "in a parable" as if they meant nothing more than "as it were," "so to speak;" and some have actually supposed them to refer to the birth of Isaac in his father's old age, when Abraham was "as good as dead." Both interpretations do violence to the Greek expression, which must mean "even in a parable." It is a brief and pregnant allusion to the ultimate purpose of Abraham's trial. God intended more by it than to test faith. The test was meant to prepare Abraham for receiving a revelation. On Moriah, and ever after, Isaac was more than Isaac to Abraham. He offered him to God as Isaac, the son of the promise. He received him back from God's hand as a type of Him in Whom the promise would be fulfilled. Abraham had gladly received the promise. He now saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAITH OF MOSES.

HEBREWS xi. 23-28 (R. V.).

ONE difference between the Old Testament and the New is the comparative silence of the former respecting Moses and the frequent mention of him in the latter. When he has brought the children of Israel through the wilderness to the borders of the promised land, their great leader is seldom mentioned by historian, psalmist, or prophet. We might be tempted to imagine that the national life of Israel had outgrown his influence. It would without question be in a measure true. We may state the same thing on its religious side by saying that God hid the memory as well as the body of his servant, in the spirit of John Wesley's words, happily chosen for his and his brother's epitaph in Westminster Abbey, "God buries His workmen and carries on His work." But in the New Testament it is quite otherwise. No man is so frequently mentioned. Sometimes when he is not named it is easy to see that the sacred writers have him in their minds.

One reason for this remarkable difference between the two Testaments in reference to Moses is to be sought in the contrast between

* Luke xx. 38.

the earlier and later Judaism. During the ages of the old covenant Judaism was a living moral force. It gave birth to a peculiar type of heroes and saints. Speaking of Judaism in the widest possible meaning, David and Isaiah, as well as Samuel and Elijah, are its children. These men were such heroes of religion that the saints of the Christian Church have not dwarfed their greatness. But it is one of the traits of a living religion to forget the past, or rather to use it only as a stepping-stone to better things. It forgets the past in the sense in which St. Paul urges the Philippians to count what things were gain a loss, and to press on, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before. Religion lives in its conscious, exultant power to create spiritual heroes, not in looking back to admire its own handiwork. The only religion among men that lives in its founder is Christianity. Forget Christ, and Christianity ceases to be. But the life of Mosaism was not bound up with the memory of Moses. Otherwise we may well suppose that idolatry would have crept in, even before Hezekiah found it necessary to destroy the brazen serpent.

When we come down to the times of John the Baptist and our Lord, Mosaism is to all practical ends a dead religion. The great movers of men's souls came down upon the age, and were not developed out of it. The product of Judaism at this time was Pharisaism, which had quite as little true faith as Sadduceeism. But when a religion has lost its power to create saints, men turn their faces to the great ones of olden times. They raise the fallen tombstones of the prophets, and religion is identical with hero-worship. An instance of this very thing may be seen in England to-day, where Atheists have discovered how to be devout, and Agnostics go on a pilgrimage! "We are the disciples of Moses," cried the Pharisees. Can any one conceive of David or Samuel calling himself a disciple of Moses? The notion of discipleship to Moses does not occur in the Old Testament. Men never thought of such a relation. But it is the dominant idea of Judaism in the time of Christ. Hence it was brought about that he who was the servant and friend appears in the New Testament as the antagonist. "For the Law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." * This is opposition and rivalry. Yet "this is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me." †

The notable difference between the Moses of New Testament times and the Moses delineated in the ancient narrative renders it especially interesting to study a passage in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews takes us back to the living man, and describes the attitude of Moses himself towards Jesus Christ. Stephen told his persecutors that the founder of the Aaronic priesthood had spoken of a great Prophet to come, and Christ said that Moses wrote of Him. ‡ But it is with joyous surprise we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews that the legislator was a believer in the same sense in which Abraham was a believer. The founder of the old covenant himself walked by faith in the new covenant.

The references to Moses made by our Lord and by Stephen sufficiently describe his mission. The special work of Moses in the history of religion was to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ and make His paths straight. He was commissioned to familiarise men with the wondrous, stupendous idea of the appearing of God in human nature,—a conception almost too vast to grasp, too difficult to believe. To render it not impossible for men to accept the truth, he was instructed to create a historical type of the Incarnation. He called into being a spiritual people. He realised the magnificent idea of a Divine nation. If we may use the term, he showed to the world God appearing in the life of a nation, in order to teach them the higher truth that the Word would at the remote end of the ages appear in the flesh. The nation was the Church; the Church was the State. The King would be God. The court of the King would be the temple. The ministers of the court would be the priests. The law of the State would have equal authority with the moral requirements of God's nature. For Moses apparently knew nothing of the distinction made by theologians between the civil, the ceremonial, and the moral law.

But in the passage before us we have something quite different from this. The Apostle says nothing about the creation of the covenant people out of the abject slaves of the brick-kilns. He is silent concerning the giving of the Law amid the fire and tempest of Sinai. It is plain that he wishes to tell us about the man's inner life. He represents Moses as a man of faith.

Even of his faith the apparently greatest achievements are passed over. Nothing is said of his appearances before Pharaoh; nothing of the wonderful faith that enabled him to pray with uplifted hands on the brow of the hill whilst the people were fighting God's battle in the valley; nothing of the faith with which, on the top of Pisgah, Moses died without receiving the promise. Evidently it is not the Apostle's purpose to write the panegyric of a hero.

Closer examination of the verses brings out the thought that the Apostle is tracing the growth and formation of the man's spiritual character. He means to show that faith has in it the making of a man of God. Moses became the leader of the Lord's redeemed people, the founder of the national covenant, the legislator and prophet, because he believed in God, in the future of Israel, and in the coming of the Christ. The subject of the passage is faith as the power that creates a great spiritual leader. But what is true of leaders is true also of every strong spiritual nature. No lesson can be more timely in our days. Not learning, not culture, not even genius, makes a strong doer, but faith.

The contents of the verses may be classified under four remarks:—

1. Faith gropes at first in the dark for the work of life.
2. Faith chooses the work of life.
3. Faith is a discipline of the man for the work of life.
4. Faith renders the man's life and work sacramental.

I. The initial stage in forming the servant of God is always the same,—a vague, restless, eager groping in the dark, a putting forth feelers for the light of revelation. This is often a time of childish mistakes and follies, of which he is

* John i. 17. † Acts vii. 37. ‡ John v. 46.

afterwards keenly ashamed, and at which he can sometimes afford to smile. It often happens, if the man of God is to spring from a religious family, that his parents undergo, in a measure, this first discipline for him. So it was in the case of Moses. The child was hid three months of his parents. Why did they hide him? Was it because they feared the king? It was because they did not fear the king. They hid their child by faith. But what had faith to do with the hiding of him? Had they received an announcement from an inspired seer that their child would deliver Israel, or that he would stand with God on the top of Sinai and receive the Law for the people, or that he would lead the redeemed of the Lord to the borders of a rich land and large? None of these sufficient grounds for defying the king's authority are mentioned. The reason given in the narrative and as well by Stephen * and the writer of this Epistle sounds quaint, if not childish. They hid him because he was comely. Yet they hid him by faith. The beauty of a sleeping babe was to them a revelation, as truly a revelation as if they had heard the voice of the angel that spoke to Manoah or to Zacharias. The Scripture narrative contains no hint that the child's beauty was miraculous, and, what is more to the purpose, we are not told that God had given it as the token of His covenant. It is an instance of faith making a sacrament of its own, and seeking in what is natural its warrant for believing in the supernatural. Nothing is easier, and perhaps nothing would be more rational, than to dismiss the entire story with a contemptuous smile.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews must admit that Jochebed's faith was unauthorised. But does not faith always begin in folly? Is it not at first a blind instinct, fastening on what is nearest at hand? Has not our belief in God sprung out of trust in human goodness or in nature's loveliness? To many a father has not the birth of his first-born been a revelation of Heaven? Is not such faith as Jochebed's the true explanation of the instinctive rise and wonderful vitality of infant baptism in the Christian Church? If Abraham's faith dared to look for the city which hath the foundations when God had promised only the wealth of a tented nomad, was not the mother of Moses justified, since God had given her faith, in letting the heaven-born instinct entwine with her earth-born love of her offspring? It grew with its growth, and rejoiced with its joy; but it also endured and triumphed in its sore distress, and justified its presence by saving the child. Faith is God's gift, no less than the testimony which faith accepts. Sometimes the faith is implanted when no fitting revelation is vouchsafed. But faith will live on in the darkness, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in the heart.

A wise teacher has warned us against phantom notions and bidden us interpret rather than anticipate nature. But another great thinker demonstrated that the clearest vision begins in mere groping. Anticipations of God precede the interpretation of His message. The immense space between instinct and genius is in religion traversed by faith, which starts with *mera palpatio*, but at last attains to the beatific vision of God.

2. Faith chooses the work of life. The Apostle has spoken of the faith that induced the parents of Moses to hide their child three months. Some theologians have set much value on what they term "an implicit faith." The faith of Moses himself would be said by them to be "enwrapped" in that of his parents. Whatever we may think of this doctrine, there can be no question that the New Testament recognises the idea of representation. The Church has always upheld the unity, the solidarity, of the family. It sprang itself out of the family. Perhaps its consummation on earth will be a return into the family relation. It retains the likeness throughout its long history. It acknowledges that a believing husband sanctifies the unbelieving wife, and a believing wife sanctifies the unbelieving husband. In like manner, a believing parent sanctifies the children, and no one but themselves can deprive them of their privileges. But they can do it. The time comes when they must choose for themselves. Hitherto led gently on by loving hands, they must now think and act for themselves, or be content to lose the power of independent action, and remain always children. The risk is sometimes great. But it cannot be evaded. It oftentimes happens that the irrevocable step is taken unobserved by others, almost unconsciously to the man himself. The decision has been taken in silence; the even tenor of life is not disturbed. The world little weens that a soul has determined its own eternity in one strong resolve.

But in the case of a man destined to be a leader of his fellows, whether in thought or in action, a crisis occurs. We use the word in its correct meaning of judgment. It is more than a transition, more than a conversion. He judges, and is conscious that as he judges he will be judged. If God has any great work for the man to do, the command comes sooner or later, as if it descended audibly from heaven, that he stand alone and, in that first terrible solitariness, choose and reject. In an educational age we may often be tempted to sneer at the doctrine of immediate conversion. It is true, nevertheless. A man has come to the parting of the two ways, and choice must be made, because they *are* two ways. To no living man is it given to walk the broad and the narrow ways. Entrance is by different gates. The history of some of the most saintly men presents an entire change of motive, of character even, and of general life, as produced through one strong act of faith.

When the Apostle wrote to the Hebrew Christians, the time was critical. The question of Christian or not Christian brooked no delay. The Son of man was nigh, at the doors. Even after swift vengeance had overtaken the doomed city of Jerusalem, the urgent cry was still the same. In the so-called "Epistle of Barnabas," in the "Pastor of Hermas," and in the priceless treasure recently brought to light, "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," the two ways are described: the way of life and the way of death. Those who professed and called themselves Christians were warned to make the right choice. It was no time for facing both ways, and halting between two opinions.

Moses too refused and chose. This is the second scene in the history of the man. Standing as he did at the fountain-head of nationalism, the prominence assigned to his act of individual choice and rejection is very significant. Before his days the heirs of the promise were in the

* Exod. ii. 2; Acts vii. 20.

bond of God's covenant in virtue of their birth. They were members of the elect family. After the days of Moses every Israelite enjoyed the privileges of the covenant by right of national descent. They were the elect nation. Moses stands at the turning point. The nation now absorbs the family, which becomes henceforth part of the larger conception. In the critical moment between the two, a great personality emerges above the confusion. The patriarchal Church of the family comes to a dispensational end in giving birth to a great man. That man's personal act of refusing the broad and choosing the narrow way marks the birth of the theocratic Church of nationalism. Before and after, personality is of secondary importance. In Moses for a moment it is everything.

Do we seek the motives that determined his choice? The Apostle mentions two, and they are really two sides of the same conception.

First, he chose to be evil-entreated with the people of God. The work of his life was to create a spiritual nation. This idea had already been presented to his mind before he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. "He was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and he was mighty in his words and works." * But an idea had taken possession of him. That idea had already invested the miserable and despised bondsmen with glory. Truly no man will achieve great things who does not pay homage to an idea, and is not ready to sacrifice wealth and position for the sake of what is yet only a thought. He who sells the world for an idea is not far from the kingdom of heaven. He will be prepared to forfeit all that the world can give him for the sake of Him in Whom truth eternally dwells in fulness and perfection. Such a man was Moses. Had not his parents often told him, when his mother was nourishing the child for Pharaoh's daughter, of the wonderful story of their hiding him by faith and afterwards putting him in an ark of bulrushes by the river's brim? Did not his mother bring him up to be at once the son of Pharaoh's daughter and the deliverer of Israel? Was the boy not living a double life? He was gradually coming to understand that he was to be the heir of the throne, and that he would or might be the destroyer of that throne. May we not, with profoundest reverence, liken it to the twofold inner life of the Child Jesus when at Nazareth He came to know that He, the Child of Mary, was the Son of the Highest?

Stephen continues the story: "When he was wellnigh forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." "He went out unto his brethren," we are told in the narrative, "and looked on their burdens." † But the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews perceives in the act of Moses more than love of kindred. The slaves of Pharaoh were, in the eyes of Moses, the people of God. The national consecration had already taken place; he himself was already swayed by the glorious hope of delivering his brethren, the covenant people of God, from the hands of their oppressors. This is the explanation which Stephen gives of his conduct in slaying the Egyptian. When he saw one of the children of Israel suffer wrong, he defended him and smote the Egyptian, supposing that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance. The deed was, in fact, intended to be a call to united effort. He was throwing the gauntlet. He was deliberately making it impossible for him to return to the former life of pomp and courtly worship. He wished the Hebrews to understand his decision, and accept at once his leadership. "But they understood not."

Our author pierces still deeper into the motives that swayed his spirit. It was not a selfish ambition, nor merely a patriotic desire to put himself at the head of a host of slaves bent on asserting their rights. Simultaneous with the social movement there was a spiritual work accomplished in the personal, inner life of Moses himself. All true, heaven-inspired revolutions in society are accompanied by a personal discipline and trial of the leaders. This is the infallible test of the movement itself. If the men who control it do not become themselves more profound, more pure, more spiritual, they are counterfeit leaders, and the movement they advocate is not of God. The writer of the Epistle argues from the decision of Moses to deliver his brethren that his own spiritual life was become deeper and holier. When he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he also rejected the pleasures of sin. He took his stand resolutely on the side of goodness. The example of Joseph was before him, of whom the same words are said: "he refused" to sin against God.

As the crisis in his own spiritual life fitted him to be the leader of a great national movement, so also his conception of that movement became a help to him to overcome the sinful temptations of Egypt. He saw that the pleasures of sin were but for a season. It is easy to supply the other side of this thought. The joy of delivering his brethren would never pass away. He welcomed the undying joy of self-sacrifice, and repudiated the momentary pleasures of self-gratification.

Second, he accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Not only the people of God, but also the Christ of God, determined his choice. An idea is not enough. It must rest on a person, and that person must be greater than the idea. He may be himself but an idea. But, even when it is so, he is the glorious thought in which all the other hopes and imaginations of faith centre and merge. If he is more than an idea, if it is a living person that controls the man's thoughts and becomes the motive of his life, a new quality will then enter into that life. Conscience will awake. The question of doing what is right will control ambition, if it will not quite absorb it. Treachery to the idea of life will now be felt to be a sin, if conscience has pronounced that the idea itself is not immoral, but good and noble. For, when conscience permits, faith will not lag behind, and will proclaim that the moral is also spiritual, that the spiritual is an ever-abiding possession.

Many expositors strive hard to make the words mean something else than the reproach which Christ Himself suffered. It is marvellous that the great doctrine of Christ's personal activity in the Church before His incarnation should have so entirely escaped the notice of the older school of English theology. On this passage, for instance, such commentators as Macknight, Whitby, Scott, explain the words

* Acts vii. 22. † Exod. ii. 11.

to mean that Moses esteemed the scoffs cast on the Israelites for expecting the Christ to arise from among them greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The more profound exegesis of Germany has made the truth of Christ's pre-existence essential to the theology of the New Testament. Far from being an innovation, it has brought us back to the view of the greater theologians in every age of the Church.

We cannot enter into the general question. Confining ourselves to the subject in hand, the faith of Moses, why may we not suppose that he had heard of the patriarch Jacob's blessing on Judah? It had been uttered in the land of Egypt, where Moses was brought up. It spoke of a Lawgiver. Did not the consciousness of his own mission lead Moses to apply the reference to the long succession of leaders, whether judges or kings or prophets, who would follow in his wake? If so, could he have altogether misunderstood the promise of the Shiloh? Jacob had spoken of a personal King, Whom the people would obey. But nowhere in the Old Testament, not once in the history of Moses, is the coming of Messiah represented as the goal of the national development. Christ is not the flowering of Judaism. On the contrary, the Angel of the covenant established through Moses is not a ministering servant, sent forth to minister to the chosen people. He is the Lord Jehovah Himself. Christ was with Israel, and Moses knew it. We may admit the vagueness of his conception, but we cannot deny the conception. To Moses, as to the Psalmist, the reproaches of them that reproached Israel fell on the Christ. Community in suffering was enough to ensure community in the glory to be revealed. Suffering with Christ, they would also be glorified with Christ. This was the recompense of reward to which Moses looked.

The lesson taught to the Hebrew Christians by the decision of Moses is loyalty to truth and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

3. Faith is a discipline for the work of life. Moses has made his final choice. Conscience is thoroughly awake, and eager aspirations fill his soul. But he is not yet strong. Men of large ideas are often found to be lacking in courage. A cloistered is often a fugitive virtue. But, apart from want of practical resolution to face the difficulties of the situation, special training is needed for special work. Israel had come into Egypt to endure chastening and be made fit for national independence. But in Egypt Moses was a courtier, perhaps heir to the throne. That he may be chastened and fitted for his share of the work which God was about to accomplish towards His people, he must be driven out of Egypt into the wilderness. Every servant of God is sent into the wilderness. St. Paul was three years in Arabia between his conversion and his entrance on the work of the ministry. Jesus Himself was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness. He learned endurance in forty days, Moses in forty years.

It will be seen that we accept the explanation of the twenty-seventh verse given by all expositors down to the time of De Lyra and Calvin. But in modern times it has been customary to say that the Apostle refers to the final departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm. Our reasons for preferring the other view are these. The departure of the Israelites through the Red Sea is mentioned subsequently; an event that occurred before the people left Egypt is mentioned in the next verse, and it is very improbable that the writer would refer to their departure first, then to the events that preceded, then once more speak of their departure. Further, the word well rendered by the Old and the Revised Versions "forsook" expresses precisely the notion of going out alone, in despondency, as if Moses had abandoned the hope of being the deliverer of Israel. If we have correctly understood the Apostle's purpose in the entire passage, this is the very notion which we should expect him to introduce. Moses forsakes Egypt, deserts his brethren, abandons his work. He flees from the vengeance of Pharaoh.

Yet all this fear, hopelessness, and unbelief is only the partial aspect of what, taken as a whole, is the action of faith. He still believes in his glorious idea, and is still willing to bear the reproach of Christ. He will not return to the court and make his submission to the king. But the time is not come, he thinks, or he is not the man to deliver Israel. Forty years afterwards he is still loath to be sent. He forsook Egypt because the people did not believe him; after forty years he asks the Lord to send another for the very same reason: "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice." But we should be obtuse indeed if we failed to recognise the faith that underlies his despondency. Doubt is oftentimes partial faith.

Let us place ourselves in his position. He refuses the selfish luxury and worldly glory of Pharaoh's court, that he may rush to deliver his brethren. He brings with him the consciousness of superiority, and at once assumes the duty of composing their quarrels. Evidently he is a believer in God, but a believer also in himself. Such men are not God's instruments. He will have a man be the one thing or the other. If the man is self-confident, conscious of his own prowess, oblivious of God or a denier of Him, the Most High can use him to do His work, to his own destruction. If the man has no confidence in the flesh, knows his utter weakness and very nothingness, and yields himself to God's hand entirely, with no by-ends to seek, him too God uses to do His work, to the man's own salvation. But Moses strove to combine faith in God and in himself. He was at once thwarted. His brethren taunted him, when he expected to be trusted and honoured. Despondency takes possession of his spirit. But his trepidation is on the surface. Beneath it is a great deep of faith. What he now needs is discipline. God leads him to the back of the wilderness. The courtier serves as a herdsman. Far removed from the monumental literature of Egypt, he communes with himself, and with nature's mighty visions. He gazes upon the dread and silent mountain, hallowed of old as the habitation of God. He had already, in Egypt, learned the faith of Joseph and of Jacob. Now, in Midian, he will imbibe the faith of Isaac and of Abraham. Far from the busy haunts of men, the din of cities, the stir of the market-place, he will learn how to pray, how to divest himself of all confidence in the flesh, and how to worship the Invisible alone. For "he endureth as seeing Him Who is invisible." Do not paraphrase it "the invisible King." That is too narrow. It was not Pharaoh only

that had vanished out of his sight and out of his thoughts. Moses himself had disappeared. He had broken down when he trusted himself. He now endures, because he sees naught but God. Surely he was in the same blessed state of mind in which St. Paul was when he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." When Moses and when Paul ceased to be anything, and God was to them everything, they were strong to endure.

4. Faith renders the work of life sacramental. The long period of discipline has drawn to a close. The self-confidence of Moses has been fully subdued. "He supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance." These, says Stephen, were his thoughts before he fled from Egypt. Very different is his language after the probation of the wilderness: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Four times he pleads and deprecates. Not until the anger of the Lord is kindled against him does he take heart to attempt the formidable task.

The Hebrews had been more than two hundred years in the house of bondage. So far as we know, the Lord had not once appeared or spoken to men for six generations. No revelation was given between Jacob's vision at Beersheba * and the vision of the burning bush. We may well believe that there were in those days mockers, saying, The age of miracles is past; the supernatural is played out. But Moses henceforth lives in a veritable world of miracles. The supernatural came with a rush, like the waking of a sleeping volcano. Signs and wonders encompass him on every side. The bush burns unconsumed; the rod in his hand is cast on the ground, and becomes a serpent; he takes the serpent in his hand again, and it becomes a rod; he puts his hand into his bosom, and it is leprous; he puts the leprous hand into his bosom, and it is as his other flesh. When he returns into Egypt, signs vie with signs, God with demons. Plague follows plague. Moses lifts up his rod over the sea, and the children of Israel go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. At last he stands once more on Horeb. But in the short interval between the day when one poor thorn-bush of the desert glowed with flame and the day on which Sinai was altogether on a smoke and the whole mountain quaked, a religious revolution had occurred second only to one in the history of the race. At the touch of their leader's wand a nation was born in a day. The immense transition from the Church in a family to a holy nation was brought about suddenly, but effectively, when the people were hopeless outcasts and Moses himself had lost heart.

Such a revolution must be inaugurated with sacrifice and with sacrament. The sins of the past must be expiated and forgiven, and the people, cleansed from the guilt of their too frequent apostasy from the God of their fathers, must be dedicated anew to the service of Jehovah. The patriarchal dispensation expired in the birth of a holy nation. The Passover was both a sacrifice and a sacrament, an expiation and a consecration. It retained its sacrificial character till Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, was slain. As a sacrifice it then ceased. But sacrament continues, and will continue as long as the Church exists on earth.

* Gen. xlvi. 2.

Moses had seen the invisible God. The burning bush had symbolised the sacramental nature of the work which he had been called to do. God would be in Israel as He was in the bush, and Israel would not be consumed. He Who is to His foes a consuming fire dwells among His people, as the vital heat and glow of their national life. The eye that can see Him is faith. This is the power that can transform the whole life of man, and make it sacramental. Too long has man's earthly existence been divided into two separate spheres. On the one side and for a stated time he lives to God; on the other side he relinquishes himself for a period to the pursuits of the world. We seem to think that the secular cannot be religious, and, consequently, that the religiousness of one day or of one place will make amends for the irreligion of the rest of life. The Passover consecrated a nation. Baptism and the Lord's Supper have, times without number, consecrated the individual. The true Christian life draws its vital sap from God. It is not cleverness and worldly success, but unselfish loyalty to the supernatural, and incessant prayer, that mark the man who lives by faith.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

HEBREWS xii. 1-17 (R. V.).

TIME fails us to dilate on the faith of the other saints of the old covenant. But they must not be passed over in silence. The impression produced by our author's splendid roll of the heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter is the result quite as much of an accumulation of examples as of the special greatness of a few among them. At the close they appear like an overhanging "cloud" of witnesses for God.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau; and Jacob, dying in a strange land, blessed the sons of Joseph, distinguishing wittingly, and bestowing on each his own peculiar blessing. His faith became a prophetic inspiration, and even distinguished between the future of Ephraim and the future of Manasseh. He did not create the blessing. He was only a steward of God's mysteries. Faith well understood its own limitations. But it drew its inspiration to foretell what was to come from a remembrance of God's faithfulness in the past. For, before he gave his blessing, he had bowed his head in worship, leaning upon the top of his staff. In his dying hour he recalled the day on which he had passed over Jordan with his staff,—a day remembered by him once before, when he had become two bands, wrestled with the angel, and halted on his thigh. His staff had become his token of the covenant, his reminder of God's faithfulness, his sacrament, or visible sign of an invisible grace.

Joseph, though he was so completely Egyptianised that he did not, like Jacob, ask to be buried in Canaan, and only two of his sons became, through Jacob's blessing, heirs of the promise, yet gave commandment concerning his bones. His faith believed that the promise given to Abraham would be fulfilled. The chil-

dren of Israel might dwell in Goshen and prosper But they would sooner or later return to Canaan. When his end drew near, his Egyptian greatness was forgotten. The piety of his childhood returned. He remembered God's promise to his fathers. Perhaps it was his father Jacob's dying blessing that had revived the thoughts of the past and fanned his faith into a steady flame.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." When the Israelites had crossed Jordan and eaten of the old corn of the land, the manna ceased. The period of continued miracle came to an end. Henceforth they would smite their enemies with their armed thousands. But one signal miracle the Lord would yet perform in the sight of all Israel. The walls of the first city they came to would fall down flat, when the seven priests would blow with the trumpets of ram's horns the seventh time on the seventh day. Israel believed, and as God had said, so it came to pass.

The treachery of a harlot even is mentioned by the Apostle as an instance of faith. Justly. For, whilst her past life and present act were neither better nor worse than the morality of her time, she saw the hand of the God of heaven in the conquest of the land, and bowed to His decision. This was a greater faith than that of her daughter-in-law, Ruth, whose name is not mentioned. Ruth believed in Naomi and, as a consequence, accepted Naomi's God and people. Rahab believed in God first, and, therefore, accepted the Israelitish conquest and adopted the nationality of the conquerors.

Of the judges the Apostle selects four: Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah. The mention of Barak must be understood to include Deborah, who was the mind and heart that moved Barak's arm; and Deborah was a prophetess of the Lord. She and Barak wrought their mighty deeds and sang their pæan in faith. Gideon put the Midianites to flight by faith; for he knew that his sword was the sword of the Lord. Jephthah was a man of faith; for he vowed a vow unto the Lord, and would not go back. Samson had faith; for he was a Nazarite to God from his mother's womb, and in his last extremity called unto the Lord and prayed.

The Apostle does not name Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and the rest. The Spirit of the Lord came upon them also. They too were mighty through God. But the narrative does not tell us that they prayed, or that their soul consciously and believingly responded to the voice of Heaven. Alaric, while on his march towards Rome, said to a holy monk, who entreated him to spare the city, that he did not go of his own will, but that One was continually urging him forward to take it. Many are the scourges of God that know not the hand that wields them.

Individuals "through faith subdued kingdoms." Gideon dispersed the Midianites; Barak discomfited Sisera, the captain of Jabin king of Canaan's host; Jephthah smote the Ammonites; David held the Philistines in check, measured Moab with a line, and put garrisons in Syria of Damascus. Samuel "wrought righteousness," and taught the people the good and the right way. David "obtained the fulfilment of God's promises:" his house was blessed that it should continue for ever before God. Daniel's faith stopped the mouths of lions. The faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted in God, and quenched the power of the fire, without extinguishing its flame. Elijah escaped the edge of Ahab's sword. Elisha's faith saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about him. Hezekiah "from weakness was made strong." The Maccabæan princes waxed mighty in war and turned to flight armies of aliens. The widow of Zarephath and the Shunammite received their dead back into their embrace in consequence of a resurrection wrought by the faith of the prophets. Others refused deliverance, gladly accepting the alternative to unfaithfulness, to be beaten to death, that they might be accounted worthy to attain the better world and the resurrection, not of, but from, the dead, which is the resurrection to eternal life. Such a man was the aged Eleazar in the time of the Maccabees. Zechariah was stoned to death at the commandment of Joash the king in the court of the house of the Lord. Isaiah is said to have been sawn asunder in extreme old age by the order of Manasseh. Others were burnt by Antiochus Epiphanes. Elijah had no settled abode, but went from place to place clad in a garment of hair, the skin of sheep or goat. It ought not to be a matter of surprise that these men of God had no dwelling-place, but were, like the Apostles after them, buffeted, persecuted, defamed, and made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things. For the world was not worthy of them. The world crucified their Lord, and they would be ashamed of accepting better treatment than He received. By the world is meant the life of those who know not Christ. The men of faith were driven out of the cities into the desert, out of homes into prisons. But their faith was an assurance of things hoped for and, therefore, a solvent of fear. Their proving of things not seen rendered the prison, as Tertullian says, a place of retirement, and the desert a welcome escape from the abominations that met their eyes wherever the world had set up its Vanity Fair.

All these sturdy men of faith have had witness borne to them in Scripture. This honour they won from time to time, as the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, saw fit to encourage the people of God on earth by their example. Are we forbidden to suppose that this witness to their faith gladdened their own glorified spirits, and calmed their eager expectation of the day when the promise would be fulfilled? For, after all, their reward was not the testimony of Scripture, but their own perfection. Now this perfection is described throughout the Epistle as a priestly consecration. It expresses fitness for entering into immediate communion with God. This was the final fulfilment of the promise. This was the blessing which the saints under the old covenant had not obtained. The way of the holiest had not yet been opened.* Consequently their faith consisted essentially in endurance. "None of these received the promise," but patiently waited. This is inferred concerning them from the testimony of Scripture that they believed. Their faith must have manifested itself in this form,—endurance. To us, at length, the promise has been fulfilled. God has spoken unto us in His Son. We have a great High-priest, Who has passed through the heavens. The Son, as High-priest, has been perfected for evermore; that is, He is endowed with fitness to enter into the true holiest place.

* Chap. ix. 8.

He has perfected also for ever them that are sanctified: freed from guilt as worshippers, they enter the holiest through a priestly consecration. The new and living way has been dedicated through the veil.

But the important point is that the fulfilment of the promise has not dispensed with the necessity for faith. We saw, in an earlier chapter, that the revelation of the Sabbath advances from lower forms of rest to higher and more spiritual. The more stubborn the unbelief of men became, the more fully the revelation of God's promise opened up. The thought is somewhat similar in the present passage. The final form which God's promise assumes is an advance on any fulfilment vouchsafed to the saints of the old covenant during their earthly life. It now includes perfection, or fitness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Christ. It means immediate communion with God. Far from dispensing with faith, this form of the promise demands the exercise of a still better faith than the fathers had. They endured by faith; we through faith enter the holiest. To them, as well as to us, faith is an assurance of things hoped for and a proving of things not seen; but our assurance must incite us to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. This is the better faith which is not once ascribed in the eleventh chapter to the saints of the Old Testament. On the contrary, we are given to understand that they, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. But Christ has abolished death. For we enter into the presence of God, not through death, but through faith.

In accordance with this, the Apostle says that "God provided some better thing concerning us." These words cannot mean that God provided some better thing *for* us than He had provided for the fathers. Such a notion would not be true. The promise was made to Abraham, and is now fulfilled to all the heirs alike; that is, to those who are of the faith of Abraham. The author says "concerning," not "for." The idea is that God foresaw we would, and provided (for the word implies both things) that we should, manifest a better kind of faith than it was possible for the fathers to show, better in so far as power to enter the holiest place is better than endurance.

But the author adds another thought. Through the exercise of the better faith by us, the fathers also enter with us into the holiest place. "Apart from us they could not be made perfect." The priestly consecration becomes theirs through us. Such is the unity of the Church, and such the power of faith, that those who could not believe, or could not believe in a certain way, for themselves, receive the fulness of the blessing through the faith of others. Nothing less will do justice to the Apostle's words than the notion that the saints of the old covenant have, through the faith of the Christian Church, entered into more immediate and intimate communion with God than they had before, though in heaven.

We now understand why they take so deep an interest in the running of the Christian athletes on earth. They surround their course, like a great cloud. They know that they will enter into the holiest if we win the race. For every new victory of faith on earth, there is a new revelation of God in heaven. Even the angels, the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, learn, says St. Paul, through the Church the manifold wisdom of God. How much more will the saints, members of the Church, brethren of Christ, be better able to apprehend the love and power of God, Who makes weak, sinful men conquerors over death and its fear.

The word "witnesses" does not itself refer to their looking on, as spectators of the race. Another word would almost certainly have been used to express this notion, which is moreover contained in the phrase "having so great a cloud surrounding us." The thought seems to be that the men to whose faith the Spirit of Christ in Scripture bare witness were themselves witnesses for God in a godless world, in the same sense in which Christ tells His disciples that they were His witnesses, and Ananias tells Saul that he would be a witness for Christ. Every one who confessed Christ before men, him did Christ also confess before His Church which is on earth, and does now confess before His Father in heaven, by leading him into God's immediate presence.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFLICT.

HEBREWS xi. 20-xii. 1 (R. V.).

THE author has told his readers that they have need of endurance; but when he connects this endurance with faith, he describes faith, not as an enduring of present evils, but as an assurance of things hoped for in the future. His meaning undoubtedly is that assurance of the future gives strength to endure the present. These are two distinct aspects of faith. In the eleventh chapter both sides of faith are illustrated in the long catalogue of believers under the Old Testament. Examples of men waiting for the promise and having an assurance of things hoped for come first. They are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In some measure these witnesses of God suffered; but the more prominent feature of their faith was expectation of a future blessing. Moses is next mentioned. He marks a transition. In him the two qualities of faith appear to strive for the pre-eminence. He chooses to be evil entreated with the people of God, because he knows that the enjoyment of sin is short-lived; he suffers the reproach of Christ, and looks away from it to the recompense of reward. After him conflict and endurance are more prominent in the history of believers than assurance of the future. Many of these later heroes of faith had a more or less dim vision of the unseen; and in the case of those of whose faith nothing is said in the Old Testament except that they endured, the other phase of this spiritual power is not wanting. For the Church is one through the ages, and the clear eye of an earlier period cannot be disconnected from the strong arm of a later time.

In the twelfth chapter the two aspects of faith exemplified in the saints of the Old Testament are urged on the Hebrew Christians. Now practically for the first time in the Epistle the writer addresses himself to the difficulties and discouragements of a state of conflict. In the

earlier chapters he exhorted his readers to hold fast their own individual confession of Christ. In the later portions he exhorted them to quicken the faith of their brethren in the Church assemblies. But his account of the worthies of the Old Testament in the previous chapter has revealed a special adaptedness in faith to meet the actual condition of his readers. We gather from the tenor of the passage that the Church had to contend against evil men. Who they were we do not know. They were "the sinners." Our author is claiming for the Christian Church the right to speak of the men outside in the language used by Jews concerning the heathen; and it is not at all unlikely that the unbelieving Jews themselves are here meant. His readers had to endure the gainsaying of sinners, who poured contempt on Christianity, as they had also covered Christ Himself with shame. The Church might have to resist unto blood in striving against the encompassing sin. Peace is to be sought and followed after with all men, but not to the injury of that sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord. The true people of God must go forth unto Jesus without the camp of Judaism, bearing His reproach.

This is an advance in the thought. Our author does not exhort his readers individually to steadfastness, nor the Church collectively to mutual oversight. He has before His eyes the conflict of the Church against wicked men, whether in sheep's clothing or without the fold. The purport of the passage may be thus stated: Faith as a hope of the future is a faith to endure in the present conflict against men. The reverse of this is equally true and important: that faith as a strength to endure the gainsaying of men is the faith that presses on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The connecting link between these two representations of faith is to be found in the illustration with which the chapter opens. A race implies both a hope and a contest.

The hope of faith is simple and well understood. It has been made abundantly clear in the Epistle. It is to obtain the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham and renewed to other believers time after time under the old covenant. "For we who believe do enter into God's rest." * They that have been called receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." † "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." ‡ In the latter part of the chapter the writer speaks of his readers as having already attained. They have come to God, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. In the first verse he urges them to run the race, so as to secure for themselves the blessing. He points them to Jesus, Who has run the race before them and won the crown, Who sits on the right hand of God, with authority to reward all who reach the goal. Both representations are perfectly consistent. Men do enter into immediate communion with God on earth; but they attain it by effort of faith.

Such is the aim of faith. The conflict is more complex and difficult to explain. There is, first of all, a conflict in the preparatory training, and this is twofold. We have to strive against ourselves and against the world. We must put away our own grossness, as athletes rid themselves by severe training of all superfluous flesh. Then we must also put away from us the sin that surrounds us, that quite besets us, on all sides, whether in the world or in the Church, as runners must have the course cleared and the crowd of onlookers that press around removed far enough to give them the sense of breathing freely and running unimpeded in a large space. The word "besetting" does not refer to the special sin to which every individual is most prone. No thoughtful man but has felt himself encompassed by sin, not merely as a temptation, but much more as an overpowering force, silent, passive, closing in upon him on all sides,—a constant pressure from which there is no escape. The sin and misery of the world have staggered reason and left men utterly powerless to resist or to alleviate the infinite evil. Faith alone surmounts these preliminary difficulties of the Christian life. Faith delivers us from grossness of spirit, from lethargy, earthliness, stupor. Faith will also lift us above the terrible pressure of the world's sin. Faith has the heart that still hopes, and the hand that still saves. Faith resolutely puts away from her whatever threatens to overwhelm and impede, and makes for herself a large room to move freely in.

Then comes the actual contest. Our author says "contest." * For the conflict is against evil men. Yet it is, in a true and vital sense, not a contest of the kind which the word naturally suggests. Here the effort is not to be first at the goal. We run the race "through endurance." Mental suffering is of the essence of the conflict. Our success in winning the prize does not mean the failure of others. The failure of our rivals does not imply that we attain the mark. In fact, the Christian life is not the competition of rivals, but the enduring of shame at the hands of evil men, which endurance is a discipline. Maybe we do not sufficiently lay to heart that the discipline of life consists mainly in overcoming rightly and well the antagonism of men. The one bitterness in the life of our Lord Himself was the malice of the wicked. Apart from that unrelenting hatred we may regard His short life as serenely happy. The warning which He addressed to His disciples was that they should beware of men. But, though wisdom is necessary, the conflict must not be shunned. When it is over, nothing will more astonish the man of faith than that he should have been afraid, so weak did malice prove to be.

To run our course successfully, we must keep our eyes steadily fixed on Jesus. It is true we are compassed about with a cloud of God's faithful witnesses. But they are a cloud. The word signifies not merely that they are a large multitude, but also that we cannot distinguish individuals in the immense gathering of those who have gone before. The Church has always cherished a hope that the saints of heaven are near us, perhaps seeing our efforts to follow their glorious example. Beyond this we dare not go. Personal communion is possible to the believer on earth with One only of the inhabitants of the spiritual world. That One is Jesus Christ. Even faith cannot discern the individual saints that compose the cloud. But it can look away from all of them to Jesus. It looks unto

* Chap. iv. 3. † Chap. ix. 15. ‡ Chap. x. 19.

* ἀγῶνα.

Jesus as He is and as He was: as He is for help; as He was for a perfect example.

1. Faith regards Jesus as He is—the "Leader and Perfecter." The words are an allusion to what the writer has already told us in the Epistle concerning Jesus. He is "the Captain or Leader of our salvation," and "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He leads onward our faith till we attain the goal, and for every advance we make in the course He strengthens, sustains, and in the end completes our faith. The runner, when he seizes the crown, will not be found to have been exhausted by his efforts. High attainments demand a correspondingly great faith.

Many expositors think the words which we have rendered "Leader" and "Perfecter" refer to Christ's own faith. But the words will hardly admit of this meaning. Others think they are intended to convey the notion that Christ is the Author of our faith in its weak beginnings and the Finisher of it when it attains perfection. But the use which the Apostle has made of the words "Leader of salvation" in chap. ii. seems to prove that here also he understands by "Leader" One Who will bring our faith onward safely to the end of the course. The distinction is rather between rendering us certain of winning the crown and making our faith large and noble enough to be worthy of wearing it.

2. Faith regards Jesus as He was on earth, the perfect example of victory through endurance. He has acquired His power to lead onward and to make perfect our faith by His own exercise of faith. He is "Leader" because He is "Forerunner;" He is "Perfecter" because He Himself has been perfected. He endured a cross. The author leaves it to his readers to imagine all that is implied in the awful word. More is involved in the Cross than shame. For the shame of the Cross He could afford to despise. But there was in the Cross what He did not despise; yea, what drew tears and strong cries from Him in the agony of His soul. Concerning this, whatever it was, the author is here silent, because it was peculiar to Christ, and could never become an example to others, except indeed in the faith that enabled Him to endure it.

Even in the gainsaying of men there was an element which He did not despise, but endured. He understood that their gainsaying was against themselves. It would end, not merely in putting Him to an open shame, but in their own destruction. This caused keen suffering to His holy and loving spirit. But He endured it, as He endured the Cross itself in all its mysterious import. He did not permit the sin and perdition of the world to overwhelm Him. His faith resolutely put away from Him the deadly pressure. On the one hand, He did not despise sin; on the other, He was not crushed by its weight. He calmly endured.

But He endured through faith, as an assurance of things hoped for and the proving of things not seen. He hoped to attain the joy which was set before Him as the prize to be won. The connection of the thought with the general subject of the whole passage satisfies us that the words translated "for the joy set before Him" are correctly so rendered, and do not mean that Christ chose the suffering and shame of the Cross in preference to the enjoyment of sin. This also is perfectly true, and more true of Christ than it was even of Moses. But the Apostle's main idea throughout is that faith in the form of assurance and faith in the form of enduring go together. Jesus endured because He looked for a future joy as His recompense of reward; He attained the joy through His endurance.

But, as more than shame was involved in His Cross, more also than joy was reserved for Him in reward. Through His Cross He became "the Leader and Perfecter" of our faith. He was exalted to be the Sanctifier of His people. "He has sat down on the right hand of God."

Our author proceeds: Weigh this in the balance. Compare this quality of faith with your own. Consider who He was and what you are. When you have well understood the difference, remember that He endured, as you endure, by faith. He put His trust in God. He was faithful to Him Who had constituted Him what He became through His assumption of flesh and blood. He offered prayers and supplications to Him Who was able to save Him out of death, yet piously committed Himself to the hands of God. The gainsaying of men brought Him to the bloody death of the Cross. You also are marshalled in battle array, in the conflict against the sin of the world. But the Leader only has shed His blood—as yet. Your hour may be drawing nigh! Therefore be not weary in striving to reach the goal! Faint not in enduring the conflict! The two sides of faith are still in the author's thoughts.

It would naturally occur to the readers of the Epistle to ask why they might not end their difficulties by shunning the conflict. Why might they not enter into fellowship with God without coming into conflict with men? But this cannot be. Communion with God requires personal fitness of character, and manifests itself in inward peace. This fitness, again, is the result of discipline, and the discipline implies endurance. "It is for discipline that ye endure."

The word translated "discipline" suggests the notion of a child with his father. But it is noteworthy that the Apostle does not use the word "children" in his illustration, but the word "sons." This was occasioned partly by the fact that the citation from the Book of Proverbs speaks of "sons." But, in addition to this, the author's mind seems to be still lingering with the remembrance of Him Who was Son of God. For discipline is the lot and privilege of all sons. Who is a son whom his father does not discipline? There might have been One. But even He humbled Himself to learn obedience through sufferings. Absolutely every son undergoes discipline.

Furthermore, the fathers of our bodies kept us under discipline, and we not only submitted, but even gave them reverence, though their discipline was not intended to have effect for more than the few days of our pupilage, and though in that short time they were liable to error in their treatment of us. How much more shall we subject ourselves to the discipline of God! He is not only the God of all spirits and of all flesh,* but also the Father of our spirits; that is, He has created our spirit after His own likeness, and made it capable, through discipline, of partaking in His own holiness, which will be our true and everlasting life. The

* Num. xvi. 22.

gardener breaks the hard ground, uproots weeds, lops off branches; but the consequence of his rough treatment is that the fruit at last hangs on the bough. We are God's tillage. Our conflict with men and their sin is watched and guided by a Father. The fruit consists in the calm after the storm, the peace of a good conscience, the silencing of accusers, the putting wicked men to shame, the reverence which righteousness extorts even from enemies. In the same book from which our author has cited far-reaching instruction, we are told that, "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Here, again, the Apostle addresses his readers as members of the Church in its conflict with men. He tells them that, in doing what is incumbent upon them as a Church towards different classes of men, they secure for themselves individually the discipline of sons and may hope to reap the fruit of that discipline in peace and righteousness. The Church has a duty to perform towards the weaker brethren, towards the enemy at the gate, and towards the Esaus whose worldliness imperils the purity of others.

1. There were among them weaker brethren, the nerves of whose hands and knees were unstrung. They could neither combat a foe nor run the race. It was for the Church to smooth the ruggedness of the road before its feet, that the lame things (for so, with something of contempt, he names the waverers) might not be turned out of the course by the pressure of the other runners. Rather than permit this, let the Church lift up their drooping hands and sustain their palsied knees, that they may be healed of their lameness.

2. As to enemies and persecutors, it is the duty of the Church to follow after peace with all men, as much as in her lies. Christians may sacrifice almost anything for peace, but not their own priestly consecration, without which no man shall see the Lord Jesus at His appearing. He will be seen only by those who eagerly expect Him unto salvation.

3. The consecration of the Church is maintained by watchfulness against every tendency to alienation from the grace of God, to bitterness against God and the brethren, to sensuality and profane worldliness. All must watch over themselves and over all the brethren. The danger, too, increases if it is neglected. It begins in withdrawing from the Church assemblies, where the influences of grace are manifested. It grows into the poisonous plant of a bitter spirit, which, "like a root that beareth gall and wormwood," spreads through "a family or tribe," and turns away their heart from the Lord to go and serve the gods of the nations. "The many are defiled." The Church as a whole becomes infected. But bitterness of spirit is not the only fruit of selfishness. On the same tree sensuality grows, which God will punish when the Church cannot detect its presence.

From the stem of selfishness, which will not brook the restraints of Church communion, springs, last and most dangerous of all, the profane, worldly spirit, which denies and mocks the very idea of consecration. It is the spirit of Esau, who bartered the right of the first-born to the promise of the covenant for one mess of pottage. The author calls attention to the incident, as it displays Esau's contempt of the promise made to Abraham and his own father Isaac. His thoughts never rose above the earth. "What profit shall this birthright do to me?" We must distinguish between the birthright and the blessing. The former carried with it the great promise given to Abraham with an oath on Moriah: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Possession of it did not depend on Isaac's fond blessing. It belonged to Esau by right of birth till he sold it to Jacob. But Isaac's blessing, which he intended for Esau because he loved him, meant more especially lordship over his brethren. Esau plainly distinguishes the two things: "Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." * When he found that Jacob had supplanted him a second time, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and sought diligently, not the birthright, which was of a religious nature, but the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine, and the homage of his mother's sons. But he had sold the greater good and, by doing so, forfeited the lesser. The Apostle recognises, beyond the subtilty of Jacob and behind the blessing of Isaac, the Divine retribution. His selling the birthright was not the merely rash act of a sorely tempted youth. He continued to despise the covenant. When he was forty years old, he took wives of the daughters of the Canaanites. Abraham had made his servant swear that he would go to the city of Nahor to take a wife unto Isaac; and Rebekah, true to the instinct of faith, was weary of her life because of the daughters of Heth. But Esau cared for none of these things. The day on which Jacob took away the blessing marks the crisis in Esau's life. He still despised the covenant and sought only worldly lordship and plenty. For this profane scorn of the spiritual promise made to Abraham and Isaac, Esau not only lost the blessing which he sought, but was himself rejected. The Apostle reminds his readers that they know it to have been so from Esau's subsequent history. They would not fail to see in him an example of the terrible doom described by the Apostle himself in a previous chapter. Esau was like the earth that brings forth thorns and thistles and is "rejected." The grace of repentance was denied him.

CHAPTER XV.

MOUNT ZION.

HEBREWS xii. 18-29 (R. V.).

MUTUAL oversight is the lesson of the foregoing verses. The author urges his readers to look carefully that no member of the Church withdraws from the grace of God, that no poison of bitterness troubles and defiles the Church as a whole, that sensuality and worldliness are put away. In the paragraph that comes next he still has the idea of Church fellowship in his mind. But his advice to his readers to exercise supervision over one another yields to the still more urgent warning to watch themselves, and especially to shun the most dangerous even of these evils, which is worldliness of

* Gen. xxvii. 36.

spirit. Esau was rejected; see that ye yourselves refuse not Him that speaketh.

That the passage is thus closely connected with what immediately precedes may be admitted. But it must be also connected with the entire argument of the Epistle. It is the final exhortation directly based on the general idea that the new covenant excels the former one. As such it may be compared with the earlier exhortation, given before the allegory of Melchizedek introduced the notion that the old covenant had passed away, and with the warning in the tenth chapter which precedes the glorious record of faith's heroes from Abel to Jesus. As early as the second chapter he warns the Hebrew Christians not to drift away and neglect a salvation revealed in One Who is greater than the angels, through whom the Law had been given. In the later exhortations he adds the notion of the blood of the covenant, and insists, not merely on the greatness, but also on the finality, of the revelation. But in the concluding passage, which now opens before us, he makes the daring announcement that all the blessings of the new covenant have already been fulfilled, and that in perfect completeness and grandeur. We have come unto Mount Zion; we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The passage must, therefore, be considered as the practical result of the whole Epistle.

Our author began with the fact of a revelation of God in a Son. But a thoughtful reader will not fail to have observed that this great subject seldom comes to the front in the course of the argument. Reading the Epistle, we seem for a time to forget the thought of a revelation given in the Son. Our minds are mastered by the author's powerful reasoning. We think of nothing but the surpassing excellence of the new covenant and its Mediator. The greatness of Jesus as High-priest makes us oblivious of His greatness as the Revealer of God. But this is only the glamour cast over us by a master mind. After all, to know God is the highest glory and perfection of man. Apart from a revelation of God in His Son, all other truths are negative; and their value to us depends on their connection with this self-manifestation of the Father. Religion, theology, priesthood, covenant, atonement, salvation, and the Incarnation itself, do not attain a worthy and final purpose except as means of revealing God. It would be a serious misapprehension to suppose that our author had forgotten this fundamental conception. His aim has been to show that the economy of the new covenant is the perfect revelation. God has spoken, not through, but in, the Son. The Divine personality, the human nature, the eternal priesthood, the infinite sacrifice, of the Son are the final revelation of God.

In the sublime contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion the two thoughts are brought together. We have had frequent occasion to point out that the central fact of the new covenant is direct communion with God. Access to God is now open to all men in Christ. We are invited to draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace.* Jesus has entered as a Forerunner for us within the veil.† We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.‡ Yea, we have already actually entered. We are come unto Mount Zion. Death has been annihilated. We are now where Christ is. The writer of our Epistle has advanced beyond the perplexity that, in his hour of loneliness, troubled St. Paul, who was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.* We are come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. That great city, the heavenly Jerusalem, has descended out of heaven from God.† The angels pass to and pro as ministering spirits. The names of the first-born are registered in heaven, as possessing already the privilege of citizenship. We must not say that the spirits of the righteous have departed from us; let us rather say that we, by being made righteous, have come to them. We stand now before the tribunal of God, the Judge of all. Jesus has fulfilled His promise to come and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.‡

All these things are contained in access unto God. The Apostle explains their meaning and unfolds their glory by contrasting them with the revelation of God on Sinai. We might perhaps have expected him to institute a comparison between them and the incidents of the day of atonement, inasmuch as he has described Christ's ascension to the right hand of God as the entering of the High-priest into the true holiest place. But the day of atonement was not a revelation of God. The propitiation required antecedently to a revelation was indeed offered. But, as the propitiation was unreal, the full revelation, to which it was intended to lead, was never given. Nothing is said in the books of Moses concerning the people's state of mind during the time when the high-priest stood in God's presence. The transaction was so purely ceremonial that the people do not seem to have taken any part in it beyond gathering perhaps around the tabernacle to witness the ingress and egress of the high-priest. Moreover, no words were spoken either by the high-priest before God, or by God to the high-priest or to the people. No prayer was uttered, no revelation vouchsafed. For these reasons the Apostle goes back to the revelation on Sinai, which indeed instituted the rites of the covenant. With the revelation that preceded the sacrifices of the Law he compares the revelation that is founded upon the sacrifice of Christ. This is the fundamental difference between Sinai and Zion. The revelation on Sinai precedes the sacrifices of the tabernacle; the revelation on Zion follows the sacrifice of the Cross. Under the old covenant the revelation demanded sacrifices; under the new covenant the sacrifice demands a revelation.

From this essential difference in the nature of the revelations a twofold contrast is apparent in the phenomena of Sinai and Zion. Sinai revealed the terrible side of God's character, Zion the peaceful tenderness of His love. The revelation on Sinai was earthly; that on Zion is spiritual.

There can be no question that the Apostle intends to contrast the terrible appearances on Sinai with the calm serenity of Zion. The very rhythm of his language expresses it. But the key to his description of the one and the other is to be found in the distinction already mentioned. On Sinai the unappeased wrath of God is revealed. Sacrifices are instituted, which, however, when established, evoke no response

*Chap. iv. 16. †Chap. vi. 20. ‡Chap. x. 19.

*Phil. i. 23. †Rev. xxi. 10. ‡John xiv. 3.

from the offended majesty of Heaven. Of the holiest place of the old covenant the best thing we can say is that the lightning and thunder of Sinai slumbered therein. The author's beautiful description of the sunny steep of Zion is framed, on the other hand, in accordance with his frequent and emphatic declaration that Christ has entered the true holiest place, having obtained for us eternal redemption. All that the Apostle says concerning Sinai and Zion gathers around the two conceptions of sin and forgiveness.

The Lord spake on Sinai out of the midst of the palpable, enkindled fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice. All the people heard the voice. They saw "that God doth talk with man, and he liveth." They begin to hope. But immediately they bethink them that, if they hear the voice of the Lord any more, they will die. Thus does a guilty conscience contradict itself! Again, the people are invited to come up into the mount when the trumpet shall sound long. Yet, when the voice of the trumpet sounds long and waxes louder and louder, they are charged not to come up unto the Lord, lest He break forth upon them. All this appearance of inconsistency is intended to symbolise that the people's desire to come to God struggled in vain against their sense of guilt, and that God's purpose of revealing Himself to them was contending in vain with the hindrances that arise from their sins. The whole assembly heard the voice of the Lord proclaiming the Ten Commandments. Conscience-smitten, they could not endure to hear more. They gat them into their tents, and Moses alone stood on the mountain with God, to receive at His mouth all the statutes and judgments which they should do and observe in the land which He would give them to possess. The Apostle singles out for remark the command that, if a beast touch the mountain, it should be stoned to death. The people, he says, could not endure this command. Why not this? It connected the terrors of Sinai with man's guilt. According to the Old Testament idea of Divine retribution, the beasts of the earth fall under the curse due to man. When God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the days of Noah, He said, "I will destroy both man and beast."* When, again, He blessed Noah after the waters were dried up, He said, "I, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with every living creature that is with you."† Similarly, the command to put to death any beast that might haply touch the mountain revealed to the people that God was dealing with them as sinners. Moses himself, the mediator of the covenant, who aspired to behold the glory of God, feared exceedingly. But his fear came upon him when he looked and beheld that the people had sinned against the Lord their God‡ and made them a molten calf. His fear was not the prostration of nervous terror. Remembering, when he had descended, the awful sights and sounds witnessed on the mountain, he was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure of God against the people, who had done wickedly in the sight of the Lord. Almost every word the Apostle has here written bears closely upon the moral relation between a guilty people and the angry God.

If we turn to the other picture, we at once perceive that the thoughts radiate from the holiest place as from a centre. The passage is, in fact, an expansion of what is said in the ninth chapter, that Christ has entered in once for all into the holiest place, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle. The holiest has widened its boundaries. The veil has been removed, so that the entire sanctuary now forms part of the holy of holies. It is true that the Apostle begins, in the passage under consideration, not with the holiest place, but with Mount Zion. He does so because the immediate contrast is between the two mountains, and he has already stated that Christ entered through a larger tabernacle. The holiest place includes, therefore, the whole mountain of Zion, on which the tabernacle was erected; yea, all Jerusalem is within the precincts. If we extend the range of our survey, we behold the earth sanctified by the presence of the first-born sons of God, who are the Church, and of His myriads, the other sons of God, who also have, not indeed the birthright, but a blessing, even the joyful multitude of the heavenly host. The Apostle describes the angels as keeping festal holiday, for joy to witness the coming of the first-born sons. They are the friends of the Bridegroom, who stand and hear Him, and rejoice greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. If, again, we attempt to soar above this world of trials, we find ourselves at once before the judgment-seat of God. But even here a change has taken place. For we are come to a Judge Who is God of all, and not merely to a God Who is Judge of all. Thus the promise of the new covenant has been fulfilled, "I will be to them a God." If in imagination we pass the tribunal and consider the condition of men in the world of spirits, we recognise there the spirits of the righteous dead, and are given to understand that they have already attained the perfection which they could not have received before the Christian Church had exercised a greater faith than some had found possible to themselves on earth. If we ascend still higher, we are in the presence of Jesus Himself. But He is on the right hand of the Majesty on high, not simply as Son of God, but as Mediator of the new covenant. His blood is sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and speaks to God, but not for vengeance on those who shed it on the Cross, some of whom possibly were now among the readers of the Apostle's piercing words. What an immeasurable distance between the first man of faith, mentioned in the eleventh chapter, and Jesus, with Whom his list closes! The very first blood of man shed to the earth cried from the ground to God for vengeance. The blood of Jesus sprinkled in heaven speaks a better thing. What the better thing is, we are not told. Men may give it a name; but it is addressed to God, and God alone knows its infinite meaning.

From all this we infer that the comparison here made between Sinai and Zion is intended to depict the difference (seen, as it were, in another Bunyan's dream) between a revelation given before Christ offered Himself as a propitiation for sin and the revelation which God gives us of Himself after the sacrifice of Christ has been presented in the true holiest place.

The Apostle's account of Mount Zion is followed by a most incisive warning, introduced with a sudden solemnity, as if the thunder of

*Gen. vi. 7. †Gen. ix. 9, 10. ‡Deut. ix. 16, 19.

Sinai itself were heard remote. The passage is beset with difficulties, some of which it would be inconsistent with the design of the present work to discuss. One question has scarcely been touched upon by the expositors. But it enters into the very pith of the subject. The exhortation which the author addresses to his readers does not at first appear to be based on a correct application of the narrative. For the Israelites at the foot of Sinai are not said to have refused Him that spake to them on the mount. No doubt God, not Moses, is meant; for it was the voice of God that shook the earth. The people were terrified. They were afraid that the fire would consume them. But they had understood also that their God was the living God, and therefore not to be approached by man. They wished Moses to intervene, not because they rejected God, but because they acknowledged the awful greatness of His living personality. Far from rejecting Him, they said to Moses, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it." God Himself commended their words: "They have well said all that they have spoken." Can we suppose, therefore, that the Apostle in the present passage represents them as actually rebelling, and "refusing Him that spake"? The word here translated "refuse" does not express the notion of rejecting with contempt. It means "to deprecate," to shrink in fear from a person. Again, the word "escape," in its reference to the children of Israel at Sinai, cannot signify "to avoid being punished," which is its meaning in the second chapter of this Epistle. The meaning is that they could not flee from His presence, though Moses mediated between Him and the people. They could not escape Him. His word "found them" when they cowered in their tents as truly as if they had climbed with Moses the heights of Sinai. For the word of God was then also a living word, and there was no creature that was not manifest in His sight. Yet it was right in the people to deprecate, and desire Moses to speak to them rather than God. This was the befitting spirit under the old covenant. It expresses very precisely the difference between the bondage of that covenant and the liberty of the new. In Christ only is the veil taken away. Where the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is, there is liberty. But, for this reason, what was praiseworthy in the people who were kept at a distance from the bounds placed around Sinai is unworthy and censurable in those who have come to Mount Zion. See, therefore, that ye do not ask Him that speaketh to withdraw into the thick darkness and terrible silence. For us to deprecate is tantamount to rejection of God. We are actually turning away from Him. But to ignore and shun His presence is now impossible to us. The revelation is from heaven. He Who brought it descended Himself from above. Because He is from heaven, the Son of God is a life-giving Spirit. He surrounds us, like the ambient air. The sin of the world is not the only "besetting" element of our life. The ever-present, besetting God wooes our spirit. He speaks. That His words are kind and forgiving we know. For He speaks to us from heaven, because the blood sprinkled in heaven speaks better before God than the blood of Abel spoke from the ground. The revelation of God to us in His Son preceded, it is true, the entrance of the Son into the holiest place; but it has acquired a new meaning and a new force in virtue of the Son's appearing before God for us. This new force of the revelation is represented by the mission and activity of the Spirit.

The author's thoughts glide almost imperceptibly into another channel. We can refuse Him that speaketh, and turn away from Him in unbelief. But let us beware. It is the final revelation. His voice on Sinai shook the earth. The meaning is not that it terrified the people. The writer has passed from that thought. He now speaks of the effect of God's voice on the material world, the power of revelation over created nature. This is a truth that frequently meets us in Scripture. Revelation is accompanied by miracle. When the Ten Commandments were spoken by the lips of God to the people, "the whole mount quaked greatly." But the prophet Haggai predicts the glory of the second house in words which recall to our author the trembling of Mount Sinai: "For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." It is very characteristic of the writer of this Epistle to fasten on a few salient points in the prophet's words. He seems to think that Haggai had the scenes that occurred on Sinai in his mind. Two expressions connect the narrative in Exodus with the prophecy. When God spoke on Sinai, His voice shook the earth. Haggai declares that God will, at some future time, shake the heaven. Again, the prophet has used the words "yet once more." Therefore, when the greater glory of the second house will have come to pass, the last shaking of earth and of heaven will take place. The inference is that the word "yet once more" signified the removing of those things that are shaken. The whole fabric of nature will perish in its present material form, and the Apostle connects this universal catastrophe with the revelation of God in His Son.

Many very excellent expositors think that our author refers, not to the final dissolution of nature, but to the abrogation of the Jewish economy. It is true that the Epistle has declared the old covenant a thing of the past. But there are two considerations that lead us to adopt the other view of this passage. In the first place, this Epistle does not describe the abrogation of the old covenant as a violent catastrophe, but rather as the passing away of what had grown old and decayed. In the second place, the coming of the Lord is elsewhere, in writings of that age, spoken of as accompanied by a great convulsion of nature. The two notions go together in the thoughts of the time. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

We connect the words "as things that have been made" with the next clause: "that those things which are not shaken may remain." It is not because they have been made that the earth and the heaven are removed; and their place will not be occupied by uncreated things

only, but also by things made. The meaning is that nature will be dissolved when it has answered its purpose, and not till then. Earth and heaven have been made, not for their own sakes, but in order that out of them a new world may be created, which will never be removed or shaken. This new world is the kingdom of which the King-Priest is eternal Monarch. As we partake in His priesthood, we share also in His kingship. We enter into the holiest place and stand before the mercy-seat, but our absolution is announced and confirmed to us by the Divine summons to sit down with Christ in His throne, as He has sat down with His Father in His throne.

Let us therefore accept the kingdom. But beware of your peculiar danger, which is self-righteous pride, worldliness, and the evil heart of unbelief. Rather let us seek and get that grace from God which will make our royal state a humble service of worshipping priests. The grace which the Apostle exhorts his readers to possess is much more than thankfulness. It includes all that Christianity bestows to counteract and vanquish the special dangers of self-righteousness. Such priestly service will be well-pleasing to God. Offer it with pious resignation to His sovereign will, with awe in the presence of His holiness. For, whilst our God proclaims forgiveness from the mercy-seat as the worshippers stand before it, He is also a consuming fire. Upon the mercy-seat itself rests the Shechinah.

CHAPTER XVI.

SUNDRY EXHORTATIONS.

HEBREWS xiii.

THE condition of the Hebrew Christians was most serious. But one excellence is acknowledged to have belonged to them. It was almost the only ground of hope. They ministered to the saints. Yet even this grace was in peril. In a previous chapter the writer has exhorted them to call to remembrance the former days, in which they had compassion on them that were in bonds. But he considers it sufficient, in reference to brotherly love, to urge them to see that it continues. They were in more danger of forgetting to show kindness to their brethren of other Churches, who, in pursuance of the liberty of prophesying accorded in Apostolic times, journeyed from place to place for the purpose of founding new Churches or of imparting spiritual gifts to Churches already established. Besides, it was a time of local persecutions. One Church might be suffering, and its members might take refuge in a sister-Church. Missionaries and persecuted brethren would be the strangers to whom the enrolled widows used hospitality, and whose feet they washed. We can well understand why in that age a bishop would be especially expected to be given to hospitality. Uhlhorn excellently observes that "the greatness of the age consisted in this very feature: that Christians of all places knew themselves to be fraternally one, and that in this oneness all differences disappeared." In the case of a Church consisting of Hebrews the duty of entertaining strangers, many of them necessarily Greeks, would be peculiarly apt to be forgotten. When a Church wavered in its allegiance to Christianity, the alienation would become still more pronounced.

The constant going and coming of missionary brethren reminds the author of the ministry of angels, who are like the swift breezes, and carry Christ's messages over the face of the earth. Sometimes they are as a flame of fire. When they were on their way to destroy the Cities of the Plain, Abraham and Lot entertained them, not knowing that they were heaven-sent ministers of wrath. It would be presumptuous in any man to deny the possibility of angelic visitations in the Christian Church; but the Apostle's meaning is not that hospitality ought to be shown to strangers in the hope that angels may be among them. They are to be received unawares; otherwise the fragrance of the deed is gone. But the fact remains, and has been proved in the experience of many, that kindness to strangers, be they preaching friars, or itinerant exhorters, or persecuted outcasts, brings a rich blessing to children's children. A Syrian builds for himself a hut on the riverside, and offers to carry the wayfarers across on his shoulders. One day a child asks to be taken over. But the light burden becomes every moment heavier. The exhausted bearer asks in astonishment, "Who art thou, child?" It was Christ, and the Syrian was named the Christ-bearer in remembrance of the event.

The next exhortation is to purity. It is better not to attempt to connect these exhortations. Their special importance in the case of the Hebrew Christians is reason enough for them. Abstinence from marriage is not commended. Our author is not an Essene. On the contrary, he would discourage it. "Let marriage be held in honour among all classes of men." It is the Divinely appointed remedy against incontinence. But in the married state itself let there be purity. For the incontinent, whether in the bonds of wedlock or not, God's direct, providential judgments will overtake.

Then follows a warning against love of money, and the Lord's promise not to fail or forsake Joshua * is appropriated by our author on behalf of his readers. Their covetousness arose from anxiety, which may have been occasioned by their distressing poverty in the days of Claudius.† That the advice was needed shows the precise character of their threatening apostasy. Worldliness was at the root of their Judaism. It is still the same. The self-righteous do not hate money.

Let them imitate the trustfulness of their great leaders in the past, who had not given their time and thoughts to heaping up riches, but had devoted themselves to the work of witnessing and of speaking the word of God. Let them review with critical eye their manner of life, and observe how it ended. They all died in faith. Some of them suffered martyrdom, so complete and entirely unworldly was their self-surrender to Jesus Christ! But Jesus Christ is still the same One. If He was worthy that Stephen and James should die for His sake, He is worthy of our allegiance too. Yea, He will be the same for ever. When the world has passed away, with its fashion and its lust, when the earth and the works that are therein are burned up and dissolved, Jesus Christ abides. What He was yesterday to His martyr Stephen,

* Josh. i. 5. † Acts xi. 28.

that He is to all that follow Him in earth's to-day, and that He will for ever be when He shall have appeared unto them who expect Him unto salvation. The antithesis, it will be seen, is not between the departing saints and the abiding Christ, but between the world, which the Hebrew Christians loved too well, and the Christ Whom the saints of their Church had loved better than the world and served by faith unto death.

If Jesus Christ abides, He is our anchorage, and the exhortation first given near the beginning of the Epistle once more suggests itself to the Apostle. "Permit not yourselves to drift and be carried past the moorings by divers strange doctrines." The word "doctrines" is itself emphatic. "Be not borne aside from the personal, abiding Jesus Christ by propositions, whether in reference to practice or to belief." What these "doctrines" were in this particular case we learn from the next verse. They were the doubtful disputations about meats. The epithets "divers and strange" restrict the allusion still more nearly. He speaks not of the general and familiar injunctions of Jewish teachers respecting meats, the subject rather contemptuously dismissed by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans: "One man hath faith to eat all things; but he that is weak eateth herbs." Our author could not have regarded these doctrines as "strange," and he could scarcely have spoken of "strengthening the heart with meats" if he had meant abstinence from meats. A recent English expositor has pointed out the direction in which we must seek the interpretation of this difficult passage. The Apostle brushes aside the novel teaching of the Essenes, who, without becoming Christians, "had broken away from the sacrificial system" of the Mosaic law and "substituted for it new ordinances of their own, according to which the daily meal became a sacrifice, and the president of the community took the place of the Levitical priest." Such teaching was quite as inconsistent with Judaism as with Christianity. But the writer of this Epistle rejects it for precisely the same reason for which he repudiates Judaism. Both are inconsistent with the perfect separateness of Christ's atonement.

It is well, as St. Paul said, for every man to be fully assured in his own mind. A doubting conscience enfeebles a man's spiritual vigour for work. The Essenes found a remedy for morbidness in strictness as to meats and minute directions for the employment of time. St. Paul taught that an unhealthy casuistry would be best counteracted by doing all things unto the Lord. "He that eateth eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews considers that it betokens a littleness of soul to strengthen conscience by regulations as to various kinds of food. The noble thing is that the heart—that is, the conscience—be stablished by thankfulness, which will produce a strong, placid, courageous, and healthy moral perception. The moral code of the New Testament is direct and simple. It is entirely free from all casuistical crotchets and distinctions without a difference. Those who busy themselves about such matters have never gained anything by it.

Do the Essenes repudiate the altar the sacrifice of which may not be eaten? Do they teach that the only sacrifice for sin is the daily meal? This is a fatal error. "We have," says the Apostle, "an altar of which the worshippers are not permitted to eat." All these expressions are metaphorical. By the altar we must understand the atoning sacrifice of Christ; by "those who serve the tabernacle" are meant believers in that sacrifice, prefigured, however, by the priests and worshippers under the old covenant; and by "eating of the altar" is meant participation in the sacredness that pertains to the death and atonement of Christ. The purpose of the writer is to teach the entire separateness of Christ's atonement. It is true that Christians eat the body and drink the blood of Christ.* But the words of our Lord and of St. Paul† refer to the passover, whereas our author speaks of the sin-offering. In the former the lamb was eaten;‡ in the latter the carcases of the beasts whose blood was brought by the worshipper through his representative,§ the high-priest, into the holiest place on the day of atonement, were carried forth without the camp and burned in the fire.‖ Both sacrifices, the passover and the sin-offering, were typical. The former typified our participation in Christ's death, the latter the separateness of Christ's death.

Many expositors see a reference in the Apostle's words to the Lord's Table, and some of them infer from the word "altar" that the Eucharist is a continual offering of a propitiatory sacrifice to God. It is not too much to say that this latter doctrine is the precise error which the Apostle is here combating.

Two other interpretations of these verses have been suggested. Both are, we think, untenable. The one is that we Christians have an altar of which we have a right to eat, but of which the Jewish priests and all who cling to Judaism have no right to eat; and, to prove that they have not, the Apostle mentions the fact that they were not permitted to eat the bodies of the beasts slain as a sin-offering under the old covenant. There are several weighty objections to this view, but the following one will be sufficient. The reference to the sin-offering in the eleventh verse is made in order to show that it was a type of Christ's atoning death. As the bodies of the slain beasts were carried outside the camp and burned, so Christ suffered without the gate. But there is no real resemblance between the two things unless the Apostle intends to teach that the atonement of Christ stands apart and cannot be shared in by any other person, which implies that the tenth verse does not convey the notion that Christians have a right to eat of the altar.

The other interpretation is that we, Christians, have an altar of which we who serve the ideal tabernacle have no right to eat, inasmuch as the sacrifice is spiritual. "Our Christian altar supplies no flesh for carnal food."¶ But if the reference is to carnal food, the expression "We have no *right* to eat" is not the appropriate one. The writer would surely have said, "of which we *cannot* eat." Besides, this view

* John vi. 51-55.
† 1 Cor. x. 16.
‡ Exod. xii.
§ διά.
‖ Lev. xvi. 27.
¶ So Rendall, *loc. cit.*

misses the connection between the ninth and tenth verses. To say that Christ's death procured spiritual blessings and that we do not eat His body after a carnal manner does not affect the question concerning meats, unless the doctrine concerning meats includes the notion that they are themselves an atoning sacrifice. Such was the doctrine of the Essenes. The argument of the Apostle is good and forcible if it means that Christ's atonement is Christ's alone. We share not in its sacredness, though we partake of its blessings. It resembles the sin-offering on the day of atonement, as well as the paschal lamb.

But it was not enough that the slain beasts should be burned without the camp. Their blood also must be brought into the holiest place. The former rite signified that the slain beast bore the sin of the people, the latter that the people themselves were sanctified. Similarly Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, in reproach and ignominy, as the Sin-bearer, and also entered into the true holiest place, in order to sanctify His people through His own blood.

We must not press the analogy. The author sees a quaint but touching resemblance between the burning of the slain beasts outside the camp and the crucifying of Jesus on Golgotha outside the city. The point of resemblance is in the ignominy symbolised in the one and in the other. Here too the writer finds the practical use of what he has said. Though the atonement of the Cross is Christ's, and cannot be shared in by others, the reproach of that atoning death can. The thought leads the Apostle away from the divers strange doctrines of the Essenes, and brings him back to the main idea of the Epistle, which is to induce his readers to hold no more dalliance with Judaism, but to break away from it finally and for ever. "Let us come out," he says. The word recalls St. Paul's exhortation to the Christians of Corinth "to come out from among them, to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. For what concord can there be between Christ and Belial, between a believer and an unbeliever, between the sanctuary of God and idols?"* Our author tells the Hebrew Christians that on earth they have nothing better than reproach to expect. Quit, therefore, the camp of Judaism. Live, so to speak, in the desert. (He speaks metaphorically throughout.) You have no abiding city on earth. The fatal mistake of the Jews has been that they have turned what ought to be simply a camp into an abiding city. They have lost the feeling of the pilgrim; they seek not a better country and a city built by God. Shun ye this worldliness. Not only regard not your earthly life as a permanent dwelling in a city, but leave even the camp; be not only sojourners, but outcasts. Share in the reproach of Jesus, and look for your citizenship in heaven.

Reverting to the teaching of the Essenes, the writer proceeds: "Through Jesus let us offer a sacrifice of praise."† The emphasis must rest on the words "through Jesus." The daily meal is not a sacrifice, except in the sense of being a thanksgiving; and our thanksgiving is acceptable to God when it is offered through Him Whose death is a propitiation. Even then lip-worship only is not accepted. Share the meal with the poor. God is pleased with the sacrifices of doing good to all and contributing* to the necessities of the saints.

The Apostle next exhorts them to obey their leaders, and that with yielding submission. The atmosphere is certainly different from the democratic spirit of the Corinthian Church. Yet it is not improbable that the safety of the Hebrew Christians everywhere from a violent reaction towards Judaism was due to the wisdom and profounder insight of the leaders. Our author evidently considers that he has them on his side. "They, whatever we may think of the common herd, are wide awake. They understand that they will have to give an account of their stewardship over you to Christ at His coming. Submit to them, that they may watch over your souls with joy, and not with a grief that finds utterance in frequent sighs. When they give their account, you will not find that your fretful rebelliousness has profited you aught. The Essenian society gain nothing by absorption of the individual in the community, and you will gain nothing, but quite the reverse, by asserting your individual crotchets to the destruction of the Church."

He asks his readers to pray for him and Timothy, who has been released from prison. Their prayers are his due. For he believes he had an upright conscience in breaking with Judaism. For the same reason he is confident that their prayers on his behalf will be answered. He and his friends wish in all things to live noble lives. He is the more desirous of having their prayers because of his eagerness to be "restored" to them. He means much more than to return to them. He wishes to be "restored," or "refitted." Their prayers will put an end to the perturbation of his mind, and bring back the happiness of their first love.

He, too, prays for them. His prayer is that God may furnish them with every gift of grace to do His will, and His will is their consecration, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. God will answer his prayer and provide in them that which is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ. For He has not left His Church without a Shepherd, though it is in the wilderness. He has brought up from the dead, and restored out of the ignominious death without the gate, our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd, Who is ever with them, whatever may become of the undershepherds. That He hath been raised from the dead is certain. For, when He was crucified in ignominy without the gate, His blood was at the same time offered in the true holiest place. That blood has ratified the new and final covenant between God and His people. It was through His own blood of this eternal covenant that He was raised from the dead, and it is in virtue of the same blood and of the same covenant that He is now the Shepherd of His Church.

Here, again, we must not draw too broad a distinction between the resurrection of Christ and His ascension to heaven. On the one hand, we must not say that by the words "bringing up from the dead" the Apostle means the ascension; on the other hand, the words do not exclude the ascension. The resurrection and the ascension coalesce in the notion of Christ being living. The only distinction present, we

*2 Cor. vi. 15 sqq. †Chap. xiii. 15. * κοινωνίας.

think, to the writer's mind was that between the shame of Christ's death without the camp and the offering of His blood by the living Christ in the holiest place. He Who died on the Cross through that death liveth evermore. He lives to be the Shepherd of His people. Therefore to Him must be ascribed the glory for ever and ever.

The Apostle once more begs his readers to bear with the word of exhortation. Let them remember that he has written briefly in order to spare them. He might have said more, but he has refrained.

He hopes to bring Timothy with him, unless his friend tarries long. In that case he will come alone, so great is his anxiety to see them.

He sends his greetings to all the saints, but mentions the leaders. Brethren who have come from Italy are with him. They may have been exiles or fugitives who had sought safety during the first great persecution of the Church in the days of Nero. They too send greetings.

He closes with the Apostolic benediction. For, whoever he was, he was truly an Apostolic man.

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CHAPTER I.

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THE GENERAL EPISTLES OF ST. JAMES AND ST. JUDE.

BY THE REV. ALFRED PLUMMER, M. A., D. D.

INTRODUCTORY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES.

THIS book is to treat of the General Epistle of St. James and the General Epistle of St. Jude. According to the most common, but not invariable arrangement, they form the first and the last letters in the collection which for fifteen centuries has been known as the Catholic Epistles. The epithet "General," which appears in the titles of these Epistles in the English versions, is simply the equivalent of the epithet "Catholic," the one word being of Latin (*generalis*), the other of Greek (καθολικός) origin. In Latin, however, *e. g.*, in the Vulgate, these letters are not called *Generales*, but *Catholicæ*.

The meaning of the term Catholic Epistles (καθολικαὶ ἐπιστολαι) has been disputed, and more than one explanation may be found in commentaries; but the true signification is not really doubtful. It certainly does not mean orthodox or canonical; although from the sixth century, and possibly earlier, we find these Epistles sometimes called the Canonical Epistles ("Epistolæ Canonicæ"), an expression in which "canonical" is evidently meant to be an equivalent for "catholic." This use is said to occur first in the "Prologus in Canonicas Epistolas" of the Pseudo-Jerome given by Cassiodorus ("De Justit. Divin. Litt.," viii.); and the expression is used by Cassiodorus himself, whose writings may be placed between A. D. 540 and 570, the period spent in his monastery at Viviers, after he had retired from the conduct of public affairs. The term "catholic" is used in the sense of "orthodox" before this date, but not in connection with these letters. There seems to be no earlier evidence of the opinion, certainly erroneous, that this collection of seven Epistles was called "Catholic" in order to mark them as Apostolic and authoritative, in distinction from other letters which were heterodox, or at any rate of inferior authority. Five out of the seven letters, viz., all but the First Epistle of St. Peter and the First Epistle of St. John, belong to that class of New Testament books which from the time of Eusebius ("H. E.," III. xxv. 4) have been spoken of as "disputed" (ἀντιλεγόμενα), *i. e.*, as being up to the beginning of the fourth century not universally admitted to be canonical. And it would have been almost a contradiction in terms if Eusebius had first called these Epistles "catholic" ("H. E.," II. xxiii. 25; VI. xiv. 1) in the sense of being universally accepted as authoritative, and had then classed them among the "disputed" books.

Nor is it accurate to say that these letters are called "catholic" because they are addressed to both Jewish and Gentile Christians alike, a statement which is not true of all of them, and least of all of the Epistle which generally stands first in the series; for the Epistle of St. James takes no account of Gentile Christians. Moreover, there are Epistles of St. Paul which are addressed to both Jews and Gentiles in the Churches to which he writes. So that this explanation of the term makes it thoroughly unsuitable for the purpose for which it is used, viz., to mark off these seven Epistles from the Epistles of St. Paul. Nevertheless, this interpretation is nearer to the truth than the former one.

The Epistles are called "Catholic" because they are not addressed to any particular Church, whether of Thessalonica, or Corinth, or Rome, or Galatia, but to the Church universal, or at any rate to a wide circle of readers. This is the earliest Christian use of the term "catholic," which was applied to the Church itself before it was applied to these or any other writings. "Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be," says Ignatius to the Church of Smyrna (viii.), "just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church,"—the earliest passage in Christian literature in which the phrase "Catholic Church" occurs. And there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the epithet in this expression. In later times, when Christians were oppressed by a consciousness of the slow progress of the Gospel, and by the knowledge that as yet only a fraction of the human race had accepted it, it became customary to explain "catholic" as meaning that which embraces and teaches the whole truth, rather than as that which spreads everywhere and covers the whole earth. But in the first two or three centuries the feeling was rather one of jubilation and triumph at the rapidity with which the "good news" was spreading, and of confidence that "there is not one single race of men, whether barbarians or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered, through the name of the crucified Jesus, to the Father and Creator of all things" (Justin Martyr, "Trypho," cxviii.); and that as "the soul is diffused through all the members of the body, Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world" ("Epistle to Diognetus," vi.). Under the influence of such exultation as this, which was felt to be in harmony with Christ's promise and command (Luke xxiv. 47; Matt. xxviii. 10), it was natural to use "catholic" of the universal extension of Christendom, rather than of the comprehensiveness of the truths of Christianity. And this meaning still prevails in the time of Augustine, who says that "the Church is called 'Catholic' in Greek, because it is diffused throughout the whole world" ("Epp.," lii. 1); although the later use, as meaning orthodox, in distinction to schismatical or heretical, has already begun; *e. g.*, in the Muratorian Fragment, in which the writer speaks of

heretical writing "which cannot be received into the Catholic Church; for wormwood is not suitable for mixing with honey" (Tregelles, pp. 20, 47; Westcott "On the Canon," Appendix C, p. 500); and the chapter in Clement of Alexandria on the priority of the Catholic Church to all heretical assemblies ("Strom.," VII. xvii.).

The four Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul were the Christian writings best known during the first century after the Ascension, and universally acknowledged as of binding authority; and it was common to speak of them as "the Gospel" and "the Apostle," much in the same way as the Jews spoke of "the Law" and "the Prophets." But when a third collection of Christian documents became widely known another collective term was required by which to distinguish it from the collections already familiar, and the feature in these seven Epistles which seems to have struck the recipients of them most is the absence of an address to any local Church. Hence they received the name of Catholic, or General, or Universal Epistles. The name was all the more natural because of the number seven, which emphasised the contrast between these and the Pauline Epistles. St. Paul had written to seven particular Churches—Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, Galatia, Philippi, Colossæ, and Ephesus; and here were seven Epistles without any address to a particular Church; therefore they might fitly be called "General Epistles." Clement of Alexandria uses this term of the letter addressed to the Gentile Christians "in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (Acts xv. 23) by the Apostles, in the so-called Council of Jerusalem ("Strom.," IV. xv.); and Origen uses it of the Epistle of Barnabas ("Con. Celsum," I. lxiii.), which is addressed simply to "sons and daughters," *i. e.*, to Christians generally.

That this meaning was well understood, even after the misleading title "Canonical Epistles" had become usual in the West, is shown by the interesting Prologue to these Epistles written by the Venerable Bede, *cir.* A. D. 712. This prologue is headed, "Here begins the Prologue to the seven Canonical Epistles," and it opens thus: "James, Peter, John, and Jude published seven Epistles, to which ecclesiastical custom gives the name of Catholic, *i. e.*, universal."

The name is not strictly accurate, excepting in the cases of 1 John, 2 Peter, and Jude. It is admissible in a qualified sense of 1 Peter and James; but it is altogether inappropriate to 2 and 3 John, which are addressed, not to the Church at large, nor to a group of local Churches, but to individuals. But inasmuch as the common title of these letters was not the Epistles "to the Elect Lady" and "to Gaius," as in the case of the letters to Philemon, Titus, and Timothy, but simply the Second and Third of John, they were regarded as without address, and classed with the Catholic Epistles. And of course it was natural to put them into the same group with the First Epistle of St. John, although the name of the group did not suit them. At what date this arrangement was made is not certain; but there is reason for believing that these seven Epistles were already regarded as one collection in the third century, when Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius, was making his famous library at Cæsarea. Euthalius (*cir.* A. D. 450) published an edition of them, in making which he had collated "the accurate copies" in this library; and it is probable that he found the grouping already existing in those copies, and did not make it for himself. Moreover, it is probable that the copies at Cæsarea were made by Pamphilus himself; for the summary of the contents of the Acts published under the name of Euthalius is a mere copy of the summary given by Pamphilus, and it became the usual practice to place the Catholic Epistles immediately after the Acts. If, then, Euthalius got the summary of the Acts from Pamphilus, he probably got the arrangement from him also, viz., the putting of these seven Epistles into one group, and placing them next to the Acts.

The order which makes the Catholic Epistles follow immediately after the Acts is very ancient, and it is a matter for regret that the influence of Jerome, acting through the Vulgate, has universally disturbed it in all Western Churches. "The connection between these two portions (the Acts and the Catholic Epistles), commended by its intrinsic appropriateness, is preserved in a large proportion of Greek MSS. of all ages, and corresponds to marked affinities of textual history." It is the order followed by Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, John of Damascus, the Council of Laodicea, and also by Cassian. It has been restored by Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort; but it is not to be expected that even their powerful authority will avail to re-establish the ancient arrangement.

The order of the books in the group of the Catholic Epistles is not quite constant; but almost always James stands first. In a very few authorities Peter stands first, an arrangement naturally preferred in the West, but not adopted even there, because the authority of the original order was too strong. A scholiast on the Epistle of James states that this Epistle has been placed before 1 Peter, "because it is more catholic than that of Peter," by which he seems to mean that whereas 1 Peter is addressed "to the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion" in certain specified districts, the Epistle of James is addressed "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," without any limitation. The Venerable Bede, in the Prologue to the Catholic Epistles quoted above, states that James is placed first, because he undertook to rule the Church of Jerusalem, which was the fount and source of that evangelic preaching which has spread throughout the world; or else because he sent his Epistle to the twelve tribes of Israel, who were the first to believe. And Bede calls attention to the fact that St. Paul himself adopts this order when he speaks of "James, and Cephas, and John, they who were reputed to be pillars" (Gal. ii. 9). It is possible, however, that the order James, Peter, John was meant to represent a belief as to the chronological precedence of James to Peter, and Peter to John; Jude being placed last because of its comparative insignificance, and because it was not at first universally admitted. The Syraic Version, which admits only James, 1 Peter, and 1 John, has the three in this order; and if the arrangement had its origin in reverence for the first Bishop of Jerusalem, it is strange that most of the Syriac copies should have a heading to the effect that these three Epistles of James, Peter, and John are by the three who witnessed the Transfiguration. Those

who made and those who accepted this comment certainly had no idea of reverencing the first Bishop of Jerusalem, for it implies that the Epistle of James is by the son of Zebedee and brother of John, who was put to death by Herod. But it is probable that this heading is a mere blundering conjecture. If persons who believed the Epistle to be written by James the brother of John had fixed the order, they would have fixed it thus—Peter, James, John, as in Matt. xvii. 1; Mark v. 37; ix. 2; xiii. 3; xiv. 33; comp. Matt. xxvi. 37; or Peter, John, James, as in Luke viii. 51; ix. 28; Acts i. 13. But the former arrangement would be more reasonable than the latter, seeing that John wrote so long after the other two. The traditional order harmonises with two facts which were worth marking—(1) that two of the three were Apostles, and must therefore be placed together; (2) that John wrote last, and must therefore be placed last; but whether or no the wish to mark these facts determined the order, we have not sufficient knowledge to enable us to decide.

How enormous would have been the loss had the Catholic Epistles been excluded from the canon of the New Testament it is not difficult to see. Whole phases of Christian thought would have been missing. The Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul would have told us of their existence, but would not have shown to us what they were. We should have known that there were serious differences of opinion even among the Apostles themselves, but we should have had a very imperfect knowledge as to their nature and reconciliation. We might have guessed that those who had been with Jesus of Nazareth throughout His ministry would not preach Christ in the same way as St. Paul, who had never seen Him until after the Ascension, but we should not have been sure of this; still less could we have seen in what the difference would have consisted; and we should have known very little indeed of the distinctive marks of the three great teachers who "were reputed to be pillars" of the Church. Above all, we should have known sadly little of the Mother Church of Jerusalem, and of the teaching of those many early Christians who, while heartily embracing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, believed that they were bound to hold fast not only to the morality, but to the discipline of Moses. Thus in many particulars we should have been left to conjecture as to how the continuity in the Divine Revelation was maintained; how the Gospel not merely superseded, but fulfilled, and glorified, and grew out of the Law.

All this has to a large extent been made plain to us by the providence of God in giving to us and preserving for us in the Church the seven Catholic Epistles. We see St. James and St. Jude presenting to us that Judaic form of Christianity which was really the complement, although when exaggerated it became the opposite, of the teaching of St. Paul. We see St. Peter mediating between the two, and preparing the way for a better comprehension of both. And then St. John lifts us up into a higher and clearer atmosphere, in which the controversy between Jew and Gentile has faded away into the dim distance, and the only opposition which remains worthy of a Christian's consideration is that between light and darkness, truth and falsehood, love and hate, God and the world, Christ and Antichrist, life and death.

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES.

CHAPTER II.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES.

James i. 1.

The question of the authenticity of this Epistle resolves itself into two parts—Is the Epistle the genuine product of a writer of the Apostolic age? If so, which of the persons of the Apostolic age who bore the name of James is the author of it? In answering the former of these two questions it is important to put it in the proper way. We have done a good deal towards the solution of a problem when we have learned to state it correctly; and the way in which we ought to approach the problem of the genuineness of this and other books of the New Testament is not, Why should we believe that these writings are what they profess to be? but, Why should we refuse to believe this? Have we any sufficient reason for reversing the decision of the fourth and fifth centuries, which possessed far more evidence on the question than has come down to us?

It must be remembered that that decision was not given mechanically or without consideration of doubts and difficulties; nor was it imposed by authority, until independent Churches and scholars had arrived at pretty much the same conclusion. And the decision, as soon as it was pronounced, was unanimously accepted in both East and West—a fact which was ample guarantee that the decision was universally recognised as correct; for there was no central authority of sufficient influence to force a suspected decision upon mistrustful Churches. Eusebius, it is true, classes most of the Catholic Epistles among the "disputed" (*ἀντιλεγόμενα*) books of the New Testament, without, however, affirming that he shared the doubts which existed in some quarters respecting them. This fact, which is sometimes rather hastily taken as telling altogether against the writings which he marks as "disputed," really tells *both* ways. On the one hand, it shows that doubts had existed respecting some of the canonical books; and these doubts must have had some reason (whether valid or not) for existing. On the other hand, the fact that the authority of these books was sometimes disputed in the third century shows that the verdict formally given and ratified at the Council of Laodicea (*cir.* 364) was given after due examination of the adverse evidence, and with a conviction that the doubts which had been raised were not justified; and the universal welcome which was accorded to the verdict throughout Christendom shows that the doubts which had been raised had ceased to exist. If, then, on the one hand we remember that misgivings once existed, and argue that these misgivings must have had some basis, on the other we must remember that these misgivings were entirely abandoned, and that there must have been reason for abandoning them. What reason, then, have we for disturbing the verdict of the fourth century, and reviving misgivings long ago put to rest?

Of course those who gave that verdict and those who ratified it were fallible persons, and no member of the English Church, at any rate, would argue that the question is closed and may not be reopened. But the point to be insisted upon is that the *onus probandi* rests with those who assail or suspect these books, rather than with those who accept them. It is not the books that ought, on demand, again and again to be placed on their trial, but the pleas of those who would once more bring them into court, that ought to be sifted. These objectors deserve a hearing; but while they receive it, we have full right to stand by the decision of the fourth century, and refuse to part with, or even seriously to suspect, any of the precious inheritance which has been handed down to us. It may be confidently asserted that thus far no strong case has been made out against any of the five "disputed" Epistles, excepting 2 Peter; and with regard to that it is still true to affirm that the Petrine authorship remains, on the whole, a reasonable "working hypothesis."

Do not let us forget what the epithet "disputed," applied to these and one or two other books of the New Testament, really means. It does not mean that at the beginning of the fourth century Eusebius found that these writings were universally regarded with suspicion: that is a gross exaggeration of the import of the term. Rather it means that these books were not universally accepted; that although they were, as a rule, regarded as canonical, and as part of the contents of the New Testament (*ἐνδιάθηκοι γραφαί*), yet in some quarters their authority was doubted or denied. And the reasons for these doubts were naturally not in all cases the same. With regard to 2 Peter, the doubt must have been as to its genuineness and authenticity. It claimed to be written by "Simon Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ" and a witness of the Transfiguration (2 Peter i. 1, 18); but the obscurity of its origin and other circumstances were against it. With regard to James, Jude, and 2 and 3 John the doubt was rather as to their Apostolicity. They did not claim to be written by Apostles. There was no reason for doubting the antiquity or the genuineness of these four books; but granting that they were written by the persons whose names they bore, were these persons Apostles? And if they were not, what was the authority of their writings? The doubts with regard to the Revelation and to the Epistle to the Hebrews were in part of the same character. Were they in the full sense of the term Apostolic, as having been written by Apostles, or at least under the guidance of Apostles? Eusebius says expressly that all these "disputed" books were "nevertheless well known to most people."

And it is manifest that the doubts which Eusebius records were ceasing to exist. Only in some cases does he indicate, and that without open statement, that he himself was at all inclined to sympathise with them. And Athanasius, writing a very short time afterwards (A. D. 326), makes no distinction between acknowledged and disputed books, but places all seven of the Catholic Epistles, as of equal authority, immediately after the Acts of the Apostles. Cyril of Jerusalem, in his Catechetical Lectures, written before his episcopate, *cir.* A. D. 349, does the same ("Lect.," IV. x. 36). Some fifteen years later we have the Council of Laodicea, and near the end of the century the Council of Hippo, and the third Council of Carthage, giving formal ratification to these generally received views; after which all questioning for many centuries ceased. So that while the classification into "acknowledged" and "disputed" writings proves that each book was carefully scrutinised, and in various quarters independently, before it was admitted to the canon, the cessation of this distinction proves that the result of all this scrutiny was that the sporadic doubts and hesitations respecting certain of the books of the New Testament were finally put to rest.

And it must not be supposed that the process was one of general amnesty. While some books that had here and there been excluded were finally accepted, some that had here and there been included in the canon, such as the Epistles of Clement and of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, were finally rejected. The charge of uncritical or indiscriminate admission cannot be substantiated. The facts are quite the other way.

When we confine our attention to the Epistle of James in particular, we find that if the doubts which were here and there felt respecting it in the third century are intelligible, the universal acceptance which it met with in the fourth and following centuries is well founded. The doubts were provoked by two facts—(1) the Epistle had remained for some time unknown to a good many Churches; (2) when it became generally known it remained uncertain what the authority of the writer was, especially whether he was an Apostle or not. It is possible also that these misgivings were in some cases emphasised by the further fact that there is a marked absence of doctrinal teaching. In this Epistle the articles of the Christian faith are scarcely touched upon at all. Whether the apparent inconsistency with the teaching of St. Paul respecting the relation between faith and works, of which so much has been made since Luther's time, was discovered or not by those who were inclined to dispute the authority of this Epistle, may be doubted. But of course, if any inconsistency was believed to exist, that also would tell against the general reception of the letter as canonical.

That the Epistle should at first remain very little known, especially in the West and among the Gentile congregations, is exactly what we should expect from the character of the letter and the circumstances of its publication. It is addressed by a Jew to Jews, by one who never moved from the Church over which he presided at Jerusalem to those humble and obscure Christians outside Palestine who, by their conscientious retention of the Law side by side with the Gospel, cut themselves off more and more from free intercourse with other Christians, whether Gentile converts or more liberally-minded Jews. A letter which in the first instance was to be read in Christian synagogues (James ii. 2) might easily remain a long time without becoming known to Churches which from the outset had adopted the principles laid down in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. The constant journeys of the Apostle of the Gentiles caused his letters to become well known throughout the Churches at a very early date. But the first Bishop of the Mother Church of Jerusalem had no such advantages.

Great as was his influence in his own sphere, with a rank equal to that of an Apostle, yet he was not well known outside that sphere, and he himself seems never to have travelled beyond it, or even to have left the centre of it. With outsiders, who simply knew that he was not one of the Twelve, his influence would not be great; and a letter emanating from him, even if known to exist, would not be eagerly inquired after or carefully circulated. Gentile prejudice against Jewish Christians would still further contribute to keep in the background a letter which was specially addressed to Jewish Christians, and was also itself distinctly Jewish in tone. Nor would the exclusive class of believers to whom the letter was sent care to make it known to those Christians from whom they habitually kept aloof. Thus the prejudices of both sides contributed to prevent the Epistle from circulating outside the somewhat narrow circle to which it was in the first instance addressed; and there is therefore nothing surprising in its being unknown to Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the author of the Muratorian Canon. There is no sign that these writers rejected it; they had never heard of it.

And yet the Epistle did become known at a very early date, at any rate to some outsiders, even in the West. It was almost certainly known to Clement of Rome, whose Epistle to the Church of Corinth (written *cir.* A. D. 97) contains several passages, which seem to be reminiscences of St. James. And although not one of them can be relied upon as proving that Clement knew our Epistle, yet, when they are all put together, they make a cumulative argument of very great strength. So cautious and critical a writer as Bishop Lightfoot does not hesitate to assert, in a note on Clement, chap. xii., "The instance of Rahab was doubtless suggested by Heb. xi. 31; James ii. 25; for both these Epistles were known to St. Clement, and are quoted elsewhere." And the Epistle of St. James was certainly known to Hermas, a younger contemporary of Clement, and author of the "Shepherd," which was written in the first half, and possibly in the first quarter, of the second century. Origen, in the works of which we have the Greek original, quotes it once as "The Epistle current as that of James" (*τῇ φερομένῃ Ἰακώβου ἐπιστολῇ*) —"In Johan.," xix. 6), and once ("In Psal.," xxx.) without any expression of doubt; and in the inaccurate Latin translations of others of his works there are several distinct quotations from the Epistle. So that it would seem to have reached Alexandria just as Clement, Origen's instructor and predecessor, left the city during the persecution under Septimius Severus (*cir.* A. D. 202).

But the conclusive fact in the external evidence respecting the Epistle is that it is contained in the Peshitto. This ancient Syriac Version was made in the second century, in the country in which the letter of James would be best known; and although the framers of this translation omitted 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, and Jude, they admitted James without scruple. Thus the earliest evidence for this Epistle, as for that to the Hebrews, is chiefly Eastern; while that for Jude, as for 2 and 3 John, is chiefly Western.

And the evidence of the Peshitto is not weakened by the fact, if it be a fact, that there was a still earlier Syrian canon which contained none of the Catholic Epistles. There is no certain allusion to them or quotation from them in the Homilies of Aphrahat or Aphraates (*cir.* A. D. 335); and in the "Doctrine of Addai" (A. D. 250-300) the clergy of Edessa are directed to read the Law and the Prophets, the Gospel, St. Paul's Epistles, and the Acts, no other canonical book being mentioned. In all Churches the number of Christian writings read publicly in the liturgy was at first small, and in no case were the Catholic Epistles the first to be used for this purpose.

The internal evidence, as we shall see when we come to examine it more closely, is even more strong than the external. The character of the letter exactly harmonises with the character of James the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and with the known circumstances of those to whom the letter is addressed, and this in a way that no literary forger of that age could have reached. And there is no sufficient motive for a forgery, for the letter is singularly wanting in doctrinal statements. The supposed opposition to St. Paul will not hold; a writer who wished to oppose St. Paul would have made his opposition much more clear. And a forger who wished to get the authority of St. James wherewith to counteract St. Paul's teaching would have made us aware that it was either an Apostle, the son of Zebedee or the son of Alphæus, or else the brother of the Lord, who was addressing us, and would not have left it open for us to suppose that the Epistle was from the pen of some unknown James, who had no authority at all equal to that of St. Paul. And let any one compare this Epistle with those of Clement of Rome, and of Barnabas, and of Ignatius, and mark its enormous superiority. If it were the work of a forger, what a perplexing fact this superiority would be! If it be the work either of an Apostle or of one who had Apostolic rank, everything is explained.

Luther's famous criticism on the Epistle, that it is "a veritable Epistle of straw," is amazing, and is to be explained by the fact that it contradicts his caricature of St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. There is no opposition between St. James and St. Paul, and there is sometimes no real opposition between St. James and Luther (see p. 591). And when Luther gives as his opinion that our Epistle was "not the writing of any Apostle" we can agree with him, though not in the sense in which he means it; for he starts from the erroneous supposition that the letter bears the name of the son of Zebedee. We must also bear in mind his own explanation of what is Apostolic and what is not. It has a purely subjective meaning. It does not mean what was written or not written by an Apostle or the equal of an Apostle. "Apostolic" means that which, in Luther's opinion, an Apostle ought to teach, and all that fails to satisfy this condition is not Apostolic. "Therein all true holy books agree, that they preach and urge Christ. That too is the right touchstone whereby to test all books—whether they urge Christ or not; for all Scripture testifies of Christ (Rom. iii. 21). . . . That which does not teach Christ is still short of Apostolic, even if it were the teaching of St. Peter or St. Paul. Again, that which preaches Christ, that were Apostolic, even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod preached it." The Lutheran Church has not followed him in his principle, which

places the authority of any book of Scripture at the mercy of the likes and dislikes of the individual reader; and it has restored the Epistles to the Hebrews and of James and Jude to their proper places in the New Testament, instead of leaving them in the kind of appendix to which Luther had banished them and the Revelation. Moreover, the passage containing the statement about the "veritable Epistle of straw" is now omitted from the preface to his translation. And with regard to this very point, his former friend and later opponent Andrew Rudolph Bodenstein, of Karlstadt, pertinently asked, "If you allow the Jews to stamp books with authority by receiving them, why do you refuse to grant as much power to the Churches of Christ, since the Church is not less than the Synagogue?" We have at least as much reason to trust the Councils of Laodicea, Hippo, and Carthage, which formally defined the limits of the New Testament, as we have to trust the unknown Jewish influences which fixed those of the Old. And when we examine for ourselves the evidence which is still extant, and which has greatly diminished in the course of fifteen hundred years, we feel that both on external and internal grounds the decision of the fourth century respecting the genuineness of the Epistle of St. James, as a veritable product of the Apostolic age and as worthy of a place in the canon of the New Testament, is fully justified.

CHAPTER III.

THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE: JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE LORD.

JAMES i. 1.

WE have still to consider the second half of the question as to the authenticity of this letter. Granting that it is a genuine Epistle of James, and a writing of the Apostolic age, to which of the persons in that age who are known to us as bearing the name of James is it to be attributed? The consensus of opinion on this point, though not so great as that respecting the genuineness of the letter, is now very considerable, and seems to be increasing.

The name James is the English form of the Hebrew name Yacoob (Jacob), which in Greek became Ἰάκωβος, in Latin Jacobus, and in English James, a form which grievously blurs the history of the name. From having been the name of the patriarch Jacob, the progenitor of the Jewish race, it became one of the commonest of proper names among the Jews; and in the New Testament we find several persons bearing this name among the followers of Jesus Christ. It would be possible to make as many as six; but these must certainly be reduced to four, and probably to three.

These six are—

1. James the Apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of John the Apostle (Matt. iv. 21; x. 2; xvii. 5; Mark x. 35; xiii. 3; Luke ix. 54; Acts xii. 2).

2. James the Apostle, the son of Alphæus (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13).

3. James the Little, the son of Mary the wife of Clōpas (John xix. 25), who had one other son, named Joses (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40).

4. James the brother of the Lord (Gal. i. 19), a relationship which he shares with Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3) and some unnamed sisters.

5. James the overseer of the Church of Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17; xv. 13; xxi. 18; 1 Cor. xv. 7; Gal. ii. 9, 12).

6. James the brother of the Jude who wrote the Epistle (Jude i. 1).

Besides which, we have an unknown James, who was father of the Apostle Judas, not Iscariot (Luke v. 16); but we do not know that this James ever became a disciple.

Of these six we may safely identify the last three as being one and the same person; and we may probably identify James the Apostle, the son of Alphæus, with James the Little, the son of Mary and Clopas; in which case we may conjecture that the epithet of "the Little" (ὁ μικρός) was given him to distinguish him from the other Apostle James, the son of Zebedee. Clopas (not Cleophas, as in the A. V.) may be one Greek form of the Aramaic name Chalpai, of which Alphæus may be another Greek form; so that the father of this James may have been known both as Clopas and as Alphæus. But this is by no means certain. In the ancient Syraic Version we do not find both Alphæus and Clopas represented by Chalpai; but we find Alphæus rendered Chalpai, while Clopas reappears as Kleopha. And the same usage is found in the Jerusalem Syraic.

We have thus reduced the six to four or three and it is sometimes proposed to reduce the three to two, by identifying James the Lord's brother with James the son of Alphæus. But this identification is attended by difficulties so serious as to seem to be quite fatal; and it would proably never have been made but for the wish to show that "brother of the Lord" does not mean brother in the literal sense, but may mean cousin. For the identification depends upon making Mary the wife of Clopas (and mother of James the son of Alphæus) identical with the sister of Mary the mother of the Lord, in the much-discussed passage John xix. 25; so that Jesus and James would be first cousins, being sons respectively of two sisters, each of whom was called Mary.

The difficulties under which this theory labours are mainly these:—

1. It depends on an identification of Clopas with Alphæus, which is uncertain, though not improbable.

2. It depends on a further identification of Christ's "mother's sister" with "Mary the wife of Clopas" in John xix. 25, which is both uncertain and highly improbable. In that verse we almost certainly have four women, and not three, contrasted with the four soldiers just mentioned (vv. 23, 24), and arranged in two pairs: "His mother, and His mother's sister; Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

3. It assumes that two sisters were both called Mary.

4. No instance in Greek literature has been found in which "brother" (ἀδελφός) means "cousin." The Greek language has a word to express "cousin" (ἀνεψιός) which occurs Col. iv. 10; and it is to be noted that the ancient tradition preserved by Hegesippus (*cir.* A. D. 170) distinguishes James, the first overseer of the Church of Jerusalem, as the "brother of the Lord" (Eus. "H. E.," II. xxiii. 1), and his successor Symeon as the "cousin of the Lord"

(IV. xxii. 4). Could Hegesippus have written thus if James were really a cousin? If a vague term such as "kinsman" (συγγενής) was wanted, that also might have been used, as in Luke i. 36, 58; ii. 44.

5. In none of the four lists of the Apostles is there any hint that any of them are the brethren of the Lord; and in Acts i. 13, 14, and 1 Cor. ix. 5, "the brethren of the Lord" are expressly distinguished from the Apostles. Moreover, the traditions of the age subsequent to the New Testament sometimes make James the Lord's brother one of the Seventy, but never one of the Twelve, a fact which can be explained only on the hypothesis that it was notorious that he was not one of the Twelve. The reverence for this James and for the title of Apostle was such that tradition would eagerly have given him the title had there been any opening for doing so.

6. The "brethren of the Lord" appear in the Gospels almost always with the mother of the Lord (Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 32; Luke viii. 19; John ii. 12); never with Mary the wife of Clopas; and popular knowledge of them connects them with Christ's mother, and not with any other Mary (Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiii. 55). "My brethren," in Matt. xxviii. 10, and John xx. 17, does not mean Christ's earthly relations, but the children of "My Father and your Father."

7. But the strongest objection of all is St. John's express statement (vii. 5) that "even His brethren did not believe on Him;" a statement which he could not have made if one of the brethren (James), and possibly two others (Simon and Judas), were already Apostles.

The identification of James the son of Alphæus with James the Lord's brother must therefore be abandoned, and we remain with three disciples bearing the name of James from which to select the writer of this Epistle—the son of Zebedee, the son of Alphæus, and the brother of the Lord. The father of Judas, not Iscariot, need not be considered, for we do not even know that he ever became a believer.

In our ignorance of the life, and thought, and language of the son of Zebedee and the son of Alphæus, we cannot say that there is anything in the Epistle itself which forbids us to attribute it to either of them; but there is nothing in it which leads us to do so. And there are two considerations which, when combined, are strongly against Apostolic authorship. The writer does not claim to be an Apostle; and the hesitation as to the reception of the Epistle in certain parts of the Christian Church would be extraordinary if the letter were reputed to be of Apostolic authorship. When we take either of these Apostles separately we become involved in further difficulties. It is not probable that any Apostolic literature existed in the lifetime of James the son of Zebedee, who was martyred, under Herod Agrippa I., *i. e.*, not later than the spring of A. D. 44, when Herod Agrippa died. That any Apostle wrote an encyclical letter as early as A. D. 42 or 43 is so improbable that we ought to have strong evidence before adopting it, and the only evidence worth considering is that furnished by the Peshitto. The earliest MSS. of this ancient Syriac Version, which date from the fifth to the eighth century, call it an Epistle of James the Apostle; but evidence which cannot be traced higher than the fifth century respecting an improbable occurrence alleged to have taken place in the first century is not worth very much. Moreover, the scribes who put this heading and subscription to the Epistle may have meant no more than that it was by a person of Apostolic rank, or they may have shared the common Western error of identifying the brother of the Lord with the son of Alphæus. Editors of the Syriac Version in a much later age certainly do attribute the Epistle to the son of Zebedee, for they state that the three Catholic Epistles admitted to that version—James, 1 Peter, and 1 John—are by the three Apostles who witnessed the Transfiguration. The statement seems to be a blundering misinterpretation of the earlier title, which assigned it to James the Apostle. And if we attribute the letter to the son of Alphæus we get rid of one difficulty, only to fall into another; we are no longer compelled to give the Epistle so improbably early a date as A. D. 43, but we are left absolutely without any evidence to connect it with the son of Alphæus, unless we identify this Apostle with the brother of the Lord, an identification which has already been shown to be untenable.

Therefore, without further hesitation, we may assign the Epistle to one of the most striking and impressive figures in the Apostolic age, James the Just, the brother of the Lord, and the first overseer of the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

Whether James was the brother of the Lord as being the son of Joseph by a former marriage, or as being the son of Joseph and Mary born after the birth of Jesus, need not be argued in detail. All that specially concerns us, for a right understanding of the Epistle, is to remember that it was written by one who, although for some time not a believer in the Messiahship of Jesus, was, through his near relationship, constantly in His society, witnessing His acts and hearing His words. This much, however, should be noted, that there is nothing in Scripture to warn us from understanding that Joseph and Mary had other children, and that "first-born" in Luke ii. 7, and "till" in Matt. i. 25, appear to imply that they had; a supposition confirmed by contemporary belief (Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiii. 55), and by the constant attendance of these "brethren" on the mother of the Lord (Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 32; Luke viii. 19; John ii. 12); that, on the other hand, the theory which gives Joseph children older than Jesus deprives Him of His rights as the heir of Joseph and of the house of David; seems to be of apocryphal origin (Gospel according to Peter, or Book of James); and like Jerome's theory of cousinship, appears to have been invented in the interests of ascetic views and of *a priori* convictions as to the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin. The immense consensus of belief in the perpetual virginity does not begin until long after all historical evidence was lost. Tertullian appears to assume as a matter of course that the Lord's brethren are the children of Joseph and Mary, as if in his day no one had any other view ("Adv. Marc.," IV. xix.; "De Carne Christi," vii.).

According to either view, James was the son of Joseph, and almost certainly was brought up with his Divine Brother in the humble home at Nazareth. His father, as St. Matthew tells us (i. 19) was a just or righteous man, like the

parents of the Baptist (Luke i. 6), and this was the title by which James was known during his lifetime, and by which he is still constantly known. He is James "the Just" (ὁ δίκαιος). The epithet as used in Scripture of his father and others (Matt. i. 19; xxiii. 35; Luke i. 6; ii. 25; xxiii. 50; Acts x. 20; 2 Peter ii. 7), and in history of him, must not be understood as implying precisely what the Athenians meant when they styled Aristides "the Just," or what we mean by being "just" now. To a Jew the word implied not merely being impartial and upright, but also having a studied and even scrupulous reverence for everything prescribed by the Law. The Sabbath, the synagogue worship, the feasts and fasts, purification, tithes, all the moral and ceremonial ordinances of the Law of the Lord—these were the things on which the just man bestowed a loving care, and in which he preferred to do more than was required, rather than the bare minimum insisted on by the Rabbis. It was in a home of which righteousness of this kind was the characteristic that St. James was reared, and in which he became imbued with that reverent love for the Law which makes him, even more than St. Paul, to be the ideal "Hebrew of Hebrews." For him Christ came "not to destroy, but to fulfil." Christianity turns the Law of Moses into a "royal law" (ii. 8), but it does not abrogate it. The Judaism which had been his moral and spiritual atmosphere during his youth and early manhood remained with him after he had learned to see that there was no antagonism between the Law and the Gospel.

It would be part of his strict Jewish training that he should pay the prescribed visits to Jerusalem at the feasts (John vii. 10); and he would there become familiar with the magnificent liturgy of the Temple, and would lay the foundation for that love of public and private prayer within its precincts which was one of his best-known characteristics in after-life. A love of prayer, and a profound belief in its efficacy, appear again and again in the pages of his Epistle (i. 5; iv. 2, 3, 8; v. 13-18). It was out of a strong personal experience that the man who knelt in prayer until "his knees became hard like a camel's" declared that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working."

Strict Judaism has ever a tendency to narrowness, and we find this tendency in the brethren of the Lord, in their attitude both towards their Brother, and also towards Gentile converts after they had accepted Him (Gal. ii. 12). Of the long period of silence during which Jesus was preparing Himself for His ministry we know nothing. But immediately after His first miracle, which they probably witnessed, they went down with Him, and His mother, and His disciples to Capernaum (John ii. 12), and very possibly accompanied Him to Jerusalem for the Passover. They would be almost certain to go thither to keep the feast. It was there that "many believed on His Name, beholding His signs which He did. But Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men." He knew that when the immediate effect of His miracles had passed off the faith of these sudden converts would not endure. And this seems to have been the case with His brethren. They were at first attracted by His originality, and power, and holiness, then perplexed by methods which they could not understand (John vii. 3, 4), then inclined to regard Him as a dreamer and a fanatic (Mark iii. 21), and finally decided against Him (John vii. 5). Like many others among His followers, they were quite unable to reconcile His position with the traditional views respecting the Messiah; and instead of revising these views, as being possibly faulty, they held fast to them, and rejected Him. It was not merely in reference to the people of Nazareth, who had tried to kill Him (Luke iv. 29), but to those who were still closer to Him by ties of blood and home, that He uttered the sad complaint, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark vi. 4).

The fact that our Lord committed His mother to the keeping of St. John harmonises with the supposition that at the time of the Crucifixion His brethren were still unbelievers. The Resurrection would be likely to open their eyes and dispel their doubts (Acts i. 14); and a special revelation of the risen Lord seems to have been granted to St. James (1 Cor. xv. 7), as to St. Paul; in both cases because behind the external opposition to Christ there were earnest faith and devotion, which at once found their object, as soon as the obstructing darkness was removed. After his conversion, St. James speedily took the first place among the believers who constituted the original Church of Jerusalem. He takes the lead, even when the chief of the Apostles are present. It is to him that St. Peter reports himself, when he is miraculously freed from prison (Acts xii. 17). It is he who presides at the so-called Council of Jerusalem (xv. 13; see esp. ver. 19). And it is to him that St. Paul specially turns on his last visit to Jerusalem, to report his success among the Gentiles (xxi. 17). St. Paul places him before St. Peter and St. John in mentioning those "who were reputed to be pillars" of the Church (Gal. ii. 9), and states that on his first visit to Jerusalem after his own conversion he stayed fifteen days with Peter, but saw no other of the Apostles, excepting James, the Lord's brother (Gal. i. 18, 19); a passage of disputed meaning, but which, if it does not imply that James was in some sense an Apostle, at least suggests that he was a person of equal importance. (Comp. Acts ix. 26-30). Moreover, we find that at Antioch St. Peter himself allowed his attitude towards the Gentiles to be changed in deference to the representations of "certain that came from James," who had possibly misunderstood or misused their commission; but the narrowness already alluded to may have made St. James himself unable to move as rapidly as St. Peter and St. Paul in adopting a generous course with Gentile converts.

Unless there is a reference to St. James in Heb. xiii. 7, as among those who had once "had the lead over you," but are now no longer alive to speak the word, we must go outside the New Testament for further notices of him. They are to be found chiefly in Clement of Alexandria, Hegesippus, and Josephus. Clement ("Hypotyp.," VI. *ap.* Eus. "H. E.," II. i. 3) records a tradition that Peter, James, and John, after the Ascension of the Saviour, although they had been preferred by the Lord, did not contend for distinction, but that James the Just became Bishop of Jerusalem. And again ("Hypotyp.," VII.), "To James the Just,

John, and Peter, the Lord, after the Resurrection, imparted the gift of knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν); these imparted it to the rest of the Apostles, and the rest of the Apostles to the Seventy, of whom Barnabas was one. Now, there have been two Jameses—one the Just, who was thrown from the gable [of the Temple], and beaten to death by a fuller with a club, and another who was beheaded." The narrative of Hegesippus is also preserved for us by Eusebius ("H. E.," II. xxiii. 4-18). It is manifestly legendary, and possibly comes from the Essene Ebionites, who appear to have been fond of religious romances. It is sometimes accepted as historical, as by Clement in the passage just quoted; but its internal improbabilities and its divergencies from Josephus condemn it. It may, however, contain some historical touches, especially in the general sketch of St. James; just as the legends about our own King Alfred, although untrustworthy as to facts, nevertheless convey a true idea of the saintly and scholarly king. It runs thus: "There succeeds to the charge of the Church, James, the brother of the Lord, in conjunction with the Apostles, the one who has been named Just by all, from the time of our Lord to our own time, for there were many called James. Now, he was holy from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor strong drink; nor did he eat animal food. No razor ever came upon his head; he anointed not himself with oil; and he did not indulge in bathing. To him alone was it lawful to go into the Holy Place; for he wore no wool, but linen. And he would go into the Temple alone, and would be found there kneeling on his knees and asking forgiveness for the people, so that his knees became dry and hard as a camel's, because he was always on his knees worshipping God and asking forgiveness for the people. On account, therefore, of his exceeding justness, he was called Just and Oblias, which is in Greek 'bulwark of the people' and 'justness,' as the prophets show concerning him. Some, then, of the seven sects among the people, which have been mentioned before by me in the 'Memoirs,' asked him, What is the Door of Jesus? And he said that He was the Saviour. From which some believed Jesus is the Christ. But the sects aforesaid did not believe, either in the Resurrection or in One coming to recompense to each man according to his works. But as many as believed did so through James. When many, therefore, even of the rulers were believing, there was a tumult of the Jews and scribes and Pharisees, who said, It looks as if all the people would be expecting Jesus as the Christ. They came together, therefore, and said to James, We pray thee, restrain the people, for it has been led astray after Jesus, as though He were the Christ. We pray thee to persuade all that come to the day of the Passover concerning Jesus; for to thee we all give heed. For we bear witness to thee, and so do all the people, that thou art just, and acceptest not the person of any. Do thou, therefore, persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus; for all the people and all of us give heed to thee. Stand, therefore, upon the gable of the Temple, that thou mayest be visible to those below, and that thy words may be readily heard by all the people. For on account of the Passover there have come together all the tribes, with the Gentiles also. Therefore the aforesaid scribes and Pharisees placed James upon the gable of the Temple, and cried to him and said, O just one, to whom we ought all to give heed, seeing that the people is being led astray after Jesus, who was crucified, tell us what is the Door of Jesus. And he answered with a loud voice, Why ask ye me concerning Jesus the Son of man? Even He sitteth in heaven, at the right of the Mighty Power, and He is to come on the clouds of heaven. And when many were convinced, and gave glory on the witness of James, and said, Hosannah to the Son of David, then again the same scribes and Pharisees said unto one another, We have done ill in furnishing such witness to Jesus. But let us go up and cast him down, that they may be terrified, and not believe him. And they cried out, saying, Oh! oh! even the Just has been led astray. And they fulfilled the Scripture, which is written in Isaiah, Let us take away the Just One, for he is troublesome to us; therefore shall they eat the fruit of their deeds. So they went up, and cast down the Just, and said to one another, Let us stone James the Just. And they began to stone him, seeing that he was not dead from the fall, but turning round, knelt, and said, I pray Thee, Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But whilst they were thus stoning him, one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, son of Rechabim, to whom Jeremiah the prophet bears testimony, cried, saying, Stop! what are ye doing? The Just One is praying for you. And one of them, one of the fullers, took the club with which clothes are pressed, and brought it down on the head of the Just One. And in this way he bore witness. And they buried him on the spot by the Temple, and his monument still remains by the Temple. This man has become a true witness, to both Jews and Gentiles, that Jesus is the Christ. And straightway Vespasian lays siege to them." That is, Hegesippus regards the attack of the Romans as a speedy judgment on the Jews for the murder of James the Just, and consequently places it A. D. 69. This is probably several years too late. Josephus places it A. D. 62 or 63. His account is as follows:—

"Now, the younger Ananus, whom we stated to have succeeded to the high-priesthood, was precipitate in temper and exceedingly audacious, and he followed the sect of the Sadducees, who are very harsh in judging offenders, beyond all other Jews, as we have already shown. Ananus, therefore, as being a person of this character, and thinking that he had a suitable opportunity, through Festus being dead, and Albinus still on his journey (to Judea), assembles a Sanhedrin of judges; and he brought before it the brother of Jesus who was called Christ (his name was James) and some others, and delivered them to be stoned, on a charge of being transgressors of the law. But as many as seemed to be most equitable among those in the city, and scrupulous as to all that concerned the laws, were grievously affected by this; and they send to the king [Herod Agrippa II.], secretly praying him to order Ananus to act in such a way no more; for that not even his first action was lawfully done. And some of them go to meet Albinus on his journey from Alexandria, and inform him that Ananus had no authority to assemble a Sanhedrin without his leave. And Albinus, being convinced by what

they said, wrote in anger to Ananus, threatening to punish him for this. And for this reason King Agrippa took away the high-priesthood from him after he had been in office three months, and conferred it upon Jesus the son of Damnæus" ("Ant.," XX. ix. 1).

This account by Josephus contains no improbabilities, and should be preferred to that of Hegesippus. It has been suspected of Christian interpolation, because of the reference to Jesus Christ, whom Josephus persistently ignores in his writings. But a Christian who took the trouble to garble the narrative at all would probably have done so to more purpose, both as regards Jesus and James. In any case Hegesippus and Josephus agree in confirming the impression produced by the New Testament, that James the Just was a person held in the greatest respect by all in Jerusalem, whether Jews or Christians, and one who exercised great influence in the East over the whole Jewish race. We shall find that this fact harmonises well with the phenomena of the Epistle, and it leads directly to the next question which calls upon us for discussion.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSONS ADDRESSED IN THE EPISTLE: THE JEWS OF THE DISPERSION.

"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting."
—JAMES i. 2.

THESE words appear to be both simple and plain. At first sight there would seem to be not much room for any serious difference of opinion as to their meaning. The writer of the letter writes as "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ," *i. e.*, as a Christian, "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," *i. e.*, to the Jews who are living away from Palestine. Almost the only point which seems to be open to doubt is whether he addresses himself to all Jews, believing and unbelieving, or, as one might presume from his proclaiming himself at the outset to be a Christian, only to those of his fellow-countrymen who, like himself, have become "servants of the Lord Jesus Christ." And this is a question which cannot be determined without a careful examination of the contents of the Epistle.

And yet there has been very great difference of opinion as to the persons whom St. James had in his mind when he wrote these words. There is not only the triplet of opinions which easily grow out of the question just indicated, viz., that the letter is addressed to believing Jews only, to unbelieving Jews only, and to both: there are also the views of those who hold that it is addressed to Jewish and Gentile Christians regarded separately, or to the same regarded as one body, or to Jewish Christians primarily, with references to Gentile Christians and unconverted Jews, or finally to Gentile Christians primarily, seeing that they, since the rejection of Jesus by the Jews, are the true sons of Abraham and the rightful inheritors of the privileges of the twelve tribes.

In such a Babel of interpretations it will clear the ground somewhat if we adopt once more * as a guiding principle the common-sense canon of interpretation laid down by Hooker ("Eccles. Pol.," V. lix. 2), that "where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst. A literal construction of the expression "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion" will not only stand, but make excellent sense. Had St. James meant to address all Christians, regarded in their position as exiles from their heavenly home, he would have found some much plainer way of expressing himself. There is nothing improbable, but something quite the reverse, in the supposition that the first overseer of the Church of Jerusalem, who, as we have seen, was "a Hebrew of Hebrews," wrote a letter to those of His fellow-countrymen who were far removed from personal intercourse with him. So devoted a Jew, so devout a Christian, as we know him to have been, could not but take the most intense interest in all who were of Jewish blood, wherever they might dwell, especially such as had learned to believe in Christ, above all when he knew that they were suffering from habitual oppression and ill-treatment. We may without hesitation decide that when St. James says "the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" he means Jews away from their home in Palestine, and not Christians away from their home in heaven. For what possible point would the Dispersion (*ἡ διασπορά*) have in such a metaphor? Separation from the heavenly home might be spoken of as banishment, or exile, or homelessness, but not as "dispersion." Even if we confined ourselves to the opening words we might safely adopt this conclusion, but we shall find that there are numerous features in the letter itself which abundantly confirm it.

It is quite out of place to quote such passages as the sealing of "the hundred and forty and four thousand . . . out of every tribe of the children of Israel" (Rev. vii. 4-8), or the city with "twelve gates, . . . and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Rev. xxi. 12). These occur in a book which is symbolical from the first chapter to the last, and therefore we know that the literal construction cannot stand. The question throughout is not whether a given passage is to be taken literally or symbolically, but what the passage in question symbolises. Nor, again, can St. Peter's declaration that "ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. ii. 9), be considered as at all parallel. There the combination of expressions plainly shows that the language is figurative; and there is no real analogy between an impassioned exhortation, modelled on the addresses of the Hebrew prophets, and the matter-of-fact opening words of a letter. The words have the clear ring of nationality, and there is nothing whatever added to them to turn the simple note into the complex sound of a doubtful metaphor. As Davidson justly remarks, "The use of the phrase twelve tribes is inexplicable if the writer intended all believers without distinction. The author makes no allusion to Gentile converts, nor to the relation between Jew and Gentile incorporated into one spiritual body."

Let us look at some of the features which characterise the Epistle itself, and see whether they bear out the view which is here advocated, that the persons addressed are Israelites in the

* See "The Pastoral Epistles," p. 455, this volume.

national sense, and not as having been admitted into the spiritual "Israel of God" (Gal. vi. 16).

(1) The writer speaks of Abraham as "our father," without a hint that this is to be understood in any but the literal sense. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar?" (ii. 21). St. Paul, when he speaks of Abraham as "the father of all them that believe," clearly indicates this (Rom. iv. 11). (2) The writer speaks of his readers as worshipping in a "synagogue" (ii. 2), which may possibly mean that, just as St. James and the Apostles continued to attend the Temple services after the Ascension, so their readers are supposed to attend the synagogue services after their conversion. But at least it shows that the writer, in speaking of the public worship of those whom he addresses, naturally uses a word (*συναγωγή*) which had then, and continues to have, specially Jewish associations, rather than one (*ἐκκλησία*) which from the first beginnings of Christianity was promoted from its old political sphere to indicate the congregations, and even the very being, of the Christian Church. (3) He assumes that his writers are familiar not only with the life of Abraham (ii. 21, 23), but of Rahab (25), the prophets (v. 10), Job (11), and Elijah (17). These frequent appeals to the details of the Old Testament would be quite out of place in a letter addressed to Gentile converts. (4) God is spoken of under the specially Hebrew title of "the lord of Sabaoth" (v. 4); and the frequent recurrence of "the Lord" throughout the Epistle (i. 7; iii. 9; iv. 10, 15; v. 10, 11, 15) looks like the language of one who wished to recall the name Jehovah to his readers. (5) In discountenancing swearing (v. 12) Jewish forms of oaths are taken as illustrations. (6) The vices which are condemned are such as were as common among the Jews as among the Gentiles—reckless language, rash swearing, oppression of the poor, covetousness. There is little or nothing said about the gross immorality which was rare among the Jews, but was almost a matter of course among the Gentiles. St. James denounces faults into which Jewish converts would be likely enough to lapse; he says nothing about the vices respecting which heathen converts, such as those at Corinth, are constantly warned by St. Paul. (7) But what is perhaps the most decisive feature of all is that he assumes throughout that for those whom he addresses the Mosaic Law is a binding and final authority. "If ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. . . . If thou dost not commit adultery, but killest, thou art become a transgressor of the law" (ii. 9-11). "He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth his brother, speaketh against the law and judgeth the law" (iv. 11).

Scarcely any of these seven points, taken singly, would be at all decisive; but when we sum them up together, remembering in how short a letter they occur, and when we add them to the very plain and simple language of the address, we have an argument which will carry conviction to most persons who have no preconceived theory of their own to defend. And to this positive evidence derived from the presence of so much material that indicates Jewish circles as the destined recipients of the letter, we must add the strongly confirmatory negative evidence derived from the absence of anything which specially points either to Gentile converts or unconverted heathen. We may therefore read the letter as having been written by one who had been born and educated in a thoroughly Jewish atmosphere, who had accepted the Gospel, not as cancelling the Law, but as raising it to a higher power; and we may read it also as addressed to men who, like the writer, are by birth and education Jews, and, like him, have acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and the Christ. The difference between writer and readers lies in this, that he is in Palestine, and they not; that he appears to be in a position of authority, whereas they seem for the most part to be a humble and suffering folk. All which fits in admirably with the hypothesis that we have before us an Epistle written by the austere and Judaic-minded James the Just, written from Jerusalem, to comfort and warn those Jewish Christians who lay remote from his personal influence.

That it is Jewish Christians, and not unbelieving Jews, or Jews whether believing or not, who are addressed, is not open to serious doubt. There is not only the fact that St. James at the outset proclaims himself to be a Christian (i. 1), but also the statement that the wealthy oppressors of his poor readers "blaspheme the honourable Name by which ye are called," or more literally "which was called upon you," viz., the Name of Christ. Again, the famous paragraph about faith and works assumes that the faith of the readers and the faith of the writer is identical (ii. 7, 14-20). Once more, he expressly claims them as believers when he writes, "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons" (ii. 1). And if more be required, we have it in the concluding exhortations: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. . . . Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (v. 7, 8).

Whether or no there are passages which glance aside at unbelieving Jews, and perhaps even some which are directly addressed to them, cannot be decided with so much certainty; but the balance of probability appears to be on the affirmative side in both cases. There probably are places in which St. James is thinking of unbelieving Israelites, and one or more passages in which he turns aside and sternly rebukes them, much in the same way as the Old Testament prophets sometimes turn aside to upbraid Tyre and Sidon and the heathen generally. "Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats?" (ii. 6), seems to refer to rich unconverted Jews prosecuting their poor Christian brethren before the synagogue courts, just as St. Paul did when he was Saul the persecutor (Acts ix. 2). And "Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which ye are called?" can scarcely be said of Christians. If the blasphemers were Christians they would be said rather to blaspheme the honourable Name by which they themselves were called. There would lie the enormity—that the name of Jesus Christ had been "called upon them," and yet they blasphemed it. And when we come to look at the matter in detail we shall find reason for believing that the stern words at the beginning of chap. v. are addressed to unbelieving Jews. There is not one word of Christian, or even moral, exhortation in it; it consists en-

tirely of accusation and threatening, and in this respect is in marked contrast to the equally stern words at the beginning of chap. iv., which are addressed to worldly and godless Christians.

To suppose that the rich oppressors so often alluded to in the Epistle are heathen, as Hilgenfeld does, confuses the whole picture, and brings no compensating advantage. The heathen among whom the Jews of the Dispersion dwelt in Syria, Egypt, Rome, and elsewhere, were of course, some of them rich, and some of them poor. But wealthy Pagans were not more apt to persecute Jews, whether Christians or not, than the needy Pagan populace. If there was any difference between heathen rich and poor in this matter, it was the fanatical and plunder-seeking mob, rather than the contemptuous and easy-going rich, who were likely to begin a persecution of the Jews, just as in Russia or Germany at the present time. And St. James would not be likely to talk of "the Lord of Sabaoth" (v. 4) in addressing wealthy Pagans. But the social antagonism so often alluded to in the Epistle, when interpreted to mean an antagonism between Jew and Jew, corresponds to a state of society which is known to have existed in Palestine and the neighbouring countries during the half-century which preceded the Jewish war of A. D. 66-70. (Comp. Matt. xi. 5; xix. 23, 24; Luke i. 53; vi. 20, 24; xvi. 19, 20.) During that period the wealthy Jews allied themselves with the Romans, in order more securely to oppress their poorer fellow-countrymen. And seeing that the Gospel in the first instance spread chiefly among the poor, this social antagonism between rich and poor Jews frequently became an antagonism between unbelieving and believing Jews. St. James, well aware of this state of things, from personal experience in Judea, and hearing similar things of the Jews of the Dispersion in Syria, reasonably supposes that this unnatural tyranny of Jew over Jew prevails elsewhere also, and addresses all "the twelve tribes which are of the Diaspora" on the subject. In any case his opportunities of knowing a very great deal respecting Jews in various parts of the world were large. Jews from all regions were constantly visiting Jerusalem. But the knowledge which he must have had respecting the condition of things in Palestine and Syria would be quite sufficient to explain what is said in this Epistle respecting the tyranny of the rich over the poor.

The Diaspora, or Dispersion of the Jews throughout the inhabited world, had been brought about in various ways, and had continued through many centuries. The two chief causes were forcible deportation and voluntary emigration. It was a common policy of Oriental conquerors to transport whole populations, in order more completely to subjugate them; and hence the Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors of Israel carried away great multitudes of Jews to the East, sending Eastern populations to take their place. Pompey on a much smaller scale transported Jewish captives to the West, carrying hundreds of Jews to Rome. But disturbances in Palestine, and opportunities of trade elsewhere, induced large multitudes of Jews to emigrate of their own accord, especially to the neighbouring countries of Egypt and Syria; and the great commercial centres in Asia Minor, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Miletus, Pergamus, Cyprus, and Rhodes contained large numbers of Jews. While Palestine was the battle-field of foreign armies, and while newly founded towns were trying to attract population by offering privileges to settlers, thousands of Jews preferred the advantages of a secure home in exile to the risks which attended residence in their native country.

At the time when this Epistle was written three chief divisions of the Dispersion were recognised—the Babylonian, which ranked as the first, the Syrian, and the Egyptian. But the Diaspora was by no means confined to these three centres. About two hundred years before this time the composer of one of the so-called Sibylline Oracles could address the Jewish nation, and say, "But every land is full of thee,—aye and every ocean." And there is abundance of evidence, both in the Bible and outside it, especially in Josephus and Philo, that such language does not go beyond the limits of justifiable hyperbole. The list of peoples represented at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, "from every nation under heaven," tells one a great deal (Acts ii. 5-11. Comp. xv. 21, and 1 Macc. xv. 15-24). Many passages from Josephus might be quoted ("Ant.," XI. v. 2; XIV. vii. 2; "Bell. Jud.," II. xvi. 4; VII. iii. 3), as stating in general terms the same fact. But perhaps no original authority gives us more information than Philo, in his famous treatise "On the Embassy to the Emperor Caius," which went to Rome (*cir.* A. D. 40) to obtain the revocation of a decree requiring the Jews to pay divine homage to the Emperor's statue. In that treatise we read that "Jerusalem is the metropolis, not of the single country of Judea, but of most countries, because of the colonies which she has sent out, as opportunity offered, into the neighbouring lands of Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, and Cœlesyria, and the more distant lands of Pamphylia and Cilicia, most of Asia, as far as Bithynia and the utmost corners of Pontus; likewise unto Europe, Thessaly, Bœotia, Macedonia, Ætolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth, with the most parts and best parts of Greece. And not only are the continents full of Jewish colonies, but also the most notable of the islands—Eubœa, Cyprus, Crete—to say nothing of the lands beyond the Euphrates. For all, excepting a small part of Babylon and those satrapies which contain the excellent land around it, contain Jewish inhabitants. So that if my country were to obtain a share in thy clemency it would not be one city that would be benefited, but ten thousand others, situated in every part of the inhabited world—Europe, Asia, Libya, continental and insular, maritime and inland" ("De Legat. ad Caium," xxxvi., Gelen., pp. 1031-32). It was therefore an enormous circle of readers that St. James addressed when he wrote "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion," although it seems to have been a long time before his letter became known to the most important of the divisions of the Diaspora, viz., the Jewish settlement in Egypt, which had its chief centre in Alexandria. We may reasonably suppose that it was the Syrian division which he had chiefly in view in writing, and it was to them, no doubt, that the letter in the first instance was sent. It is of this division that Josephus writes that, widely dispersed as the Jewish race is over the whole of the inhabited world, it is most largely

mingled with Syria on account of its proximity, and especially in Antioch, where the kings since Antiochus had afforded them undisturbed tranquillity and equal privileges with the heathen; so that they multiplied exceedingly, and made many proselytes ("Bell. Jud.," VII. iii. 3).

The enormous significance of the Dispersion as a preparation for Christianity must not be overlooked. It showed to both Jew and Gentile alike that the barriers which had hedged in and isolated the hermit nation had broken down, and that what had ceased to be thus isolated had changed its character. A kingdom had become a religion. What henceforth distinguished the Jews in the eyes of all the world was not their country or their government, but their creed, and through this they exercised upon those among whom they were scattered an influence which had been impossible under the old conditions of exclusiveness. They themselves also were forced to understand their own religion better. When the keeping of the letter of the Law became an impossibility, they were compelled to penetrate into its spirit; and what they exhibited to the heathen was not a mere code of burdensome rites and ceremonies, but a moral life and a worship in spirit and truth. The universality of the services of the synagogue taught the Jew that God's worship was not confined to Jerusalem, and their simplicity attracted proselytes who might have turned away from the complex and bloody liturgies of the Temple. Even in matters of detail the services in the synagogue prepared the way for the services of the Christian Church. The regular lessons—read from two divisions of Scripture, the antiphonal singing, the turning towards the east, the general Amen of the whole congregation, the observance of the third, sixth, and ninth hours as hours of prayer, and of one day in seven as specially holy—all these things, together with some others which have since become obsolete, meet us in the synagogue worship, as St. James knew it, and in the liturgies of the Christian Church, which he and the Apostles and their successors helped to frame. Thus justice once more became mercy, and a punishment was turned into a blessing. The captivity of the Jew became the freedom of both Jew and Gentile, and the scattering of Israel was the gathering in of all nations unto God. "He hath scattered abroad; He hath given to the poor: His righteousness abideth for ever" (Ps. cxii. 9; 2 Cor. ix. 9).

CHAPTER V.

THE RELATION OF THIS EPISTLE TO THE WRITINGS OF ST. PAUL AND OF ST. PETER—THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE—THE DOCTRINE OF JOY IN TEMPTATION.

JAMES i. 2-4.

THIS passage at once raises the question of the relation of this Epistle to other writings in the New Testament. Did the writer of it know any of the writings of St. Paul or of St. Peter? It is contended in some quarters that the similarity of thought and expression in several passages is so great as to prove such knowledge, and it is argued that such knowledge tells against the genuineness of the Epistle. In any case the question of the date of the Epistle is involved in its relation to these other documents; it was written after them, if it can be established that the author of it was acquainted with them.

With Dr. Salmon we may dismiss the coincidences which have been pointed out by Davidson and others between expressions in this Epistle and the Epistles to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Philippians. Some critics seem to forget that a large number of words and phrases were part of the common language, not merely of Jews and early Christians, but of those who were in the habit of mixing much with such persons. We can no more argue from such phrases as "be not deceived" (1 Cor. vi. 9; xv. 33; Gal. vi. 7, and James i. 16), "but some one will say" (1 Cor. xv. 35, and James ii. 18), "a transgressor of the law" (Rom. ii. 25, 27, and James ii. 11), "fruit of righteousness" (Phil. i. 11, and James iii. 18), or from such words as "entire" (1 Thess. v. 23, and James i. 4), "transgressor" used absolutely (Gal. ii. 18, and James ii. 9), and the like, that when they occur in two writings the author of one must have read the other, than we can argue from such phrases as "natural selection," "survival of the fittest," and the like that the writer who uses them has read the works of Darwin. A certain amount of stereotyped phraseology is part of the intellectual atmosphere of each generation, and the writers in each generation make common use of it. In such cases even striking identity of expressions may prove nothing as to the dependence of one author upon another. The obligation is not of one writer to another, but of both to a common and indefinite source. In other words, both writers quite naturally make use of language which is current in the circles in which they live.

Some of the coincidences between the Epistle of James and the Epistle to the Romans are of a character to raise the question whether they can satisfactorily be explained by considerations of this kind, and one of these more remarkable coincidences occurs in the passage before us. St. James writes, "Knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience." St. Paul writes, "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation" (Rom. v. 3). In this same chapter we have another instance. St. James says, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (i. 22). St. Paul says, "Not the hearers of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13). There is yet a third such parallel. St. James asks, "Whence come fightings? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures which war in your members?" (iv. 1). St. Paul laments, "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. vii. 23).

The effect of this evidence will be different upon different minds. But it may reasonably be doubted whether these passages, even when summed up together, are stronger than many other strange coincidences in literature, which are known to be accidental. The second instance, taken by itself, is of little weight; for the contrast between hearers and doers is one of the most hackneyed commonplaces of rhetoric. But assuming that a *prima facie* case has been established, and that one of the two writers

has seen the Epistle of the other, no difficulty is created, whichever we assume to have written first. The Epistle to the Romans was written in A. D. 58, and might easily have become known to St. James before A. D. 62. On the other hand, the Epistle of St. James may be placed anywhere between A. D. 45 and 62, and in that case might easily have become known to St. Paul before A. D. 58. And of the two alternatives, this latter is perhaps the more probable. We shall find other reasons for placing the Epistle of St. James earlier than A. D. 58; and we may reasonably suppose that had he read the Epistle to the Romans, he would have expressed his meaning respecting justification somewhat differently. Had he wished (as some erroneously suppose) to oppose and correct the teaching of St. Paul, he would have done so much more unmistakably. And as he is really quite in harmony with St. Paul on the question, he would, if he had read him, have avoided words which look like a contradiction of St. Paul's words.

It remains to examine the relations between our Epistle and the First Epistle of St. Peter. Here, again, one of the coincidences occurs in the passage before us. St. James writes, "Count it all joy, when ye enter into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience;" and St. Peter writes, "Ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold temptations, that the proof of your faith . . . might be found" (1 Peter i. 6, 7). Here there is the thought of rejoicing in trials common to both passages, and the expressions for "manifold temptations" and "proof of your patience" are identical in the two places. This is remarkable, especially when taken with other coincidences. On the other hand, the fact that some of the language is common to all three Epistles (James, Peter, and Romans) suggests the possibility that we have here one of the "faithful sayings" of primitive Christianity, rather than one or two writers remembering the writings of a predecessor.

In three places St. James and St. Peter both quote the same passages from the Old Testament. In i. 10, 11 St. James has, "*As the flower of the grass* he shall pass away. For the sun ariseth with the scorching wind, and *withereth the grass; and the flower* thereof *falleth*," where the words in italics are from Isa. xl. 6-8. St. Peter (i. 24) quotes the words of Isaiah much more completely and consecutively, and in their original sense; he does not merely make a free use of portions of them. Again, in iv. 6 St. James quotes from Prov. iii. 34, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." In v. 5 St. Peter quotes exactly the same words. Lastly, in v. 20 St. James quotes from Prov. x. 12 the expression "covereth sins:" In iv. 8 St. Peter quotes a word more of the original, "love covereth sins." And it will be observed that both St. James and St. Peter change "covereth all sins" into "covereth a multitude of sins."

Once more we must be content to give a verdict of "Not proven." There is a certain amount of probability, but nothing that amounts to proof, that one of these writers had seen the other's Epistle. Let us, however, assume that echoes of one Epistle are found in the other; then, whichever letter we put first, we have no chronological difficulty. The probable dates of death are, for St. James A. D. 62, for St. Peter A. D. 64-68. Either Epistle may be placed in the six or seven years immediately preceding A. D. 62, and one of the most recent critics places 1 Peter in the middle of the year A. D. 50, and the Epistle of James any time after that date. But there are good reasons for believing that 1 Peter contains references to the persecution under Nero, that "fiery trial" (iv. 12) in which the mere being a Christian would lead to penal consequences (iv. 16), and in which, for conscience' sake, men would have to "endure griefs, suffering wrongfully" (ii. 19), thereby being "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (iv. 13). In which case 1 Peter cannot be placed earlier than A. D. 64, and the Epistle of James must be the earlier of the two. And it seems to be chiefly those who would make our Epistle a forgery of the second century (Brückner, Holtzmann) who consider that it is James that echoes 1 Peter, rather than 1 Peter that reproduces James. There is a powerful consensus of opinion that if there is any influence of one writer upon the other, it is St. James who influences St. Peter, and not the other way.

We must not place the Epistle of St. James in or close after A. D. 50. The crisis respecting the treatment of Gentile converts was then at its height (Acts xv.); and it would be extraordinary if a letter written in the midst of the crisis, and by the person who took the leading part in dealing with it, should contain no allusion to it. The Epistle must be placed either before (A. D. 45-49) or some time after (A. D. 53-62) the so-called Council of Jerusalem. There is reason for believing that the controversy about compelling Gentiles to observe the Mosaic Law, although sharp and critical, was not very lasting. The *modus vivendi* decreed by the Apostles was on the whole loyally accepted, and therefore a letter written a few years after it was promulgated would not of necessity take any notice of it. Indeed, to have revived the question again might have been impolitic, as implying either that there was still some doubt on the point, or that the Apostolic decision had proved futile.

In deciding between the two periods (A. D. 45-49 and 53-62) for the date of the Epistle of St. James, we have not much to guide us if we adopt the view that it is independent of the writings of St. Peter and of St. Paul. There is plenty in the letter to lead us to suppose that it was written before the war (A. D. 66-70) which put an end to the tyranny of the wealthy Sadducees over their poorer brethren, before controversies between Jewish and Gentile Christians such as we find at Corinth had arisen or become chronic, and before doctrinal controversies had sprung up in the Church; also that it was written at a time when the coming of Christ to judgment was still regarded as near at hand (v. 8), and by some one who could recollect the words of Christ independently of the Gospels, and who therefore must have stood in close relationship to Him. All this points to its having been written within the lifetime of James the Lord's brother, and by such a person as he was; but it does not seem to be decisive as to the difference between *cir.* A. D. 49 and *cir.* A. D. 59. We must be content to leave this undecided. But it is worth while pointing out that if we place it earlier than A. D. 52 we make it

the earliest book in the New Testament. The First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written late in A. D. 52 or early in 53; and excepting our Epistle, and perhaps 1 Peter, there is no other writing in the New Testament that can reasonably be placed at so early a date as 52.

"Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations." "My brethren," with or without the epithet "beloved," is the regular form of address throughout the Epistle (i. 16, 19; ii. 1, 5, 14; iii. 1, 10, 12; v. 12), in one or two places the "my" being omitted (iv. 11; v. 7, 9, 19). The frequency of this brotherly address seems to indicate how strongly the writer feels, and wishes his readers to feel, the ties of race and of faith which bind them together.

In "Count it all joy," *i. e.*, "Consider it as nothing but matter for rejoicing," we miss a linguistic touch which is evident in the Greek, but cannot well be preserved in English. In saying "joy" (χάραν) St. James is apparently carrying on the idea just started in the address, "greeting" (χαίρειν), *i. e.*, "wishing joy." "I wish you joy; and you must account as pure joy all the troubles into which you may fall." This carrying on a word or thought from one sentence into the next is characteristic of St. James, and reminds us somewhat of the style of St. John. Thus "The proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work" (i. 3, 4). "Lacking in nothing. But if any of you lacketh wisdom" (4, 5). "Nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea" (6). "The lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death" (15). "Slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (19, 20). "This man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this" (26, 27). "In many things we all stumble. If any man stumbleth not in word" (iii. 2). "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire" (iii. 5, 6). "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not" (iv. 2, 3). "Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you" (v. 3). "We call them blessed which endured: ye have heard of the endurance of Job" (v. 11).

It is just possible that "all joy" (πᾶσαν χάραν) is meant exactly to balance "manifold temptations" (πειρασμοῖς ποικίλοις). Great diversity of troubles is to be considered as in reality every kind of joy. Nevertheless, the troubles are not to be of our own making or seeking. It is not when we inflict suffering on ourselves, but when we "fall into" it, and therefore may regard it as placed in our way by God, that we are to look upon it as a source of joy rather than of sorrow. The word for "fall into" (περιπίπτειν) implies not only that what one falls into is unwelcome, but also that it is unsought and unexpected. Moreover, it implies that this unforeseen misfortune is large enough to encircle or overwhelm one. It indicates a serious calamity. The word for "temptations" in this passage is the same as is used in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer; but the word is not used in the same sense in both places. In the Lord's Prayer all kinds of temptation are included, and especially the internal solicitations of the devil, as is shown by the next petition: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the tempter." In the passage before us internal temptations, if not actually excluded, are certainly quite in the background. What St. James has principally in his mind are external trials, such as poverty of intellect (ver. 5), or of substance (ver. 9), or persecution (ii. 6, 7), and the like; those worldly troubles which test our faith, loyalty, and obedience, and tempt us to abandon our trust in God, and to cease to strive to please Him. The trials by which Satan was allowed to tempt Job are the kind of temptations to be understood here. They are material for spiritual joy, because (1) they are opportunities for practising virtue, which cannot be learned without practice, nor practised without opportunities; (2) they teach us that we have here no abiding city, for a world in which such things are possible cannot be a lasting home; (3) they make us more Christlike; (4) we have the assurance of Divine support, and that no more will ever be laid upon us than we, relying upon that support, can bear; (5) we have the assurance of abundant compensation here and hereafter.

St. James here is only echoing the teaching of his Brother: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v. 11, 12). In the first days after Pentecost he had seen the Apostles acting in the very spirit which he here enjoins, and he had himself very probably taken part in doing so, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name" (Acts v. 41. Comp. iv. 23-30). And as we have already seen in comparing the parallel passages, St. Peter (1 Peter i. 6) and St. Paul (Rom. v. 3) teach the same doctrine of rejoicing in tribulation.

As St. Augustine long ago pointed out, in his letter to Anastasius ("Ep.," cxlv. 7, 8), and Hooker also ("Eccl. Pol.," V. xlviii. 13), there is no inconsistency in teaching such doctrine, and yet praying, "Lead us not into temptation." Not only is there no sin in shrinking from both external trials and internal temptations, or in desiring to be freed from such things; but such is the weakness of the human will, that it is only reasonable humility to pray to God not to allow us to be subjected to severe trials. Nevertheless, when God, in His wisdom, has permitted such things to come upon us, the right course is, not to be cast down and sorrowful, as though something quite intolerable had overtaken us, but to rejoice that God has thought us capable of enduring something for His sake, and has given us the opportunity of strengthening our patience and our trust in Him.

This doctrine of joy in suffering, which at first sight seems to be almost superhuman, is shown by experience to be less hard than the apparently more human doctrine of resignation and fortitude. The effort to be resigned, and to suffer without complaining, is not a very inspiriting effort. Its tendency is towards depression. It does not lift us out of ourselves or above our tribulations. On the contrary, it leads rather to self-contemplation and a brooding over miseries. Between mere resignation and thankful joy there is all the difference that there is between mere obedience and affectionate trust.

The one is submission; the other is love. It is in the long run easier to rejoice in tribulation, and be thankful for it, than to be merely resigned and submit patiently. And therefore this "hard saying" is really a merciful one, for it teaches us to endure trials in the spirit that will make us feel them least. It is not only "a good thing to sing praises unto our God;" it is also "a joyful and pleasant thing to be thankful" (Ps. cxlvii. 1).

And here it may be noticed that St. James is no Cynic or Stoic. He does not tell us that we are to anticipate misfortune, and cut ourselves off from all those things the loss of which might involve suffering; or that we are to trample on our feelings, and act as if we had none, treating sufferings as if they were non-existent, or as if they in no way affected us. He does not teach us that as Christians we live in an atmosphere in which excruciating pain, whether of body or mind, is a matter of pure indifference, and that such emotions as fear or grief under the influence of adversity, and hope or joy under the influence of prosperity, are utterly unworthy and contemptible. There is not a hint of anything of the kind. He points out to us that temptations, and especially external trials, are really blessings, if we use them aright; and he teaches us to meet them in that conviction. And it is manifest that the spirit in which to welcome a blessing is the spirit of joy and thankfulness.

St. James does not bid us accept this doctrine of joy in tribulation upon his personal authority. It is no philosopher's *ipse dixit*. He appeals to his readers' own experience: "Knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience." "Knowing" (γινώσκοντες) *i. e.*, "in that ye are continually finding out and getting to know." The verb and the tense indicate progressive and continuous knowledge, as by the experience of daily life; and this teaches us that proving and testing not only bring to light, but bring into existence, patience. This patience (ὑπομονή) this abiding firm under attack or pressure, must be allowed full scope to regulate all our conduct; and then we shall see why trials are a matter for joy rather than sorrow, when we find ourselves moving onwards towards, not the barrenness of stoical "self-sufficiency" (αὐτάρκεια), but the fulness of Divine perfection. "That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing," is perhaps one of the many reminiscences of Christ's words which we shall find in this letter of the Lord's brother. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48).

CHAPTER VI.

THE RELATION OF THIS EPISTLE TO THE BOOKS OF ECCLESIASTICUS AND OF THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON—THE VALUE OF THE APOCRYPHA, AND THE MISCHIEF OF NEGLECTING IT.

JAMES i. 5-8.

THE previous section led us to the question as to the relation of this Epistle to certain Christian writings, and in particular to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, and to the First Epistle of St. Peter. The present section, combined with the preceding one, raises a similar question—the relation of our Epistle to certain Jewish writings, and especially the Books of Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon.

The two sets of questions are not parallel. In the former case, even if we could determine that the writer of one Epistle had certainly seen the Epistle of the other, we should still be uncertain as to which had written first. Here, if the similarity is found to be too great to be accounted for by common influences acting upon both writers, and we are compelled to suppose that one has made use of the writing of the other, there cannot be any doubt as to the side on which the obligation lies. The Book of Ecclesiasticus certainly, and the Book of Wisdom possibly, had come into circulation long before St. James was born. And if, with some of the latest writers on the subject, we place the Book of Wisdom as late as A. D. 40, it nevertheless was written in plenty of time for St. James to have become acquainted with it before he wrote his Epistle. Although some doubts have been expressed on the subject, the number of similarities, both of thought and expression, between the Epistle of St. James and Ecclesiasticus is too great to be reasonably accounted for without the supposition that St. James was not only acquainted with the book, but fond of its contents. And it is to be remembered, in forming an opinion on the subject, that there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the supposition that St. James had read Ecclesiasticus. Indeed, the improbability would rather be the other way. Even if there were no coincidences of ideas and language between our Epistle and Ecclesiasticus, we know enough about St. James and about the circulation of Ecclesiasticus to say that he was likely to become acquainted with it. As Dr. Salmon remarks on the use of the Apocrypha generally, "The books we know as Apocrypha are nearly all earlier than the New Testament writers, who could not well have been ignorant of them; and therefore coincidences between the former and the latter are not likely to have been the result of mere accident."

But it will be worth while to quote a decided expression of opinion, on each side of the question immediately before us, from the writings of scholars who are certainly well qualified to give a decided opinion. On the one hand, Bernhard Weiss says, "It has been incorrectly held by most that the author adheres very closely to Jesus Sirach. . . . But it must be distinctly denied that there is anywhere an echo of the Book of Wisdom." On the other hand, Dr. Edersheim, after pointing out the parallel between Ecclus. xii. 10, 11, and James v. 3, concludes, "In view of all this it cannot be doubted that both the simile and the expression of it in the Epistle of St. James were derived from Ecclesiasticus." And then he gives some more coincidences between the two writings, and sums up thus: "But if the result is to prove beyond doubt the familiarity of St. James with a book which at the time was evidently in wide circulation, it exhibits with even greater clearness the immense spiritual difference between the standpoint occupied in Ecclesiasticus and that in the Epistle of St. James." And Archdeacon Farrar quotes with approval an estimate that St. James "alludes more or less directly to the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon at least five times, but to the Book of Ecclesiasticus

more than fifteen times. . . . The fact is the more striking because in other respects St. James shows no sympathy with Alexandrian speculations. There is not in him the faintest tinge of Philonian philosophy; on the contrary, he belongs in a marked degree to the school of Jerusalem. He is a thorough Hebraiser, a typical Judaist. All his thoughts and phrases move normally in the Palestinian sphere. This is a curious and almost unnoticed phenomenon. The "sapiential literature" of the Old Testament was the least specifically Israelite. It was the direct precursor of Alexandrian morals. It deals with mankind, and not with the Jew. Yet St. James, who shows so much partiality for this literature, is of all the writers of the New Testament the least Alexandrian and the most Judaic."

Let us endeavour to form an opinion for ourselves; and the only way in which to do this with thoroughness is to place side by side, in the original Greek, the passages in which there seems to be coincidence between the two writers. Want of space prevents this from being done here. But some of the most striking coincidences shall be placed in parallel columns, and where the coincidence is inadequately represented by the English Version the Greek shall be given also. Other coincidences, which are not drawn out in full, will be added, to enable students who care to examine the evidence more in detail to do so without much trouble. Two Bibles, or, still better, a Septuagint and a Greek Testament, will serve the purpose of parallel columns.

It will be found that by far the greater number of coincidences occur in the first chapter, a fact which suggests the conjecture that St. James had been reading Ecclesiasticus shortly before he began to write. In the middle of the Epistle there is very little that strongly recalls the son of Sirach. In the last chapter there are one or two striking parallels; but by far the larger proportion is in the first chapter.

ECCLESIASTICUS.	ST. JAMES.
1. A patient man will bear for a time, and afterward joy shall spring up unto him (i. 23).	Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations (*πειρασμοῖς*), knowing that the proof (*τὸ δοκίμιον*) of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing (i. 2-4).
My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation (*πειρασμόν*). Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure. . . . Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate. For gold is tried (*δοκιμάζεται*) in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity (ii. 1-5.)	Blessed is the man that endureth temptation (*πειρασμόν*); for when he hath been approved (*δόκιμος γενόμενος*) he shall receive the crown of life (i. 12).
2. If thou desire wisdom (*σοφίαν*), keep the commandments, and the Lord shall give her unto thee (i. 26).	But if any of you lacketh wisdom (*σοφίαν*), let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not (*μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος*); and it shall be given him (i. 5).
I desired wisdom (*σοφίαν*) openly in my prayer . . . . The Lord hath given me a tongue for my reward (li. 13, 22).	
Thy desire for wisdom (*σοφίας*) shall be given thee (vi. 37. Comp. xliii. 33). [A fool] will give little, and will upbraid (*ὀνειδίσει*) much (xx. 15).	
After thou hast given, upbraid (*ὀνείδιζε*) not (xli. 22. Comp. xviii. 18).	
3. Distrust not the fear of the Lord; and come not unto Him with a double heart (i. 28).	But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (i. 6-8. Comp. iv. 8).
Woe be to fearful hearts, and faint hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways (ii. 12).	
Be not faint-hearted when thou makest thy prayer (vii. 10. Comp. xxxiii. 2; xxxv. 16, 17).	
4. Exalt not thyself, lest thou fall, and bring dishonour upon thy soul (i. 30).	But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; and the rich in that he is made low (i. 9, 10).
The greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the Lord (iii. 18. Comp. xxxi. 1-9).	
5. Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do the things that He hateth. Say not thou, He hath caused me to err: for He hath no need of the sinful man (xv. 11, 12).	Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempteth no man (i. 13).
6. Be swift in thy listening (*ταχὺς ἐν ἀκροάσει σου*); and with patience give answer (v. 11).	Let every man be swift to hear (*ταχὺς εἰς τὸ ἀκοῦσαι*), slow to speak, slow to wrath (i. 19).
7. Thou shalt be to him as one that hath wiped a mirror (*ἔσοπτρον*), and shalt know that it is not rusted (*κατίωται*) for ever (xii. 11).	He is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror (*ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ*). . . . Your gold and your silver are rusted (*κατίωται*); and their rust (*ἰός*) shall be a testimony against you (i. 23; v. 3).
Like as bronze rusteth (*ἰοῦται*), so is his wickedness (xii. 10).	
Lose money through a brother and a friend, and let it not rust (*ἰωθήτω*) under the stone unto loss (xxix. 10).	
8. He that looketh in (*ὁ παρακύπτων*) through her windows, *i. e.*, the windows of wisdom (xix. 23).	He that looketh into (*ὁ παρακύψας*) the perfect law (i. 25).
A fool peepeth in (*παρακύπτει*) at the door (xxi. 23).	
9. A prey of lions are wild asses in the wilderness; so the fodder of the rich are the poor (*οὕτω νομοὶ πλουσίων πτωχοί*: xiii. 19. Comp. xiii. 3, 17, 18).	But ye have dishonoured the poor man (*τὸν πτωχόν*). Do not the rich (*οἱ πλούσιοι*) oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? (ii. 6).

It will be observed that of these nine examples all come out of the first two chapters of St. James, and six are from the first two chapters of Ecclesiasticus. This fact is worth considering in estimating the probabilities of St. James being under the influence of this earlier and popular book. Owing to recent reading, or some other cause, he seems to have been specially familiar with the opening chapters of Ecclesiasticus. Probably most persons who study these coincidences will be of the opinion that Bernhard Weiss is needlessly cautious and sceptical when he refuses to assent to the common opinion that in some portions of the Epistle St. James closely follows the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach. The strongest coincidence is the seventh in the table. The word for "to rust" (*κατιόω*) occurs nowhere else either in the Septuagint or in the New Testament, and the passages in Ecclesiasticus and St. James "are the only Biblical passages in which the figure of rust as affecting unused silver and gold occurs" (Edersheim). The fifth instance is also very striking.

Let us now look at some of the coincidences between the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon and the Epistle of St. James.

WISDOM.	ST. JAMES.
The hope of the ungodly is like thistle-down carried	He that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven

WISDOM (*continued*).

away by the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away by the blast, and like smoke is dispersed by the wind (v. 14. Comp. μαρανθῆναι in ii. 8).

2. In eternity it weareth a crown and triumpheth (iv. 2).

3. The alterations of the solstices and the change of seasons (τροπῶν ἀλλαγὰς καὶ μεταβολὰς καιρῶν: vii. 18).

4. Let us oppress (καταδυναστεύσωμεν) the poor righteous man. . . . Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture (ii. 10, 19).

5. For the lowest is pardonable by mercy; but mighty men shall be mightily chastised (vi. 6).

6. What hath pride profited us? or what good hath riches with our vaunting (ἀλαζονείας) brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and as a post that hasted by, etc. etc.; even so we, as soon as we were born, came to an end (v. 8–14).

7. Let us lie in wait for the righteous (τὸν δίκαιον) . . . . Let us condemn him (καταδικάσωμεν) with a shameful death (ii. 12, 20).

ST. JAMES (*continued*).

by the wind and tossed . . . . As the flower of the grass he shall pass away . . . . So also shall the rich man fade away (μαρανθήσεται) in his ways (i. 6, 10, 11).

When he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love Him (i. 12).

With whom can be no variation, neither shadow of turning (παρ' ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσκίασμα: i. 17).

Ye have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress (καταδυναστεύουσιν) you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? (ii. 6).

For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment (ii. 13).

Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away . . . . But now ye glory in your vauntings (ἀλαζονίαις): all such glorying is evil (iv. 13–16).

Ye have condemned (κατεδικάσατε), ye have killed the righteous one (τὸν δίκαιον); he doth not resist you (v. 6).

It will at once be perceived that these parallels are neither so numerous nor so convincing as those which have been pointed out between Ecclesiasticus and the Epistle of St. James; but they are sufficient to make a *prima facie* case of considerable probability, whatever date we assign to the Book of Wisdom. This probability is strengthened by the fact that this book, with the rest of the Apocrypha or deutero-canonical writings, constituted to a large extent the religious literature of the Jews of the Dispersion; and therefore in writing to such Jews St. James would be likely to make conscious allusions to writings with which his hearers would be sure to be familiar; a consideration which strengthens the case as regards the coincidences with Ecclesiasticus, as well as regards those with the Wisdom of Solomon. Even if the probability as to the Alexandrian origin of Wisdom were a certainty, and if the conjectural date A. D. 40 were established, there would be nothing surprising in its becoming well known in Jerusalem within twenty years of its production. It is, therefore, far too strong an assertion when Weiss declares that "it must be distinctly denied that there is anywhere [in the Epistle of St. James] an echo of the Book of Wisdom." All that one can safely say is that the evidence for his acquaintance with the book does not approach to proof.

But the use of these two books of the Apocrypha by writers in the New Testament does not depend upon the question whether St. James makes use of them or not. If this were the place to do it, it might be shown that other coincidences, both of language and thought, far too numerous and too strong to be all of them accidental, occur in the writings of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John. Such things also occur outside the New Testament in the Epistles of Clement and of Barnabas; while Clement of Alexandria frequently quotes Ecclesiasticus with the introductory formula, "The Scripture saith."

These facts go a long way towards proving that the neglect of the Apocrypha which is so prevalent among ourselves is a thing which cannot be defended, either by an appeal to Scripture or by the practice of the primitive Church; for both the one and the other show a great respect for these deutero-canonical writings. That the New Lectionary omits a good deal of what used to be read publicly in church is not a thing to be lamented. We gladly sacrifice portions of the Apocrypha in order to obtain more of Ezekiel and Revelation. It is the neglect of them in private reading that is so much to be deplored. Passages which are too grotesque and too unspiritual to be edifying when read to a mixed congregation are nevertheless full of instruction, and throw most valuable light both on the Old and on the New Testament. The Apocryphal writings, instead of being a worthless interpolation between the Old Testament and the New, like a block of paltry buildings disfiguring two noble edifices, are among our best means of understanding how the Old Testament led up to the New, and prepared the way for it. They show us the Jewish mind under the combined influences of Jewish Scriptures, Gentile culture, and new phases of political life, and being gradually brought into the condition in which it either fiercely opposed or ardently accepted the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. A huge chasm yawns between Judaism as we leave it at the close of the Old Testament canon, and as we find it at the beginning of the Gospel history; and we have no better material with which to bridge the chasm than the writings of the Apocrypha. This is well brought out, not only in the commentary on the Apocrypha already quoted more than once, but also in a valuable review of the commentary from which some of what follows is taken.*

The neglect of the Apocrypha has not been by any means entirely accidental. It is partly the result of a deliberate protest against the action of the Council of Trent in placing these books on a level with the books of the Old and New Testament. In the seventeenth century we find the learned John Lightfoot writing, "Thus sweetly and nearly should the two Testaments join together, and thus Divinely should they kiss each other, but that the wretched Apocrypha doth thrust in between." And the fact that many people are now unable to recognise or appreciate an allusion to the Apocrypha is by no means the most serious result of this common neglect of its contents. Appreciation of the Bible in general, and especially of those books in which the Old and New Testaments come most in contact, is materially diminished in consequence. The Apocrypha is not a barrier, but a bridge; it does not separate, but unite the two Covenants. What thoughtful reader can pass from the Old to the New Testament without feeling that he has entered another world? He is still in Palestine, still among the Jews; but how different from the Palestine and the Judaism of Ezra, and Nehemiah, and

* *Edinburgh Review*, No. 345, January, 1889, pp. 58–95.

Malachi! He "finds mention of persons, and sects, and schools of which he can find no trace in the Old Testament. He comes upon beliefs and opinions for which the earlier canon does not even furnish a clue. He discovers institutions long settled, and dominating the religious life of the people, of which the Old Testament supplies not even the name. He find popular ideas, religious terms and phrases in current use wholly unlike those of ancient psalmists and prophets." And there is no literature that can explain all these changes to him either so surely or so fully as the Apocrypha. It supplies instances of the early use of New Testament words, of old words in new senses. It throws light upon the growth of the popular conception of the Messiah. It illuminates still more the development of the doctrine of the Logos. Above all, it helps us to see something of the evolution of that strange religious system which became the raw material out of which the special doctrines of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes were formed, and which had a powerful influence upon Christianity itself.

The neglect of the Apocrypha has been greatly increased by the widespread practice of publishing Bibles without it, and even of striking out from the margins of these mutilated Bibles all references to it. And this mischief has lately been augmented by the fact that the Revised Version omits it. Yet no portion of the Bible was in greater need of revision. The original texts used by the translators of 1611 were very bad; and perhaps in no part of the Authorised Version are utterly faulty translations more abundant. A comparison of the quotations given above with the text of the Authorised Version of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus will show that considerable changes have been made in order to bring the quotations into harmony with the true readings of the Greek text, and thus give a fair comparison with the words of St. James.

Books which the writers of the New Testament found worthy of study, and from which they derived some of their thoughts and language, ought not to be lightly disregarded by ourselves. We cannot disregard them without loss; and it is the duty of every reader of the Bible to see that his apprehension of the Old and New Testaments is not hindered through his ignorance of those writings which interpret the process of transition from the one to the other. Neglect of the helps to understanding His Word which God has placed easily within our reach may endanger our possession of that wisdom which St. James here assures us will be given to every one who asks for it in faith.

A discussion of that heavenly wisdom, and of the efficacy of prayer offered in faith, will be found in the expositions of later passages in the Epistle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXALTATION OF THE LOWLY AND THE FADING AWAY OF THE RICH—THE METAPHORS OF ST. JAMES AND THE PARABLES OF CHRIST.

James i. 9-11.

In this section St. James returns to what is the main thought of the first chapter, and one of the main thoughts of the whole Epistle, viz., the blessedness of enduring temptations, and especially such temptations as are caused by external trials and adversity. He adds another thought which may help to console and strengthen the oppressed Christian.

The Revisers have quite rightly restored the "But" (δέ) at the beginning of this section. There seems to be absolutely no authority for its omission; and we may conjecture that the earlier English translators ignored it, because it seemed to them to be superfluous, or even disturbing. The Rhemish Version, made from the Vulgate (*Glorietur autem*), is the only English Version which preserves it; and Luther (*Ein Bruder aber*) preserves it also. The force of the conjunction is to connect the advice in this section with the items of advice already given. They form a connected series. "Count it all joy, when ye fall into manifold temptations. . . . But (δέ) let patience have its perfect work. . . . But (δέ) if any lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God. . . . But (δέ) let him ask in faith. . . . But (δέ) let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate: and the rich in that he is made low."

The meaning of this last item in the series is by no means clear. Various interpretations have been suggested, and it is difficult or even impossible to arrive at a conclusive decision as to which of them is the right one. But we may clear the ground by setting aside all explanations which would make "the brother of low degree (ὁ ταπεινός) to mean the Christian who is lowly in heart (Matt. xi. 29), and "the rich" (ὁ πλούσιος) the Christian who is rich in faith (ii. 5) and in good works (1 Tim. vi. 18). Both words are to be understood literally. The lowly man is the man of humble position, oppressed by poverty, and perhaps by unscrupulous neighbours (ii. 3), and the rich man, here, as elsewhere in this Epistle, is the man of wealth who very often oppresses the poorer brethren (i. 11; ii. 6; v. 1).

What, then, is the meaning of the "high estate" (ὕψος) in which the brother of low degree is to glory, and of the "being made low" (ταπείνωσις) in which the rich man is to do the same? At first sight one is disposed to say that the one is the heavenly birthright, and the other the Divine humiliation, in which every one shares who becomes a member of Christ; in fact, that they are the same thing looked at from different points of view; for what to the Christian is promotion, to the world seems degradation. If this were correct, then we should have an antithesis analogous to that which is drawn out by St. Paul, when he says, "He that was called in the Lord, being a bond-servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise he that was called, being free, is Christ's bond-servant" (1 Cor. vii. 22). But on further consideration this attractive explanation is found not to suit the context. What analogy is there between the humiliation in which every Christian glories in Christ and the withering of herbage under a scorching wind? Even if we could allow that this metaphor refers to the fugitive character of earthly possessions, what has that to do with Christian humiliation, which does not depend upon either the presence or the absence of wealth? Moreover, St. James says nothing about the fugitiveness of riches: it is the rich man himself, and not his wealth, that is said to

"pass away," and to "fade away in his goings." Twice over St. James declares this to be the destiny of the rich man; and the wording is such as to show that when the writer says that "the rich man shall fade away in his goings" he means the man, and not his riches. "His goings," or "journeys," very likely refers to his "going into this city to spend a year there, and trade, and get gain" (iv. 13); *i. e.*, he wastes himself away in the pursuit of wealth. But what could be the meaning of wealth "fading away in its journeys"? Evidently, we must not transfer what is said of the rich man himself to his possessions.

It is a baseless assumption to suppose that the rich man here spoken of is a Christian at all. "The brother of low degree" is contrasted, not with the brother who is rich, but with the rich man, whose miserable destiny shows that he is not "a brother," *i. e.*, not a believer. The latter is the wealthy Jew who rejects Christ. Throughout this Epistle (ii. 6, 7; v. 1-6) "rich" is a term of reproach. This is what is meant by the Ebionite tone of the Epistle; for poverty is the condition which Ebionism delights to honour. In this St. James seems to be reproducing the thoughts both of Jesus Christ and of Jesus the Son of Sirach. "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you, ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger" (Luke vi. 25, 26. Comp. Matt. xix. 23-25). "The rich man hath done wrong, and is very wroth besides: the poor man is wronged, and he must intreat also. . . . An abomination to the proud is lowliness; so the poor are abomination to the rich" (Ecclus. xiii. 3, 20).

But when we have arrived at the conclusion that the "being made low" does not refer to the humiliation of the Christian, and that the rich man here threatened with a miserable end is not a believer, a new difficulty arises. What is the meaning of the wealthy unbeliever being told to glory in the degradation which is to prove so calamitous to him? In order to avoid this difficulty various expedients have been suggested. Some propose a rather violent change of mood—from the imperative to the indicative. No verb is expressed, and it is said that instead of repeating "let him glory" from the previous clause, we may supply "he glories," as a statement of fact rather than an exhortation. The sentence will then run, "But let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; but (*δέ*) the rich glorieth in his being made low;" *i. e.*, he glories in what degrades him and ought to inspire him with shame and grief. Others propose a still more violent change, viz., of verb; they would keep the imperative, but supply a word of opposite meaning: "so let the rich man be ashamed of his being made low." Neither of these expedients seems to be necessary, or indeed to be a fair treatment of the text. It is quite possible to make good sense of the exhortation, without any violent change either of mood or of verb. In the exhortation to the rich man St. James speaks in severe irony: "Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate; and the rich man—what is he to glory in?—let him glory in the only thing upon which he can count with certainty, viz., his being brought low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." Such irony is not uncommon in Scripture. Our blessed Lord Himself makes use of it sometimes, as when He says of the hypocrites that they have their reward, and have it in full (*ἀπέχουσι*: Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16).

Whether or no this interpretation be accepted —and no interpretation of this passage has as yet been suggested which is free from difficulty —it must be clearly borne in mind that no explanation can be correct which does not preserve the connection between the humiliation of the rich man and his passing away as the flower of the grass. This fading away is his humiliation, is the thing in which he is to glory, if he glories in anything at all. The inexorable "because" must not be ignored or explained away by making the wealth of the rich man shrivel up, when St. James twice over says that it is the rich man himself who fades away.

The metaphor here used of the rich man is common enough in the Old Testament. Man "cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down" (*ὥσπερ ἄνθος ἀνθῆσαν ἐξέπεσεν*: LXX.), says Job, in his complaint (xiv. 2); and, "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more," says the Psalmist (ciii. 15, 16). But elsewhere, with a closer similarity to the present passage, we have this transitory character specially attributed to the ungodly, who "shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb" (Ps. xxxvii. 2). None of these passages, however, are so clearly in St. James's mind as the words of Isaiah: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the breath of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. xl. 6, 7). Here the words of St. James are almost identical with those of the Septuagint (*ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου· ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν . . . ἐξηράνθη χόρτος, ἐξέπεσεν τὸ ἄνθος*); and, as has been already pointed out (p. 570), this is one of the quotations which our (1 Peter i. 24).

"Grass" throughout is a comprehensive term for herbage, and the "flower of grass" does not mean the bloom or blossom of grass in the narrower sense, but the wild flowers, specially abundant and brilliant in the Holy Land, which grow among the grass. Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, what are first called "the lilies (*τὰ κρίνα*) of the field" are immediately afterwards called "the grass" (*τὸν χόρτον*) of the field" (Matt. vi. 28, 30).

"The scorching wind" (*ὁ καύσων*) is one of the features in the Epistle which harmonise well with the fact that the writer was an inhabitant of Palestine. It is the furnace-like blast from the arid wilderness to the east of the Jordan. "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? Shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? It shall wither in the beds where it grew" (Ezek. xvii. 10). "God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted" (Jonah iv. 8). The fig-tree, olives, and vine (iii. 12) are the chief fruit-trees of Palestine; and "the early and latter rain" (v. 7) points still more clearly to the same district.

It has been remarked with justice that whereas St. Paul for the most part draws his

metaphors from the scenes of human activity—building, husbandry, athletic contests, and warfare—St. James prefers to take his metaphors from the scenes of nature. In this chapter we have "the surge of the sea" (ver. 6) and "the flower of the grass" (ver. 10). In the third chapter we have the "rough winds" driving the ships, the "wood kindled by a small fire," "the wheel of nature," "every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things, and things in the sea," "the fountain sending forth sweet water," "the fig-tree and vine" (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12). In the fourth chapter human life is "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (ver. 14). And in the last chapter, besides the moth and the rust, we have "the fruit of the earth," and "the early and latter rain" (vv. 2, 3, 7, 18).

These instances are certainly very numerous, when the brevity of the Epistle is considered. The love of nature which breathes through them was no doubt learned and cherished in the village home at Nazareth, and it forms another link between St. James and his Divine Brother. Nearly every one of the natural phenomena to which St. James directs attention in this letter are used by Christ also in His teaching. The surging of the sea (Luke xxi. 25), the flowers of the field (Matt. vi. 28), the burning of wood (John xv. 6), the birds of the air (Matt. vi. 26; viii. 20; xiii. 4, 32), the fountain of sweet water (John iv. 10-14; vii. 38), the fig-tree (Matt. vii. 16; xxi. 19; xxiv. 32), the vine (John xv. 1-5), the moth (Matt. vi. 19), the rust (Matt. vi. 19), and the rain (Matt. v. 45; vii. 25). In some cases the use made by St. James of these natural objects is very similar to that made by our Lord, and it may well be that what he writes is a reminiscence of what he had heard years before from Christ's lips; but in other cases the use is quite different, and must be assigned to the love of nature, and the recognition of its fitness for teaching spiritual truths, which is common to the Lord and His brother. Thus, when St. James asks, "Can a fig-tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs?" we seem to have an echo of the question in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" And when St. James tells the rich oppressors that their "garments are moth-eaten; their gold and their silver are rusted," is he not remembering Christ's charge, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust do consume, and where thieves break through and steal"? But in most of the other cases there is little or no resemblance between the similes of Christ and the figurative use of the same natural phenomena made by St. James. Thus, while Jesus uses the flowers of the field to illustrate God's care for every object in the universe, and the superiority of the glory which He bestows over that with which man adorns himself, St. James teaches thereby the transitory character of the glory which comes of riches; and while Christ points to the rain as illustrating God's bounty to good and bad alike, St. James takes it as an illustration of His goodness in answer to patient and trusting prayer.

It is manifest that in this matter St. James is partly following a great example, but partly also following the bent of his own mind. The first, without the second, would hardly have given us so many examples of this kind of teaching in so small a space. St. John had equal opportunities with St. James of learning this method of teaching from Christ, and yet there are scarcely any examples of it in his Epistles. Possibly his opportunities were even greater than those of St. James; for although he was at most the cousin of the Lord, whereas St. James was His brother, yet he was present during the whole of Christ's ministry, whereas St. James was not converted until after the Resurrection. But there is this great difference between Christ's teaching from nature and that of St. James: St. James recognises in the order and beauty of the universe a revelation of Divine truth, and makes use of the facts of the external world to teach spiritual lessons; the incarnate Word, in drawing spiritual lessons from the external world, could expound the meaning of a universe which He Himself had made. In the one case it is a disciple of nature who imparts to us the lore which he himself has learned; in the other it is the Master of nature, who points out to us the meaning of His own world, and interprets to us the voices of the winds and the waves, which obey Him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOURCE OF TEMPTATIONS AND THE REALITY OF SIN—THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE DETERMINIST

JAMES i. 12-18.

AFTER the slight digression respecting the short-lived glory of the rich man, St. James returns once more to the subject with which the letter opens—the blessing of trials and temptations as opportunities of patience, and the blessedness of the man who endures them, and thus earns "the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him." These last words are very interesting as being a record of some utterance of Christ's not preserved in the Gospels, of which we have perhaps other traces elsewhere in the New Testament (1 Pet. v. 4; Rev. ii. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 8). They imply a principle which qualifies what goes before, and leads on to what follows. The mere endurance of temptations and afflictions will not win the promised crown, unless temptations are withstood, and afflictions endured in the right spirit. The proud self-reliance and self-repression of the Stoic have nothing meritorious about them. These trials must be met in a spirit of loving trust in the God who sends or allows them. It is only those who love and trust God who have the right to expect anything from His bounty. This St. James continually insists on. Let not the double-minded man, with his affections and loyalty divided between God and Mammon, "think that he shall receive anything of the Lord" (i. 7). God has chosen the poor who are "rich in faith" to be "heirs of the kingdom which He promised to them that love Him" (ii. 5). And this love of God is quite incompatible with love of the world. "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (iv. 4).

It is the loving withstanding of temptation, then, that wins the crown of life: the mere being tempted tends rather to death. "Lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the

sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." With these facts before him, the loving Christian will never say, when temptations come, that they come from God. It cannot be God's will to seduce him from the path of life to the path of death. The existence of temptations is no just ground of complaint against God. Such complaints are an attempt to shift the blame from himself to his Creator. The temptations proceed, not from God, but from the man's own evil nature; a nature which God created stainless, but which man of his own free will has debased. To tempt is to try to lead astray; and one has only to understand the word in its true sense to see how impossible it is that God should become a tempter. By a simple but telling opposition of words St. James indicates where the blame lies. God "Himself tempteth no man (*πειράζει δὲ αὐτὸς οὐδένα*); but each man is tempted when by his own lust he is drawn away and enticed" (*ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος*). It is his own evil desire which plays the part of the temptress, drawing him out from his place of safety by the enticement of sinful pleasure. So that the fault is in a sense doubly his. The desire which tempts proceeds from his own evil nature, and the will which consents to the temptress is his own. Throughout the passage St. James represents the evil desire as playing the part of Potiphar's wife. The man who withstands such temptation is winning the promised crown of life; the man who yields has for the offspring of his error death. The one result is in accordance with God's will, as is proved by His promising and bestowing the crown; the other is not, but is the natural and known consequence of the man's own act.

At the present time there is a vehement effort being made in some quarters to shift the blame of man's wrong-doing, if not on to God (and He is commonly left out of the account, as unknown or non-existing), at any rate on to those natural laws which determine phenomena. We are asked to believe that such ideas as moral freedom and responsibility are mere chimeras, and that the first thing which a reasonable person has to do, in raising himself to a higher level, is to get rid of them. He is to convince himself that character and conduct are the necessarily evolved result of inherited endowments, developed in certain circumstances, over neither of which the man has any control. He did not select the qualities of body and mind which he received from his parents, and he did not make the circumstances in which he has had to live since his birth. He could no more help acting as he did on any given occasion than he could help the size of his heart or the colour of his brain. He is no more responsible for the acts which he produces than a tree is responsible for its leaves. And of all senseless delusions and senseless wastes of power, those which are involved in the feeling of remorse are the worst. In remorse we wring our hands over deeds which we could not possibly have avoided doing, and reproach ourselves for omitting what we could not by any possibility have done. Ethiopians might as reasonably blame themselves for their black skins, or be conscience-stricken for not having golden hair, as any human being feel remorse for what he has done or left undone in the past. Whatever folly a man may have committed, he eclipses it all by the folly of self-reproach.

Positivism will indeed have worked marvels when it has driven remorse out of the world; and until it has succeeded in doing so, it will remain confronted by an unanswerable proof—as universal as the humanity which it professes to worship—that its moral system is based upon a falsehood. Whether or no we admit the belief in a God, the fact of self-reproach in every human heart remains to be accounted for. And it is a fact of the most enormous proportions. Think of the years of mental agony and moral torture which countless numbers of the human race have endured since man became a living soul, because men have invariably reproached themselves with the folly and wickedness which they have committed. Think of the exquisite suffering which remorse has inflicted on every human being who has reached years of reflection. Think of the untold misery which the misdeeds of men have inflicted upon those who love and would fain respect them. It may be doubted whether all other forms of human suffering, whether mental or bodily, are more than as a drop in the ocean, compared with the agonies which have been endured through the gnawing pangs of remorse for personal misconduct, and of shame and grief for the misconduct of friends and relations. And if the Determinist is right, all this mental torture, with its myriad stabs and stings through centuries of centuries, is based on a monstrous delusion. These bitter reproachers of themselves and of those dearest to them might have been spared it all, if only they had known that not one of the acts thus blamed and lamented in tears of blood could have been avoided.

Certainly the Positivist, who shuts God out from his consideration, has a difficult problem to solve, when he is asked how he accounts for a delusion so vast, so universal, and so horrible in its consequences; and we do not wonder that he should exhaust all the powers of rhetoric and invective in the attempt to exorcise it. But his difficulty is as nothing compared with the difficulties of a thinker who endeavours to combine Determinism with Theism, and even with Christianity. What sort of a God can He be who has allowed, who has even ordained, that every human heart should be wrung with this needless, senseless agony? Has any savage, any inquisitor, ever devised torture so diabolical? And what kind of a Saviour and Redeemer can He be who has come from heaven, and returned thither again, without saying one word to free men from their blind, self-inflicted agonies; who, on the contrary, has said many things to confirm them in their delusions? Whence came moral evil and the pangs of remorse, if there is no such thing as free will? They must have been fore-ordained and created by God. The Theist has no escape from that. If God made man free, and man by misusing his freedom brought sin into the world, and remorse as a punishment for sin, then we have some explanation of the mystery of evil. God neither willed it nor created it; it was the offspring of a free and rebellious will. But if man was never free, and there is no such thing as sin, then the madman gnawing his own limbs in his frenzy is a reasonable being and a joyous sight, compared with the man who gnaws his own heart in remorse for the deeds which the

inexorable laws of his own nature compelled him, and still compel him, to commit.

Is there, or is there not, such a thing as sin? That is the question which lies at the bottom of the error against which St. James warns his readers, and of the doctrines which are advocated at the present time by Positivists and all who deny the reality of human freedom and responsibility. To say that when we are tempted we are tempted by God, or that the Power which brought us into existence has given us no freedom to refuse the evil and to choose the good, is to say that sin is a figment of the human mind, and that a conscious revolt of the human mind against the power of holiness is impossible. On such a question the appeal to human language, of which Aristotle is so fond, seems to be eminently suitable; and the verdict which it gives is overwhelming. There is probably no language, there is certainly no civilised language, which has no word to express the idea of sin. If sin is an illusion, how came the whole human race to believe in it, and to frame a word to express it? Can we point to any other word in universal, or even very general use, which nevertheless represents a mere chimera, believed in as real, but actually non-existent? And let us remember that this is no case in which self-interest, which so fatally warps our judgment, can have led the whole human race astray. Self-interest would lead us entirely in the opposite direction. There is no human being who would not enthusiastically welcome the belief that what seem to him to be grievous sins are no more a matter of reproach to him than the beatings of his heart or the winkings of his eyes. Sometimes the conscience-stricken offender, in his efforts to excuse his acts before the judgment-seat of his higher self, tries to believe this. Sometimes the Determinist philosopher endeavours to prove to him that he ought to believe it. But the stern facts of his own nature and the bitter outcome of all human experience are too strong for such attempts. In spite of all specious excuses, and all plausible statements of philosophic difficulties, his conscience and his consciousness compel him to confess, "It was my own lust that enticed me, and my own will that consented."

How serious St. James considers the error of attempting to make God responsible for our temptations is shown both by the earnest and affectionate insertion of "Be not deceived, my beloved brethren," and also by the pains which he takes to disprove the error. After having shown the true source of temptation, and explained the way in which sin and death are generated, he points out how incredible it is on other grounds that God should become a tempter. How can the Source of every good gift and every perfect boon be also a source of temptations to sin? How can the Father of lights be one who would lead away His creatures into darkness? If what we know of human nature ought to tell us whence temptations to sin are likely to come, what we know of God's nature and of His dealings with mankind ought to tell us whence such things are *not* likely to come.

And He is far above those heavenly luminaries of which He is the Author. *They* are not always bright, and are therefore very imperfect symbols of His holiness. In their revolutions they are sometimes overshadowed. The moon is not always at the full, the sun is sometimes eclipsed, and the stars suffer changes in like manner. In Him there is no change, no loss of light, no encroachment of shadow. There is never a time at which one could say that through momentary dimunition in holiness it had become possible for Him to become a tempter.

Nor are the brightness and beneficence which pervade the material universe the chief proofs of God's goodness and of the impossibility of temptations to sin proceeding from Him. It was "of His own will" that He rescued mankind from the state of death into which their rebellious wills had brought them, and by a new revelation of Himself in "the Word of truth," *i. e.*, the Gospel, brought them forth again, born anew as Christians, to be, like the first-born under the Law, "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."

When, therefore, we sum up all the known facts of the case, there is only one conclusion at which we can justly arrive. There is the nature of God, so far as it is known to us, utterly opposed to evil. There is the nature of man, as it has been debased by himself, constantly bringing forth evil. There is God's goodness, as manifested in the creation of the universe and in the regeneration of man. It is a hopeless case to try to banish remorse by making God responsible for man's temptations and sin.

There is only one way of getting rid of remorse, and that is to confess sin—to confess its reality, to confess it to God, and if need be to man. No man ever yet succeeded in justifying himself by laying the blame of his sins on God. But he may do so by laying the sins themselves upon "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," and by washing his stained robes, "and making them white in the blood of the Lamb." That done, remorse will have no power over him; and instead of fruitlessly accusing God, and seeking vain substitutes for the service of God, he will humbly "give Him glory," and "serve Him day and night in His temple" (Joshua vii. 19; Rev. vii. 15).

CHAPTER IX.

THE DELUSION OF HEARING WITHOUT DOING—THE MIRROR OF GOD'S WORD.

JAMES. i. 22-25.

HERE we reach what on the whole seems to be the main thought of the Epistle—the all-importance of Christian activity and service. The essential thing, without which other things, however good in themselves, become insignificant or worthless, or even mischievous, is conduct. Everything else, if not accompanied by practice, by avoiding evil and doing good, is vain. In Bishop Butler's words, religion "does not consist in the knowledge and belief even of fundamental truth," but rather in our being brought "to a certain temper and behaviour;" or as St. John puts it still more simply, only "he who doeth righteousness is righteous." Suffering injuries, poverty and temptations, hearing the Word, teaching the Word, faith,

wisdom (i. 2, 9, 12, 19; ii. 14-16; iii. 13-17), are all of them excellent; but if they are not accompanied by a holy life, a life of prayer and gentle words and good deeds, they are valueless.

There are two or three other leading thoughts, but they are all of them subordinated to this main thought of the necessity for Christian conduct as well as Christian belief and wisdom. One of these secondary thoughts has already been noticed more than once—the blessedness of enduring temptations and other trials; it is specially prominent in the first and last chapters (i. 2-4, 12; v. 7-11). Another of the secondary topics which have a prominent place in the letter is the peril of much speaking. It introduces and closes the section which lies immediately before us (i. 19, 26), and it is dwelt upon at length in the third chapter. Yet a third topic which cannot fail to attract the attention of the reader is the preference given to the poor over the rich as regards their spiritual opportunities, and the stern warnings addressed to all those whose wealth leads them to become tyrannical. This subject is specially prominent in the first, second, and last chapters (i. 10, 11; ii. 1-7; v. 1-6). But all these matters are looked at from the point of view of Christian conduct and service. They are not in any one case the idea which binds together the whole Epistle, but they lead up to it and emphasise it. If we were to single out one verse as in a special way summing up the teaching of the whole letter, we could hardly find one more suitable for the purpose than the first of the four which stand at the head of the present chapter: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." It will be worth while to examine this simple and most practical exhortation somewhat in detail.

It is one of the many sayings in the Epistle which irresistibly remind us of the teaching of Jesus Christ; not as being a quotation from any of His recorded discourses, but as being an independent reproduction of the substance of His conversation by one who was quite familiar with it, but was not familiar with the written Gospels. Had the writer of this letter been well acquainted with any of the four Gospels, he could hardly have escaped being influenced by them, and the echoes of Christ's teaching which we find in its pages would have been more closely in accordance with the reports of His words which they contain. This feature of the Epistle harmonises well with its being written by the Lord's brother, who must have been very familiar with the Lord's teaching, and who wrote before A. D. 62, *i. e.*, at a time when perhaps not one of our Gospels was written, and when certainly none of them can have had a very wide circulation. More will be said upon this point hereafter (p. 630): for the present it suffices to point out the resemblance between this warning against the delusion of thinking that hearing without doing is of any avail, and the warning which closes the Sermon on the Mount: "Every one which heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock. . . . And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof" (Matt. vii. 24-27).

"Be ye doers of the Word." Both verb and tense are remarkable (*γίνεσθε*): "Become doers of the Word." True Christian practice is a thing of growth; it is a process, and a process which has already begun, and is continually going on. We may compare, "Become ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. x. 16); "Therefore become ye also ready" (xxiv. 44); and "Become not faithless, but believing" (John xx. 27; where see Westcott's note). "Become doers of the Word" is more expressive than "Be doers of the Word," and a good deal more expressive than "Do the Word." A "doer of the Word" (*ποιητὴς λόγου*) is such by profession and practice; the phrase expresses a habit. But one who merely incidentally performs what is prescribed may be said to "do the Word." By the "Word" is meant what just before has been called the "implanted Word" and the "Word of truth" (vv. 21, 18), and what in this passage is also called "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (ver. 25), *i. e.*, the Gospel. The parable of the Sower illustrates in detail the meaning of becoming an habitual doer of the implanted Word.

"And not hearers only." The order of the words in the Greek is a little doubtful, the authorities being very much divided; but the balance is in favour of taking "only" closely with "hearers" (*μὴ ἀκροαταὶ μόνον* rather than *μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταί*); "Be not such as are mere hearers and nothing more." The word for "hearer" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, excepting in the singularly similar passage in the Epistle to the Romans, which is one of the passages that give support to the theory that either St. Paul had seen this Epistle, or St. James had seen St. Paul's: "Not the hearers (*ἀκροαταί*) of a law are just before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13; see above, p. 569). The verb (*ἀκροάομαι*) does not occur in the New Testament; but another cognate substantive (*ἀκροατήριον*), meaning "a place of hearing," is found in the Acts (xxv. 23). In classical Greek this group of words indicates attentive listening, especially in the case of those who attend the lectures of philosophers and the addresses of public speakers. It is thus used frequently in Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, and Plutarch. It is somewhat too hastily concluded that there is nothing of this kind included either in this passage or in Rom. ii. 13. Possibly that is the very thing to which both St. James and St. Paul allude. St. James, in the address which he made to the so-called Council of Jerusalem, says, "Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath" (Acts xv. 21). The Jews came with great punctiliousness to these weekly gatherings, and listened with much attention to the public reading and exposition of the Law; and too many of them thought that with that the chief part of their duty was performed. This habitual public testimony of respect for the Mosaic Law and the traditional interpretations of it, and this zeal to acquire a knowledge of its contents and an insight into its meaning, was the main portion of what was required of them. This, St. James tells them, is miserably insufficient, whether what they hear be the Law or the Gospel, the Law with or without the illumination of the life of Christ.

"Being swift to hear" (ver. 19) and to understand is well, but "apart from works it is barren." It is the habitual practice in striving to do what is heard and understood that is of value. "Not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh" is blessed, and "blessed in his doing." To suppose that mere hearing brings a blessing is "deluding your own selves." Bede rightly quotes Rev. i. 3 in illustration: "Blessed are they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein."

The word here used for deluding (*παραλογιζόμενοι*) is found nowhere else in the New Testament, excepting in one passage in the Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 4), in which St. Paul warns them against allowing any one to "delude them with persuasiveness of speech." But the word is fairly common, both in ordinary Greek and in the Septuagint. Its meaning is to mislead with fallacious reasoning, and the substantive (*παραλογισμός*) is the Aristotelian term for a fallacy. The word does not necessarily imply that the fallacious reasoning is known to be fallacious by those who employ it. To express that we should rather have the word which is used in 2 Peter i. 16 to characterise "cunningly devised fables" (*σεσοφισμένοι μῦθοι*). Here we are to understand that the victims of the delusion do not, although they might, see the worthlessness of the reasons upon which their self-contentment is based. It is precisely in this that the danger of their position lies. Self-deceit is the most subtle and fatal deceit. The mere knowledge of the law derived from their attentive listening to it does but increase their evil case, if they do not practise it. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (iv. 17).

The Jews have a saying that the man who hears without practising is like a husbandman who ploughs and sows, but never reaps. Such an illustration, being taken from natural phenomena, would be quite in harmony with the manner of St. James; but he enforces his meaning by employing a far more striking illustration. He who is a hearer and not a doer "is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror." Almost all the words in this sentence are worthy of separate attention.

"Is like unto a man" (*ἐοικεν ἀνδρί*). St. James uses the more definite word, which usually excludes women, and sometimes boys also. He does not say, "is like unto a person" (*ἀνθρώπῳ*), which would have included both sexes and all ages. A somewhat quaint explanation has been suggested by Paes, and adopted as probable elsewhere; viz., that men, as a rule, give only a passing look to themselves in the glass; whereas it is a feminine weakness to be fond of attentive observations. But it is fatal to this suggestion that the word here used for beholding (*κατανοεῖν*) means to fix one's mind upon, and consider attentively. It is the word used in "Consider the ravens," and "Consider the lilies" (Luke xii. 24, 27). Moreover, the Greeks sometimes do what we very frequently do in speaking of the human race; they employ the male sex as representative of both. This usage is found in the New Testament; *e. g.*, "The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with the men (*τῶν ἀνδρῶν*) of this generation, and shall condemn them. . . . The men (*ἄνδρες*) of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment of this generation, and shall condemn it" (Luke xi. 31, 32). Here it is impossible that the women are not included. And this use of "man" (*ἀνήρ*) in the sense of human being is specially common in St. James. We have it four times in this chapter (vv. 8, 12, 20, 23), and again in the second (ver. 2) and third (ver. 2).

This man, then, attentively studies his natural face in a mirror. The words for "his natural face" literally mean "the face of his birth" (*τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ*); *i. e.*, the features with which he was born; and the mirror would be a piece of polished metal, which, however excellent, would not reflect the features with the clearness and fidelity of a modern looking-glass. Hence the necessity for attentive observation, the result of which is that the man recognises his own face beyond all question. But what follows? "He beheld himself, and he has gone away, and he straightway forgot what manner of man he was." The perfect tense between two aorists gives a lively simplicity to the narration (*κατενόησεν . . . ἀπελήλυθεν . . . ἐπελάθετο*). This is represented as a common case, though not an invariable one. Most of us know our own features sufficiently well to recognise them in a good representation of them, but do not carry in our minds a very accurate image of them. But what has all this to do with being hearers, and not doers, of the Word?

The spoken or written Word of God is the mirror. When we hear it preached, or study it for ourselves, we can find the reflection of ourselves in it, our temptations and weaknesses, our failings and sins, the influences of God's Spirit upon us, and the impress of His grace. It is here that we notice one marked difference between the inspiration of the sacred writers and the inspiration of the poet and the dramatist. The latter show us other people to the life; Scripture shows us ourselves.

"Our mirror is a blessed book,
Where out from each illumined page
We see one glorious image look,
All eyes to dazzle and engage.

"The Son of God; and that indeed
We see Him as He is we know,
Since in the same bright glass we read
The very life of things below.

"Eye of God's Word, where'er we turn
Ever upon us! thy keen gaze
Can all the depths of sin discern,
Unravel every bosom's maze.

"Who that has felt thy glance of dread
Thrill through his heart's remotest cells,
About his path, about his bed,
Can doubt what Spirit in thee dwells?"*

Keble's metaphor is somewhat more elaborate than St. James's. He represents the Bible as a mirror, out of which the reflected image of the Son of God looks upon us and reads our inmost selves. St. James supposes that in the mirror we see ourselves reflected. But the thought is the same, that through hearing or reading God's Word our knowledge of our characters is quickened. But does this quickened knowledge last? Does it lead to action, or influence our conduct? Too often we leave the church or our study, and the impression produced by the recognition of the features of our own case is obliterated. "We straightway forget what manner of men we are," and the insight which has been granted to us into our

* "The Christian Year," St. Bartholomew's Day.

own true selves is just one more wasted experience.

But this need not be so, and in some cases a very different result may be noticed. Instead of merely looking attentively for a short time, he may stoop down and pore over it. Instead of forthwith going away, he may continue in the study of it. And instead of straightway forgetting, he may prove a mindful doer that worketh. Thus the three parts of the two pictures are made exactly to balance. The word for "looking into" is an interesting one (*παρακύπτειν*). It indicates bending forward to examine earnestly. It is used of Peter looking into the sepulchre (Luke xxiv. 12, a verse of doubtful genuineness); and of Mary Magdalene doing the same (John xx. 11); and of the angels desiring to look into heavenly mysteries (1 Peter i. 12). He who does this recognises God's Word as being "the perfect law, the law of liberty." The two things are the same. It is when the law is seen to be perfect that it is found to be the law of liberty. So long as the law is not seen in the beauty of its perfection, it is not loved, and men either disobey it or obey it by constraint and unwillingly. It is then a law of bondage. But when its perfection is recognised men long to conform to it; and they obey, not because they must, but because they choose. To do what one likes is freedom, and they like to obey. It is in this way that the moral law of the Gospel becomes "the law of liberty," not by imposing fewer obligations than the moral law of the Jew or of the Gentile, but by infusing into the hearts of those who welcome it a disposition and a desire to obey. Christian liberty is never license. It is not the relaxation of needful restraints, but the spontaneous acceptance of them as excellent in themselves and beneficial to those who observe them. It is the difference between a code imposed by another, and a constitution voluntarily adopted. To be made to work for one whom one fears is slavery and misery; to choose to work for one whom one loves is freedom and happiness. The Gospel has not abolished the moral law; it has supplied a new and adequate motive for fulfilling it.

"Being not a hearer that forgetteth." Literally, "having become not a hearer of forgetfulness" (*οὐκ ἀκροατὴς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος*); *i. e.*, having by practice come to be a hearer, who is characterised, not by forgetfulness of what he hears, but by attentive performance of it. The unusual word "forgetfulness" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, nor in classical Greek; but it is found in Ecclesiasticus (xi. 27), "The affliction of an hour causeth forgetfulness of pleasure;" and this adds a trifle to the evidence that St. James was acquainted with that book (see above, p. 573). "A hearer of forgetfulness" exactly balances, both in form and in thought, "a doer of work;" and this is well brought out by the Revisers, who turn both genitives by a relative clause: "a hearer that forgetteth," and "a doer that worketh." The Authorised Version is much less happy: "a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work." There is no article in the Greek, and the translation of one genitive by an adjective, and of the other by a genitive, is unfortunate. "A doer of work" (*ποιητὴς ἔργου*), or "a doer that worketh," is an expression that emphasises just what St. James wishes to emphasise, viz., the necessity of actively practising what is attentively heard. "A doer" would have sufficed, but "a doer that worketh" makes the idea of habitual action still more prominent.

"This man shall be blessed in his doing" (*ἐν τῇ ποιήσει*). Once more we have a word which is found nowhere else in the New Testament, but occurs in Ecclesiasticus (xix. 20), and with much the same meaning as here: "All wisdom is fear of the Lord; and in all wisdom there is doing of the law" (*ποίησις νόμου*). The correspondence between the meaning of St. James and the meaning of the son of Sirach is very close. Mere knowledge without performance is of little worth: it is in the doing that a blessing can be found.

The danger against which St. James warns the Jewish Christians of the Dispersion is as pressing now as it was when he wrote. Never was there a time when interest in the Scriptures was more keen or more widely spread, especially among the educated classes; and never was there a time when greater facilities for gratifying this interest abounded. Commentaries, expositions, criticisms, introductions, helps of all kinds,—exegetical, homiletic, historical, and textual,—suitable both for learned and unlearned students, multiply year by year. But it is much to be feared that with many of us the interest in the sacred writings which is thus roused and fostered remains to a very large extent a literary interest. We are much more eager to know all about God's Word than from it to learn His will respecting ourselves, that we may do it; to prove that a book is genuine than to practise what it enjoins. We study Lives of Christ, but we do not follow the life of Christ. We pay Him the empty homage of an intellectual interest in His words and works, but we do not the things which He says. We throng and press Him in our curiosity, but we obtain no blessing, because in all our hearing and learning there is no true wisdom, no fear of the Lord, and no doing of His Word.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ST. JAMES—THE PRACTICAL UNBELIEF INVOLVED IN SHOWING A WORLDLY RESPECT OF PERSONS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

JAMES ii. 1-4.

As has been stated already, in a previous chapter (p. 561), one of Luther's main objections to this Epistle is that it does not "preach and urge Christ." "It teaches Christian people, and yet does not once notice the Passion, the Resurrection, the Spirit of Christ. The writer names Christ a few times; but he teaches nothing of Him, but speaks of general faith in God."

This indictment has been more fully drawn out by a modern writer. "The author's standpoint is Jewish rather than Christian. The ideas are cast in a Jewish mould. The very name of Christ occurs but twice (i. 1; ii. 1), and His atonement is scarcely touched. We see little more than the threshold of the new system. It is the teaching of a Christian Jew, rather than of one who had reached a true apprehension of the essence of Christ's religion. The doctrinal development is imperfect. It is only necessary to read the entire Epistle to per-

ceive the truth of these remarks. In warning his readers against transgression of the law by partiality to individuals, the author adduces Jewish rather than Christian motives (ii. 8-13). The greater part of the third chapter, respecting the government of the tongue, is of the same character, in which Christ's example is not once alluded to, the illustrations being taken from objects in nature. The warning against uncharitable judgment does not refer to Christ, or to God, who puts His Spirit in the hearts of believers, but to the law (iv. 10-12). He who judges his neighbour judges the law. The exhortation to feel and act under constant remembrance of the dependence of our life on God belongs to the same category (iv. 13-17). He that knows good without doing it is earnestly admonished to practise virtue and to avoid self-sufficiency, without reference to motives connected with redemption. Job and the Prophets are quoted as examples of patience, not Christ; and the efficacy of prayer is proved by the instance of Elias, without allusion to the Redeemer's promise (v. 17). The Epistle is wound up after the same Jewish fashion, though the opportunity of mentioning Christ, who gave Himself a Sacrifice for sin, presented itself naturally." *

All this may be admitted, without at all consenting to the conclusion which is drawn from it. Several other considerations must be taken into account before we can form a satisfactory opinion respecting the whole case. Few things are more misleading, in the interpretation of Scripture, than the insisting upon one set of facts and texts, and passing over all that is to be found on the other side. In this manner the most opposite views may be equally proved from Scripture: Universalism and the eschatology of Calvin, Pelagianism and Fatalism, Papalism and Presbyterianism.

First, both logically and chronologically the teaching of St. James precedes that of St. Paul and of St. John. To call it "retrograde" when compared with either of them is to call a child retrograde when compared with a man. St. Paul had to feed his converts with milk before he fed them with meat, and the whole of the congregations addressed by St. James in this letter must have been at a comparatively early stage of development. In some respects even the Mother Church of Jerusalem, from which his letter was written, did not get beyond these early stages. Before it had done so the centre of Christendom had moved from Jerusalem to Antioch; and to Jerusalem it never returned. It was useless to build a structure of doctrine before a foundation of morality had been laid. Advent must come before Christmas, and Lent before Easter. The manifold significance of the great truths of the Incarnation and the Resurrection would not be well appreciated by those who were neglecting some of the plainest principles of the moral law; and to appeal to the sanctions which every Jew from his childhood had been accustomed to regard as final was probably in the long-run more convincing than to remind these converts of the additional sanctions which they had admitted when they entered the Christian Church. Moreover, there are passages in the Epistle which seem to show that St. James at times looks aside to address Jews who are not Christians at all, and it may be that even when He addresses Christian converts he deliberately prefers arguments which would weigh with Jew and Christian alike to those which would appeal to the latter only. Like St. Paul himself, he was willing to become to the Jews a Jew, that he might win the Jews. Besides which, we must allow something for the bias of his own mind. To his death he remained in many respects, not only a saintly shepherd of the Christian Church, but also a Hebrew of Hebrews. He is the last Jewish prophet as well as the first Christian bishop, a Hebrew Rabbi inside the Church; and even if the condition of his readers had not made it desirable to lay much stress upon the Law and the Old Testament, the associations of a lifetime would have led him frequently to those old sources of truth and morality, all the more so as no authoritative Christian literature was as yet in existence. It was part of his mission to help in creating such a literature. He sets one of the first, it may be the very first, of the mystic stones, which, although apparently thrown together without order or connection, form so harmonious and so complete a whole; and alike in the solidity of its material and in the simplicity of its form this Epistle is well fitted to be one of the first stones in such a building.

But it is easy to go away with an exaggerated view of the so-called deficiencies of this letter as regards distinctly Christian teaching. The passage before us is a strong piece of evidence, and even if it stood alone it would carry us a long way. Moreover, the strength of it is not much affected by the ambiguity of construction which confronts us in the original. It is impossible to say with absolute certainty how the genitive "of glory" (*τῆς δόξης*) ought to be taken; but the Revisers are possibly right: "Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, (the Lord) of glory, with respect of persons." Nor does it much matter whether we take the Greek negative (*μὴ . . . ἔχετε*) as an imperative, "Do not go on holding;" or as an interrogative which expects a negative reply, "Do ye hold?" In any case we have the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and the fact of His being an object of faith to Christians, placed before us in clear language. No mere Jew, and no Ebionite who believed that Jesus was a mere man, could have written thus. And the words with which the Epistle opens are scarcely less marked: "James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ a bond-servant." In both passages the title "Lord," which in the Old Testament means Jehovah, is given to Jesus Christ, and in the opening words God and the Lord Jesus are placed side by side as equal. Moreover, St. James, who might have claimed honour as the brother of the Lord, prefers to style himself His bond-servant. He has "known Christ after the flesh," few more closely and intimately, and he knows from experience how little such knowledge avails: "henceforth knows he Him so no more." He who does the will of God is the true brother of the Lord, and it is this kind of relationship to Christ that he wishes to secure for his readers.

Nor do these two passages, in which Jesus Christ is mentioned by name, stand alone. There is the question, "Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which ye were called?" The honourable Name, which had been "called

* Davidson, "Introduction to the Study of the N. T." vol. i. pp. 327, 328, 2d ed. (Longmans, 1882).

upon" them, is that of Christ, and if it can be blasphemed it is a Divine Name (ii. 7). The Second Advent of Christ, "the coming of the Lord," is a thing for which Christians are to wait patiently and longingly (v. 7-9), and the office which He will then discharge is that of the Divine Judge of all mankind. "The coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the Judge standeth before the doors" (v. 8, 9).

Nor have we yet exhausted the passages which in this singularly practical and undoctrinal Epistle point clearly to the central doctrine of the Divinity of Christ and His eternal relation to His Church. "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (v. 14, 15). As in the case of the man healed at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Acts iii. 6, 16) it is "in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, . . . whom God raised from the dead, even in this Name," that the sick man is to be restored. And some interpreters (Dorner and Von Soden) think that Christ is included, or even exclusively intended, in "One is the Lawgiver and the Judge" (iv. 12. Comp. v. 9). Thus Liddon: "Especially noteworthy is his assertion that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of men, is not the delegated representative of an absent Majesty, but is Himself the Legislator enforcing His own laws. The Lawgiver, he says, is One Being with the Judge who can save and can destroy; the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven, has enacted the law which He thus administers." But without taking into account expressions of which the interpretation is open to doubt, there is quite enough to show us that the Divinity of Jesus Christ, His redeeming death, His abiding power, and His return to judgment are the basis of the moral teaching of St. James, and are never long absent from his thoughts. Expressions, some of which no mere Jew or Ebionite could have used, and others which no such imperfect believer would have been likely to use, abound in this short Epistle, in spite of its simple and practical character.

"My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." These words open a new section of the letter, as the renewed address indicates; and although the Epistle is not a set treatise, capable of analysis, but a letter, in which the subjects to be treated are loosely strung together in the order in which they occur to the writer, yet the connection between the two very different subjects of this section and the preceding one can be traced. The previous section teaches that much hearing is better than much talking, and that much hearing is worthless without corresponding conduct. This section denounces undue respect of persons, and especially of wealthy persons during public worship. The connecting thoughts are religious worship and the treatment of the poor. The conduct which is true devotion is practical benevolence, moral purity, and unworldliness. This conclusion suggests a new subject, worldly respect of persons in public worship. That is the very reverse of pure devotion. To profess one's belief in Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, and at the same time show one's belief in the majesty of mere money, is grievously incongruous. St. James is not making any attack on differences of rank, or asserting that no man is to be honoured above another. He is pointing out that reverence for the wealthy is no part of Christianity, and that such reverence is peculiarly out of place in the house of God, especially when it brings with it a corresponding disregard of the poor.

"If there come into your synagogue." This is one of several improvements which the Revisers have introduced into this passage. The Authorised Version has "assembly," which obscures the fact that the letter is written in those very early days of the Church in which the Jewish Christians still attended the worship of the Temple and the synagogue, or if they had a separate place of worship, spoke of it under the old familiar name. The latter is probably what is meant here. St. James, in writing to Christians, would hardly speak of a Jewish place of worship as "your synagogue," nor would he have rebuked Christians for the way in which different persons were treated in a synagogue of the Jews. The supposition that "the article (*τὴν συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν*) indicates that the one synagogue of the entire Jewish Christian Dispersion is meant, *i. e.*, their religious community, symbolically described by the name of the Jewish place of worship," is quite unfounded, and against the whole context. A typical incident—perhaps something which had actually been witnessed by St. James, or had been reported to him—is made the vehicle of a general principle (comp. i. 11). That the reference is to judicial courts often held in synagogues is also quite gratuitous, and destroys the contrast between "pure religion" and worldly respect of persons in public worship.

Another improvement introduced by the Revisers is a uniform translation of the word (*ἐσθής*) capriciously rendered "apparel," "raiment," and "clothing." Only one word is used in the Greek, and it is misleading to use three different words in English. By a quaint misuse of the very passage before us, the translators of 1611 defend their want of precision in such matters, and avow that in many cases precision was deliberately sacrificed to variety and to a wish to honour as many English words as possible by giving them a place in the Bible! In ordinary copies of the Authorised Version the Address to King James is commonly given, the far more instructive Address to the Reader never. Near the close of it the translators say as follows:—

"Another thing we think good to admonish thee of (gentle Reader) that we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish we had done, because they observe, that some learned men somewhere, have been as exact as they could that way. Truly, that we might not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified the same thing in both places (for there be some words that be not of the same sense everywhere) we were especially careful, and made a conscience, according to our duty. But, that we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by Purpose, never to call it Intent; if one where Journeying, never

Travelling; if one where Think, never Suppose; if one where Pain, never Ache; if one where Joy, never Gladness, etc. Thus to mince the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the Atheist, than bring profit to the godly Reader. For is the kingdom of God become words or syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them if we may be free, use one precisely, when we may use another no less fit, as commodiously? A godly Father in the primitive time showed himself greatly moved, that one of new-fangleness called *κράββατον σκίμπους*, though the difference be little or none (Niceph. Call. viii. 42); and another reporteth that he was much abused for turning *Cucurbita* (to which reading the people had been used) into *Hedera* (Jerome, 'In IV. Jonæ.' See S. Augustine, 'Epist.,' 71). Now if this happen in better times, and upon so small occasions, we might justly fear hard censure, if generally we should make verbal and unnecessary changings. We might also be charged (by scoffers) with some unequal dealing towards a great number of good English words. For as it is written of a certain great Philosopher, that he should say, that those logs were happy that were made images to be worshipped; for their fellows, as good as they, lay for blocks behind the fire: so if we should say, as it were, unto certain words, Stand up higher, have a place in the Bible always, and to others of a like quality, Get ye hence, be banished for ever, we might be taxed peradventure with S. James his words, namely, To be partial in ourselves and judges of evil thoughts."

In the passage before us the repetition of one and the same word for "clothing" is possibly not accidental. The repetition accentuates the fact that such a thing as clothing is allowed to be the measure of a man's merit. The rich man is neither the better nor the worse for his fine clothes, the poor man neither the better nor the worse for his shabby clothes. The error lies in supposing that such distinctions have anything to do with religion, or ought to be recognised in public worship; and still more in supposing that any one, whether rich or poor, may at such a time be treated with contumely.

"Are ye not divided in your own mind, and become judges with evil thoughts?" Here, as in the first verse, there is a doubt whether the sentence is an interrogation or not. In the former case the meaning is the same, whichever way we take it; for a question which implies a negative answer (*μή*, interrogative) is equivalent to a prohibition. In the present case the meaning will be affected if we consider the sentence to be a statement of fact, and the number of translations which have been suggested is very large. In both cases we may safely follow the Vulgate and all English versions in making the first verse a prohibition, and the fourth a question. "Are ye not divided in your own mind?" Or more literally, "Did ye not doubt in yourselves?" *i. e.*, on the typical occasion mentioned. At the outset St. James says, "Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons." But the conduct described respecting the treatment of the gold-ringed man and the squalidly clothed man shows that they do have respect of persons in their religion, and that shows that genuine faith in Christ is wanting. Such behaviour proves that they doubt in themselves. They are not single-hearted believers in the Lord Jesus, but double-minded doubters (i. 6, 7), trying to make the best of both worlds, and to serve God and Mammon.

The word rendered "doubt" (*διακρίνεσθαι*) may mean "distinguish:" "Do ye not make distinctions among yourselves?" It is so taken by Renan ("L'Antechrist," p. 49) and others. This makes sense, but it is rather obvious sense; for of course to give a rich man a good place, and a poor man a bad one, is making distinctions. It seems better to adhere to the meaning which the word certainly has in the preceding chapter (i. 6), as well as elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt. xxi. 21; Mark xi. 23; Acts x. 20; Rom. iv. 20; xiv. 23), and understand it as referring to the want of faith in Christ and in His teaching which was displayed in a worldly preference for the rich over the poor, even in those services in which His words were to be taught and His person adored.

"Judges with evil thoughts" is an improvement on the more literal but misleading "judges of evil thoughts" (*κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν*) The meaning of the genitive case is that the evil thoughts characterise the judges, as in such common phrases as "men of evil habits," "judges of remarkable severity" (see above on "hearers of forgetfulness," p. 582). The word for "thoughts" is one which in itself suggests evil, even without any epithet. It is the word used of the reasonings of the Pharisees, when they taxed our Lord with blasphemy for forgiving sins (Luke v. 22. Comp. xxiv. 38). St. Paul uses it of those who are "vain in their reasonings" (Rom. i. 21; 1 Cor. iii. 20), and couples with it "murmurings" (Phil. ii. 14) as congenial company. Those men who, even while engaged in the public worship of God, set themselves up as judges to honour the rich and contemn the poor, were not holding the faith of Jesus Christ, but were full of evil doubts, questionings, and distrust.

CHAPTER XI.

THE INIQUITY OF RESPECTING THE RICH AND DESPISING THE POOR—THE SOLIDARITY OF THE DIVINE LAW.

JAMES ii. 5-10.

ST. JAMES is varied in his style. Sometimes he writes short, maxim-like sentences, which remind us of the Book of Proverbs; sometimes, as in the passage before us, he is as argumentative as St. Paul. Having condemned worldly respect of persons as practical infidelity, he proceeds to prove the justice of this estimate; and he does so with regard to both items of the account: these respecters of persons are utterly wrong, both in their treatment of the poor and in their treatment of the rich. The former is the worse of the two; for it is in flat contradiction of the Divine decree, and is an attempt to reverse it. God has said one thing about the poor man's estate, and these time-servers, publicly in the house of God, say another.

"Hearken, my beloved brethren." He invites their attention to an affectionate and conclusive statement of the case. "Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom? But ye have dishonoured the poor man." By the

humble life which, by Divine decree, God's Son led upon the earth, by the social position of the men whom He chose as His Apostles and first disciples, by blessings promised to the poor and to the friends of the poor, both under the Law and under the Gospel, God has declared His special approbation of the poor man's estate. "But ye" (ὑμεῖς δέ, with great emphasis on the pronoun) "have dishonoured the poor man." With Haman-like impiety ye would disgrace "the man whom the King delights to honour."

Let us not misunderstand St. James. He does not say or imply that the poor man is promised salvation on account of his poverty, or that his poverty is in any way meritorious. That is not the case, any more than that the wealth of the rich is a sin. But so far as God has declared any preference, it is for the poor, rather than for the rich. The poor man has fewer temptations, and he is more likely to live according to God's will, and to win the blessings that are in store for those who love Him. His dependence upon God for the means of life is perpetually brought home to him, and he is spared the peril of trusting in riches, which is so terrible a snare to the wealthy. He has greater opportunities of the virtues which make man Christlike, and fewer occasions of falling into those sins which separate him most fatally from Christ. But opportunities are not virtues, and poverty is not salvation. Nevertheless, to a Christian a poor man is an object of reverence, rather than of contempt.

But the error of the worldly Christians whom St. James is here rebuking does not end with dishonouring the poor whom God has honoured; they also pay special respect to the rich. Have the rich, as a class, shown that they deserve anything of the kind? Very much the reverse, as experience is constantly proving. "Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? Do not they blaspheme the honourable name by the which ye are called?" Unless we consider the "synagogue" mentioned above to be a Jewish one, in which Christians still worship, as in the Temple at Jerusalem, the gold-ringed worshipper is to be understood as a Christian; and reasons have been given above (p. 584) for believing that the "synagogue" is a Christian place of worship. But in any case the rich oppressors here spoken of are not to be thought of as exclusively or principally Christian. They are the wealthy as a class, whether converts to Christianity or not; and apparently, as in chap. v. 1-6, it is the wealthy, unbelieving Jews who are principally in the writer's mind. St. James is thinking of the rich Sadducees, who at this period (A. D. 35-65) were among the worst oppressors of the poorer Jews, and were of course specially bitter against those who had become adherents of "the Way," and who seemed to them to be renegades from the faith of their forefathers. It was precisely to this kind of oppression that St. Paul devoted himself with fanatical zeal previous to his conversion (Acts ix. 1, 2; 1 Tim. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Phil. iii. 6).

"The judgment-seats" before which these wealthy Jews drag their poorer brethren may be either heathen or Jewish courts (comp. 1 Cor. vi. 2, 4), but are probably the Jewish courts frequently held in the synagogues. The Roman government allowed the Jews very considerable powers of jurisdiction over their own people, not only in purely ecclesiastical matters, but in civil matters as well. The Mosaic Law penetrated into almost all the relations of life, and where it was concerned it was intolerable to a Jew to be tried by heathen law. Consequently the Romans found that their control over the Jews was more secure, and less provocative of rebellion, when the Jews were permitted to retain a large measure of self-government. This applied not only to Palestine, but to all places in which there were large settlements of Jews. Even in the New Testament we find ample evidence of this. The high-priest grants Saul "letters to Damascus, unto the synagogues" to arrest all who had become converts to "the Way" (Acts ix. 2). And St. Paul before Herod Agrippa II. declares that, in his fury against converts to Christianity, he "persecuted them even unto foreign cities" (Acts xxvi. 11). Most, if not all, of the five occasions on which he himself "received of the Jews forty stripes save one" (2 Cor. xi. 24) must have been during his travels outside Palestine. The proconsul Gallio told the Jews of Corinth, not only that they might, but that they must, take their charges against Paul, for breaking a Jewish law, to a Jewish tribunal; and when they ostentatiously beat Sosthenes before his own tribunal, for some Jewish offence, he abstained from interfering. It is likely enough that provincial governors, partly from policy, partly from indifference, allowed Jewish officials to exercise more power than they legally possessed; but they possessed quite enough to enable them to handle severely those who contravened the letter or the traditional interpretation of the Mosaic Law. That the dragging before the judgment seats refers to bringing Christians before Roman magistrates, in a time of persecution, is a gratuitous hypothesis which does not fit the context. It was the mob, rather than the rich, that in the earlier persecutions acted in this way. The rich were contemptuously indifferent. There is, therefore, no evidence here that the letter was written during the persecution under Domitian or under Trajan. Nevertheless, their Christianity, rather than their debt, was probably the reason why these poor Jewish Christians were prosecuted in the synagogue courts by the wealthy Jews.

So far from this passage being evidence that the Epistle was written at a time long after the death of St. James, it is, as Renan has carefully shown, almost a proof that it was written during his lifetime. As regards the relations between rich and poor, "the Epistle of James is a perfect picture of the Ebionim at Jerusalem in the years which preceded the revolt." The destruction of Jerusalem "introduced so complete a change into the situation of Judaism and of Christianity, that it is easy to distinguish a writing subsequent to the catastrophe of the year 70 from a writing contemporary with the third Temple. Pictures evidently referring to the internal contests between the different classes in Jerusalem society, such as that which is presented to us in the Epistle of James, are inconceivable after the revolt of the year 66, which put an end to the reign of the Sadducees." These were the times when women bought the priesthood for their husbands from Herod Agrippa II., and went to see them officiate, over carpets spread from their own door to the Temple; when wealthy priests were too fastidious to kill the victims for sacrifice without first putting on silk gloves; when their kitchens

were furnished with every appliance for luxurious living, and their tables with every delicacy; and when, supported by the Romans, to whom they truckled, they made war upon the poor priests, who were supported by the people. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they sent out their servants to collect what they claimed as offerings, and if payment was refused the servants took what they claimed by force. Facts like these help us to understand the strong language used here by St. James, and the still sterner words at the beginning of the fifth chapter. In such a state of society the mere possession of wealth certainly established no claims upon the reverence of a Christian congregation; and the fawning upon rich people, degrading and unchristian at all times, would seem to St. James to be specially perilous and distressing then.

"Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which ye are called?" The last clause literally means "which was called upon you" (*τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς*); and we need not doubt that the reference is to the Name of Christ which was invoked upon them at their baptism; *quod invocatum est super vos*, as the Vulgate has it. The same expression is found in the Septuagint of those who are called by God's name (2 Chron. vii. 14; Jer. xiv. 9; xv. 16; Amos ix. 12). Some have suggested that the name here indicated is that of "poor," or of "brethren," or of "Christian;" but none of these is at all probable. It may be doubted whether the last was already in common use; and "blaspheme" would be a very strong expression to use of any of them; whereas both it and "honourable" are quite in keeping if the name be that of Christ. The word rendered "honourable" (*καλόν*) cannot be adequately translated. It is the same as that which is rendered "good" when we read of "the Good Shepherd" (John x. 11). It suggests what is beautiful, noble, and good, as opposed to what is foul, mean, and wicked; and such is the Name of Christ, which is called in a special sense "the Name" (Acts v. 41; 3 John 7. Comp. Ignatius, "Eph." iii., vii.; "Philad." x.; Clem. Rom. ii., xiii.). That the blasphemers are not Christians is shown by the clause "which was called upon you." Had Christians been intended, St. James would have written "Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name which was called upon them?" That they blasphemed the Name in which they were baptised would have been such an aggravation of their offence that he would not have failed to indicate it. These blasphemers were no doubt Jews; and St. James has in his mind the anathemas against Jesus Christ which were frequent utterances among the Jews, both in the synagogues and in conversation. St. Paul alludes to these when he says, "No man speaking in the Spirit of God saith, Jesus is anathema;" and Justin Martyr writes, "That which is said in the Law, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, confirms our hope which is hung upon the crucified Christ, not as if God were cursing that crucified One, but because God foretold that which would be done by all of you (Jews) and those like you. . . . And you may see with your eyes this very thing coming to pass; for in your synagogues you curse all those who from Him have become Christians" ("Trypho," xcvi.). The text, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," was a favourite one with the Jews in their controversies with Christians, as St. James would know well (see Gal. iii. 13); and all this tends to show that he refers to literal blasphemy by word of mouth, and not to the virtual blasphemy which is involved in conduct that dishonours Christ.

His argument, therefore, amounts to this, that the practice of honouring the rich for their riches is (quite independently of any dishonour done to the poor) doubly reprehensible. It involves the meanness of flattering their own oppressors, and the wickedness of reverencing those who blaspheme Christ. It is a servile surrender of their own rights, and base disloyalty to their Lord.

But, perhaps (the argument continues), some will defend this respect paid to the rich as being no disloyalty to Christ, but, on the contrary, simple fulfilment of the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Be it so, that the rich as a class are unworthy of respect and honour, yet nevertheless they are our neighbours, and no misconduct on their side can cancel the obligation on our side to treat them as we should wish to be treated ourselves. We ourselves like to be respected and honoured, and therefore we pay respect and honour to them. To those who argue thus the reply is easy. Certainly, if that is your motive, ye do well. But why do you love your neighbour as yourselves if he chances to be rich, and treat him like a dog if he chances to be poor? However excellent your reasons for honouring the wealthy may be, you still do not free yourselves from the blame of showing an unchristian respect of persons, and therefore of committing sin, "being convicted by the law as transgressors."

The law of loving one's neighbour as oneself is a "royal law," not as having emanated from God or from Christ as King, still less as being a law which binds even kings, or which makes kings of those who observe it. It is a royal law, as being sovereign over other laws, inasmuch as it is one of those two on which "hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. xxii. 40). Indeed, either of the two may be interpreted so as to cover the whole duty of man. Thus St. Paul says of this royal law, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Gal. v. 14). And St. John teaches the same truth in a different way, when he declares that "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John iv. 20). The expression "royal law" occurs nowhere else, either in the New Testament or in the Septuagint, but it is found in a dialogue entitled "Minos" (p. 317), which is sometimes wrongly attributed to Plato. It is one which might readily occur to any one as a name for a supreme moral principle.

"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." The law is the expression of one and the same principle—love; and of one and the same will—the will of God. Therefore he who deliberately offends against any one of its enactments, however diligently he may keep all the rest, is guilty of offending against the whole. His guiding principle is not love, but selfishness—not God's will, but his own. He keeps nine tenths of the law because he likes to do so, and he breaks one tenth because he likes to do so. The fact of his wilful disobedience proves that his obedience is not the fruit of love or loyalty, but of self-seeking. If we ask what his character is, the answer must be, "He is a lawbreaker." These respecters of persons claimed to be observers of

the law, because they treated their rich neighbours as they would have liked to be treated themselves. St. James shows them that, on the contrary, they are transgressors of the law, because they pick and choose as to what neighbours shall be treated thus kindly. They keep the law when it is convenient to keep it, and break it when it is inconvenient to keep it. Such keeping of the law is in its essence, not obedience, but disobedience. He who follows honesty only because honesty is the best policy is not an honest man, and he who obeys the law only because obedience suits him is not an obedient man. There is no serving God with reservations. However small the reservation may be, it vitiates all the rest. In order to "fulfil the law" (a rare expression, found only here and in Rom. ii. 27), we must keep it all round, independently of our own likes and dislikes.

St. James is not here countenancing the severity of Draco, that small crimes deserve death, and that there is no worse punishment for great crimes; nor yet the paradox of the Stoics, that the theft of a penny is as bad as parricide, because in either case the path of virtue is left, and one is drowned as surely in seven feet of water as in seventy fathoms. He is not contending that all sins are equal and that to break one of God's commands is as bad as to break them all. What he maintains is that no one can claim to be a fulfiller of the law in virtue of his extensive obedience so long as there is any portion of the law which he wilfully disobeys. Why does he disobey in this? Because it pleases him to do so. Then he would disobey in the rest if it pleased him to do so. The motive of his conduct is not submission, but self-will. He is in character "a transgressor of the law."

Both defects are common enough still, and are likely to remain so. Paying respect to persons, dignities, and positions is a frequent form of meanness, especially in the manner here condemned, of courting the rich and slighting the poor. It is a Christian duty to respect the rank or the office of those whom God has placed in a position superior to ourselves, and it is also a Christian duty to reverence those who by God's grace are leading lives of virtue and holiness; but it is unchristian partiality to honour a man merely for his wealth, or to dishonour him merely for his poverty. And, secondly, we are all of us prone to plead, both before the world and our own consciences, the particulars in which we do not offend as a set-off against those in which we do. To detect ourselves thus balancing a transgression here, against many observances there, ought at once to startle us into the conviction that the whole principle of our lives must be faulty. Our aim is, not to love God, or to obey Him, but to get to heaven, or at least to escape hell, on the cheapest terms.

CHAPTER XII.

FAITH AND WORKS: THREE VIEWS OF THE RELATION OF THE TEACHING OF ST. JAMES TO THE TEACHING OF ST. PAUL—THE RELATION OF LUTHER TO BOTH.

JAMES ii. 14-26.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is One; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."—JAMES ii. 14-26.

THIS famous passage has been quoted in full, because one needs to have the whole of it before one in order to appreciate the value of the arguments used on this side and on that as to its relation to the teaching of St. Paul on the connection between faith and works; for which purpose mere extracts will not do; and also because considerable changes, some of them important, have been made throughout the passage by the Revisers, and these will influence the impression derived from reading the passage as a whole.

It might be thought that here, at any rate, we have got, in this singularly practical and undogmatic Epistle, a paragraph which is, both in intention and in effect, distinctly doctrinal. It seems at first sight to be a careful exposition of St. James's views as to the nature and value of faith and its relation to conduct. But a little attention will prove to us that throughout the passage St. James is as practical in his aim as in any part of the letter, and that whatever doctrinal teaching there may be in the passage is there because the practical purpose of the writer could not be fulfilled without involving doctrine, and not at all because the writer's object is to expound or defend an article of the Christian faith. He has *agenda* rather than *credenda* in his mind. An orthodox creed is assumed throughout. What needs to be produced is not right belief, but right action.

In this affectionate pastoral St. James passes in review the defects which he knows to exist in his readers. They have their good points, but these are sadly marred by corresponding deficiencies. They are swift to hear, but also swift to speak and slow to act. They believe in Jesus Christ; but they dishonour Him by dishonouring His poor, while they profess to keep the law of charity by honouring the rich. They are orthodox in a Monotheistic creed; but they rest content with that, and their orthodoxy is as barren as a dead tree. It is with this last defect that St. James is dealing in the passage before us. And as so often (i. 12, 19; ii. 1; iii. 1, 13; iv. 1, 13; v. 1, 7, 13), he clearly states his main point first, and then proceeds to enforce and elucidate it.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him?" "That faith" is literally "the faith," or "his faith;" viz., such faith as he professes, a faith that produces nothing. There is no emphasis on "say." St. James is not insinuating that the man says he has faith, when he really has none. If that were the case, it would be needless to ask, "Can his faith save him?" The question then would be, "Can his

profession of faith save him?" But St. James nowhere throws doubt on the truth of the unprofitable believer's professions, or on the possibility of believing much and doing nothing. Why, then, does he put in the "say"? Why not write, "If a man have faith"? Perhaps in order to indicate that in such cases the man's own statement is all the evidence there is that he has faith. In the case of other Christians their works prove them to be believers; but where there are no works you can only have the man's word for it that he believes. The case is parallel to that sketched by our blessed Lord, which St. James may have in his mind. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy Name, and by Thy Name cast out devils, and by Thy Name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. vii. 21-23). In this case it is manifest that the profession of faith is not mere empty hypocrisy; it is not a saying of "Lord, Lord," to one who is not believed to be the Lord. It is a faith that can remove mountains, but divorced from the love which makes it acceptable. The two, which God hath joined together, have by man's self-will been put asunder.

The relation, therefore, of the teaching of St. James to that of His Divine Brother is clear: the two are in perfect harmony. What is its relation to the teaching of St. Paul? Omitting minor differences, there are in the main three answers to this question: (1) The writer of this Epistle is deliberately contradicting and correcting the teaching of St. Paul. (2) St. James is correcting prevalent misunderstandings, or is anticipating probable misunderstandings, of the teaching of St. Paul. (3) St. James writes without reference to, and possibly without knowledge of, the precise teaching of the Apostle of the Gentiles respecting the relation between faith and works.

(1) Those who hold the first of these three views naturally maintain that the Epistle is not genuine, but the production of some one of a later age than St. James, who wished to have the great authority of his name to cover an attack upon the teaching of St. Paul. Thus F. C. Baur maintains that "the doctrine of this Epistle must be considered as intended to correct that of Paul." This, which is taken from the second edition of his work on the "Life and Work of St. Paul," published after his death in 1860, by his pupil Zeller, may be taken as his matured opinion. In his history of the "Christian Church of the First Three Centuries," published in 1853, he expresses himself a little less positively: "It is impossible to deny that the Epistle of James presupposes the Pauline doctrine of justification. And if this be so, its tendency is distinctly anti-Pauline, though it may not be aimed directly against the Apostle himself. The Epistle contends against a one-sided conception of the Pauline doctrine, which was dangerous to practical Christianity." In both works alike Baur contends that the Epistle of James cannot be genuine, but is the product of some unknown writer in the second century. The opinions that our Epistle is directed against the teachings of St. Paul, and that it is not genuine, naturally go together. It is against all probability that St. James, who had supported St. Paul in the crisis at Jerusalem in A. D. 50 (Acts xv.), and who had given to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (Gal. ii. 9), should attack St. Paul's own teaching. But to deny the authenticity of the Epistle, and place it in a later age, does not really avoid the difficulty of the supposed attack on St. Paul, and it brings with it other difficulties of a no less serious character. In any case the letter is addressed to *Jewish* Christians (i. 1); and what need was there to put *them* on their guard against the teaching of a man whom they regarded with profound distrust, and whose claim to be an Apostle they denied? It would be as reasonable to warn Presbyterians against the doctrine of the Infallibility of the Pope. Besides all which, as Renan has shown, the letter sketches a state of things which would be inconceivable after the outbreak of the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem; *i. e.*, it cannot be placed later than A. D. 66.

Dr. Salmon justly observes, "To a disciple of Baur there is no more disappointing document than this Epistle of James. Here, if anywhere in the New Testament, he might expect to find evidence of anti-Pauline rancour. There is what looks like flat contradiction between this Epistle and the teaching of St. Paul. . . . But that opposition to Paul which, on a superficial glance, we are disposed to ascribe to the Epistle of James, disappears on a closer examination. I postpone for the moment the question whether we can suppose that James intended to contradict Paul; but whether he intended it or not, he has not really done so; he has denied nothing that Paul has asserted, and asserted nothing that a disciple of Paul would care to deny. On comparing the language of James with that of Paul, all the distinctive expressions of the latter are found to be absent from the former. St. Paul's thesis is that a man is justified not by works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. James speaks only of works without any mention of the law, and of faith without any mention of Jesus Christ, the example of faith which he considers being merely the belief that there is one God. In other words, James is writing not in the interests of Judaism, but of morality. Paul taught that faith in Jesus Christ was able to justify a man uncircumcised and unobservant of the Mosaic ordinances. . . . For this Pauline teaching James not only has no word of contradiction, but he gives no sign of ever having heard of the controversy which, according to Baur, formed the most striking feature in the early history of the Church. . . . Whatever embarrassment the apparent disagreement between the Apostles has caused to orthodox theologians is as nothing in comparison with the embarrassment caused to a disciple of Baur by their fundamental agreement."

We may, therefore, safely abandon a theory which involves three such difficulties. It assigns a date to the Epistle utterly incompatible with its contents. It makes the writer warn Jewish Christians against teaching which they, of all Christians, were least likely to find attractive. And after all, the warning is futile; for the writer's own teaching is fundamentally the same as that which it is supposed to oppose and correct. Besides all which, we may say with Reuss that this Tübingen criticism is merely baseless ingenuity. It "overlooks the unique originality of the Epistle;" and to ascribe to the writer of it

"any ulterior motives at all is simply a useless display of acuteness."

(2) This last remark will not predispose us to regard with favour the second hypothesis mentioned above—that in this passage St. James is correcting prevalent misunderstandings, or is anticipating probable misunderstandings, of the teaching of St. Paul. There is no trace of any such intention, or of any anxiety on the subject. The purpose of the passage is not doctrinal at all, but, like the rest of the Epistle, eminently practical. The writer's object throughout is to inculcate the necessity of right conduct. Readiness in hearing the Word of God is all very well, and correctness of belief in God is all very well; but without readiness to do what pleases Him it is as useless as a dead vine. Whether St. James remembered the words, "We reckon that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Rom. iii. 28), must remain doubtful; for, as has been pointed out in a previous exposition (p. 569), there is some reason for believing that he had seen the Epistle to the Romans. But there is no reason for believing that he was acquainted with the parallel statement in the Epistle to the Galatians, "We being Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, save through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believe on Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (ii. 15, 16). Of one thing, however, we may feel confident, that, had St. James been intending to give the true meaning of either or both of these statements by St. Paul, in order to correct or obviate misunderstanding, he would not have worded his exposition in such a way that it would be possible for a hasty reader to suppose that he was contradicting the Apostle of the Gentiles instead of merely explaining him. He takes no pains to show that while St. Paul speaks of works of the law, *i. e.*, ceremonial observances, he himself is speaking of good works generally, which St. Paul no less than himself regarded as a necessary accompaniment and outcome of living faith.

Moreover, was there any likelihood that the Jewish Christians would thus misinterpret St. Paul? Among Gentile Christians there was danger of this, because they misunderstood the meaning of the Christian liberty which he so enthusiastically preached. But with Jewish converts the danger was that they would refuse to listen to St. Paul in anything, not that they would be in such a hurry to accept his teaching that they would go away with a wrong impression as to what he really meant. And precisely that doctrine of St. Paul which was so liable to be misunderstood St. James proclaims as clearly as St. Paul does in this very Epistle. He also declares, more than once, that the Gospel is the "law of liberty" (i. 25; ii. 12). Had St. James been writing to Gentiles, there might have been some reason for his putting his readers on their guard against misinterpreting St. Paul's manner of preaching the Gospel: in writing "to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion" there was little or no reason for so doing.

(3) We fall back, therefore, upon the far more probable view that in this passage St. James is merely following the course of his own argument, without thinking of St. Paul's teaching respecting the relation between faith and works. How much of St. Paul's teaching he knew depends upon the date assigned to this Epistle, whether before A. D. 50 or after A. D. 60. At the later date St. James must have known a good deal, both from St. Paul himself, and also from many Jews of the Dispersion, who had heard the preaching of the Apostle in his missionary journeys, had seen some of his letters and brought both good and evil reports of his work to the Church at Jerusalem. Each year, at the Passover and other festivals, James would receive multitudes of such visitors. But it does not follow that because he knew a good deal about St. Paul's favourite topics, and his manner of presenting the faith to his hearers, therefore he has his teaching in his mind in writing to Jewish converts. The passage before us is thoroughly intelligible, if it is treated on its own merits without any reference to Pauline doctrine; and not only so, but we may say that it becomes more intelligible when so treated.

At the opening of the Epistle St. James insists on the necessity of faith: "knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience" (ver. 3); and "Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting" (ver. 6). Then he passes on to insist upon the necessity of practice: "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (ver. 22); and "Being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh" (ver. 25). At the beginning of the second chapter he does exactly the same. He first assumes that as a matter of course his hearers have faith (ver. 1), and then goes on to show how this must be accompanied by the practice of charity and mercy towards all, and especially towards the poor (vv. 2-13). The passage before us is precisely on the same lines.

It is assumed that his readers profess to have faith (vv. 14, 19); and St. James does not dispute the truth of this profession. But he maintains that unless this faith is productive of a corresponding practice, its existence is not proved, and its utility is disproved. It is as barren as a withered tree, and as lifeless as a corpse. Three times over he asserts, with simple emphasis, that faith apart from practice is dead (vv. 17, 20, 26). All which tends to show that the present paragraph comes quite naturally in the course of the exhortation, without any ulterior motive being assumed to explain it. It is in close harmony with what precedes, and thoroughly in keeping with the practical aim of the whole letter. We see how easily it might have been written by any one who was in earnest about religion and morality, without having heard a word about St. Paul's teaching respecting faith in Christ and works of the law.

It has been already pointed out that a letter addressed by a Jewish Christian to Jewish Christians would not be very likely to take account of St. Paul's doctrine, whether rightly or wrongly understood. It has also been shown that St. James, as is natural in such a letter, makes frequent appeals to the Old Testament, and also has numerous coincidences with portions of that now much-neglected Jewish literature which forms a connecting-link between the Old and the New, especially with the Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. It was in the period in which that literature was produced that discussions as to the value of faith in God, as distinct from the fear of God, and in particular as to the faith of Abraham, the friend of God, began to be com-

mon among the Jews, especially in the Rabbinical schools. We find evidence of this in the Apocrypha itself. "Abraham was a great father of many people, . . . and when he was proved he was found faithful" (Ecclus. xliv. 19, 20). "Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness" (1 Macc. ii. 52), where the interrogative form of sentence may have suggested the interrogation of St. James. It will be observed that in these passages we have the adjective "faithful" (πιστός); not yet the substantive "faith" (πίστις). But in the composite and later work which in our Bibles bears the name of the Second Book of Esdras we have faith frequently spoken of. "The way of truth shall be hidden, and the land shall be barren of faith" (v. 1). "As for faith, it shall flourish, corruption shall be overcome, and the truth, which hath been so long without fruit, shall be declared" (vi. 28) "Truth shall stand, and faith shall wax strong" (vii. 34). And in two remarkable passages faith is spoken of in connection with works. "And every one that shall be saved, and shall be able to escape by his works, and by faith, whereby ye have believed, shall be preserved from the said perils, and shall see My salvation" (ix. 7, 8). "These are they that have works and faith towards the Most Mighty" (xiii. 23). With Philo faith and the faith of Abraham are common topics. He calls it "the queen of the virtues," and the possessor of it "will bring a faultless and most fair sacrifice to God." Abraham's faith is not easy to imitate, so hard is it to trust in the unseen God rather than in the visible creation; whereas he without wavering believed that the things which were not present were already present, because of his most sure faith in Him Who promised.

Other instances might be quoted from Jewish literature; but these suffice to show that the nature of faith, and the special merit of Abraham's faith, were subjects often discussed among Jews, and were likely to be familiar to those whom St. James addresses. This being so, it becomes probable that what he has in his mind is not Pauline doctrine, or any perversion of it, but some Pharisaic tenet respecting these things. The view that faith is formal orthodoxy—the belief in one God—and that correctness of belief suffices for the salvation of a son of Abraham, seems to be the kind of error against which St. James is contending. About faith in Christ or in His Resurrection there is not a word. It is the cold Monotheism which the self-satisfied Pharisee has brought with him into the Christian Church, and which he supposes will render charity and good works superfluous, that St. James is condemning. So far from this being a contradiction to St. Paul, it is the very doctrine which he taught, and almost in the same form of words. "What doth it profit (τί ὄφελος), my brethren," asks St. James, "if a man say he hath faith, but have not works?" "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing," says St. Paul. "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (οὐδὲν ὠφελοῦμαι).

St. Paul and St. James are thus found to be agreed. It remains to be shown that in spite of his own statements to the contrary, Luther was as fully agreed with the latter as with the former. When he writes about St. James, Luther's prejudices lead him to disparage a form of teaching which he has not been at the pains to comprehend. But when he expounds St. Paul he does so in words which would serve excellently as an exposition of the teaching of St. James. In his preface to the Epistle to the Romans he writes thus: "But faith is a Divine work in us, that changes us and begets us anew of God (John i. 13); and kills the old man, and makes of us quite other men in heart, courage, mind, and strength, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. Oh, it is a living, active, energetic, mighty thing, this faith, so that it is impossible that it should not work what is good without intermission. It does not even ask whether good works are to be done, but before one asks it has done them, and is ever doing. But he who does not do such works is a man without faith, is fumbling and looking about him for faith and good works, and knows neither the one nor the other, yet chatters and babbles many words about both.

"Faith is a living deliberate confidence in the grace of God, so sure that it would die a thousand times for its trust. And such confidence and experience of Divine grace make a man merry, bold, and joyful towards God and all creatures; all which the Holy Spirit does in faith. Hence the man without compulsion becomes willing and joyful to do good to every one, to serve every one, to endure everything for the love and praise of God, who has shown him such grace. Therefore it is impossible to sever works from fath; yea, as impossible as to sever burning and shining from fire."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FAITH OF THE DEMONS; THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM; AND THE FAITH OF RAHAB THE HARLOT.

JAMES ii. 19, 21, 25.

IN the preceding chapter several points of great interest were passed over, in order not to obscure the main issue as to the relation of this passage to the teaching of St. Paul. Some of these may now be usefully considered.

Throughout this book, as in that on the Pastoral Epistles and others for which the present writer is in no way responsible, the Revised Version has been taken as the basis of the expositions. There may be reasonable difference of opinion as to its superiority to the Authorised Version for public reading in the services of the Church, but few unprejudiced persons would deny its superiority for purposes of private study and both private and public exposition. Its superiority lies not so much in happy treatment of difficult texts, as in the correction of a great many small errors of translation, and above all in the substitution of a great many true or probable readings for others that are false or improbable. And while there are not a few cases in which there is plenty of room for doubt whether the change, even if clearly a gain in accuracy, was worth making, there are also some in which the uninitiated student wonders why no change was made. The passage before us contains a remarkable instance. Why has the word "devils" been retained as the rendering of *δαιμόνια*, while "demons" is relegated to the margin?

There are two Greek words, very different

from one another in origin and history, which are used both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to express the unseen and spiritual powers of evil. These are *διάβολος* and *δαιμόνιον*, or in one place *δαίμων* (Matt. xlii. 31; not Mark v. 12, or Luke vii. 29, or Rev. xvi. 14 and xviii. 2). The Scriptural usage of these two words is quite distinct and very marked. Excepting where it is used as an adjective (John vi. 70; 1 Tim. iii. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 3; Titus ii. 3), *διάβολος* is one of the names of Satan, the great enemy of God and of men, and the prince of the spirits of evil. It is so used in the Books of Job and of Zechariah, as well as in Wisdom ii. 24, and also throughout the New Testament, viz., in the Gospels and Acts, the Catholic and Pauline Epistles, and the Apocalypse. It is, in fact, a proper name, and is applied to one person only. It commonly, but not invariably (1 Chron. xxi. 1; Ps. cviii. [cix.] 5) has the definite article. The word *δαιμόνιον*, on the other hand, is used of those evil spirits who are the messengers and ministers of Satan. It is thus used in Isaiah, the Psalms, Tobit, Baruch, and throughout the New Testament. It is used also of the false gods of the heathen, which were believed to be evil spirits, or at least the productions of evil spirits, who are the inspirers of idolatry; whereas Satan is never identified with any heathen divinity. Those who worship false gods are said to worship "demons," but never to worship "the devil." Neither in the Old Testament nor in the New are the two words ever interchanged. Satan is never spoken of as a *δαίμων* or *δαιμόνιον*, and his ministers are never called *διάβολοι*. Is it not a calamity that this very marked distinction should be obliterated in the English Version by translating both Greek words by the word "devil," especially when there is another word which, as the margin admits, might have been used for one of them? The Revisers have done immense service by distinguishing between Hades, the abode of departed spirits of men, and Hell or Gehenna, the place of punishment (iii. 6). Why did they reject a similar opportunity by refusing to distinguish the devil from the demons over whom he reigns? This is one of the suggestions of the American Committee which might have been followed with great advantage and (so far as one sees) no loss.

St. James has just been pointing out the advantage which the Christian who has works to show has over one who has only faith. The one can prove that he possesses both; the other cannot prove that he possesses either. The works of the one are evidence that the faith is there also, just as leaves and fruit are evidence that a tree is alive. But the other, who possesses only faith, cannot prove that he possesses even that. He says that he believes, and we may believe his statement, but if any one doubts or denies the truth of his profession of faith he is helpless. Just as a leafless and fruitless tree may be alive; but who is to be sure of this? We must note, however, that in this case the statement is not doubted. "Thou hast faith, and I have works;" the possibility of possessing faith without works is not disputed. And again, "Thou believest that God is one;" the orthodox character of the man's creed is not called in question. This shows that there is no emphasis on "say" in the opening verse, "If a man say he hath faith, but have not works;" as if such a profession were incredible (see pp. 588-89). And this remains equally true if, with some of the best editors, we turn the statement of the man's faith into a question, "Dost thou believe that God is One?" For "Thou doest well" shows that the man's orthodoxy is not questioned. The object of St. James is not to prove that the man is a hypocrite, and that his professions are false; but that, on his own showing, he is in a miserable condition. He may plume himself upon the correctness of his Theism; but as far as that goes, he is no better than the demons, to whom this article of faith is a source, not of joy and strength, but of horror.

It is most improbable that, if he had been alluding to the teaching of St. Paul, St. James would have selected the Unity of the Godhead as the article of faith held by the barren Christian. He would have taken faith in Christ as his example. But in writing to Jewish Christians, without any such allusion, the selection is very natural. The Monotheism of his creed, in contrast with the foolish "gods many, and lords many," of the heathen, was to the Jew a matter of religious and national pride. He gloried in his intellectual and spiritual superiority to those who could believe in a plurality of deities. And there was nothing in Christianity to make him think less highly of this supreme article of faith. Hence, when St. James desires to give an example of the faith on which a Jewish Christian, who had sunk into a dead formalism, would be most likely to rely, he selects this article, common to both the Jewish and the Christian creed, "I believe that God is One." "Thou doest well," is the calm reply; and then follows the sarcastic addition, "The demons also believe—and shudder."

Is St. James here alluding to the belief mentioned above, that the gods of the heathen are demons? They, of all evil spirits, might be supposed to know most about the Unity of God, and to have most to fear in reference to it. "They sacrificed unto demons, which were no God," we read in Deuteronomy (xxxii. 17). And again in the Psalms, "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons" (cvi. 37. Comp. xcvi. 5). In these passages the Greek word *δαιμόνια* represents the Elilim or Shedim, the nonentities who were allowed to usurp the place of Jehovah. And St. Paul affirms, "That the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God" (1 Cor. x. 20). It is quite possible, therefore, that St. James is thinking of demons as objects of idolatrous worship, or at any rate as seducing people into such worship, when he speaks of the demons' belief in the Unity of God.

But a suggestion which Bede makes, and which several modern commentators have followed, is well worth considering. St. James may be thinking of the demons which possessed human beings, rather than those which received or promoted idolatrous worship. Bede reminds us of the many demons who went out at Christ's command, crying out that He was the Son of God, and especially of the man with the legion among the Gadarenes, who expressed not only belief, but horror: "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not." Without falling into the error of supposing that demons can mean demoniacs, we may imagine how readily one who had witnessed such scenes as

those recorded in the Gospels might attribute to the demons the expressions of horror which he had heard in the words and seen on the faces of those whom demons possessed. Such expressions were the usual effect of being confronted by the Divine presence and power of Christ, and were evidence both of a belief in God and of a dread of Him. St. James, who was then living with the mother of the Lord, and sometimes followed His Divine Brother in His wanderings, would be almost certain to have been a witness of some of these healings of demoniacs. And it is worth noting that the word which in the Authorised Version is rendered "tremble," and in the Revised "shudder" (φρίσσειν), expresses physical horror, especially as it affects the hair; and in itself it implies a body, and would be an inappropriate word to use of the fear felt by a purely spiritual being. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; but in the Septuagint we find it used in the book of Job: "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up" (iv. 15). It is a stronger word than either "fear" or "tremble," and strictly speaking can be used only of men and other animals.

This horror, then, expressed by the demons through the bodies of those whom they possess, is evidence enough of faith. Can faith such as that save any one? Is it not obvious that a faith which produces, not works of love, but the strongest expressions of fear, is not a faith on which any one can rely for his salvation? And yet the faith of those who refuse to do good works, because they hold that their faith is sufficient to save them, is no better than the faith of the demons. Indeed, in some respects it is worse. For the sincerity of the demons' faith cannot be doubted; their terror is proof of it: whereas the formal Christian has nothing but cold professions to offer. Moreover, the demons are under no self-delusion; they know their own terrible condition. For the formalist who accepts Christian truth and neglects Christian practice there is a dreadful awakening in store. There will come a time when "believe and shudder" will be true also of him. "But, before it is too late, willest thou to get to know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?"

"Wilt thou know" does not do full justice to the meaning of the Greek (θέλεις γνῶναι). The meaning is not, "I would have you know," but, "Do you wish to have acquired the knowledge?" You profess to know God and to believe in Him; do you desire to know what faith in Him really means? "O vain man" is literally. "O empty man," *i. e.*, empty-headed, empty-handed, and empty-hearted. Empty-headed, in being so deluded as to suppose that a dead faith can save; empty-handed, in being devoid of true spiritual riches; empty-hearted, in having no real love either for God or man. The epithet seems to be the equivalent of Raca, the term of contempt quoted by our Lord as the expression of that angry spirit which is akin to murder (Matt. v. 22). The use of it by St. James may be taken as an indication that the primitive Church saw that the commands in the Sermon on the Mount are not rules to be obeyed literally, but illustrations of principles. The sin lies not so much in the precise term of reproach which is employed as in the spirit and temper which are felt and displayed in the employment of it. The change from "dead" (A. V.) to "barren" (R. V.) is not a change of translation, but of reading (νεκρά to ἀργή), the latter term meaning "workless, idle, unproductive" (Matt. xx. 3, 6; 1 Tim. v. 13; Titus i. 12; 2 Peter i. 8). Aristotle ("Nic. Eth.," I. vii. 11) asks whether it is likely that every member of a man's body should have a function or work (ἔργον) to perform, and that man as a whole should be functionless (ἀργός). Would nature have produced such a vain contradiction? We should reproduce the spirit of St. James's pointed interrogation if we rendered "that faith without fruits is fruitless."

In contrast with this barren faith, which makes a man's spiritual condition no better than that of the demons, St. James places two conspicuous instances of living and fruitful faith—Abraham and Rahab. The case of "Abraham our father" would be the first that would occur to every Jew. As the passages in the Apocrypha (Wisdom x. 5; Ecclus. xliv. 20; 1 Macc. ii. 52) prove, Abraham's faith was a subject of frequent discussion among the Jews, and this fact is quite enough to account for its mention by St. James, St. Paul (Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6), and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 17), without supposing that any one of them had seen the writings of the others. Certainly there is no proof that the writer of this Epistle is the borrower, if there is borrowing on either side. It is urged that between the authors of this Epistle and that to the Hebrews there must be dependence on one side or the other, because each selects not only Abraham, but Rahab, as an example of faith; and Rahab is so strange an example that it is unlikely that two writers would have selected it independently. There is force in the argument, but less than at first sight appears. The presence of Rahab's name in the genealogy of the Christ (Matt. i. 5), in which so few women are mentioned, must have given thoughtful persons food for reflection. Why was such a woman singled out for such distinction? The answer to this question cannot be given with certainty. But whatever caused her to be mentioned in the genealogy may also have caused her to be mentioned by St. James and the writer of Hebrews; or the fact of her being in the genealogy may have suggested her to the author of these two Epistles. This latter alternative does not necessarily imply that these two writers were acquainted with the written Gospel of St. Matthew, which was perhaps not in existence when they wrote. The genealogy, at any rate, was in existence, for St. Matthew no doubt copied it from official or family registers. Assuming, however, that it is not a mere coincidence that both writers use Abraham and Rahab as examples of fruitful faith, it is altogether arbitrary to decide that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote first. The probabilities are the other way. Had St. James known that Epistle, he would have made more use of it.

The two examples are in many respects very different. Their resemblance consists in this, that in both cases faith found expression in action, and this action was the source of the believer's deliverance. The case of Abraham, which St. Paul uses to prove the worthlessness of "works of the law" in comparison with a living faith, is used by St. James to prove the worthlessness of a dead faith in comparison with works of love which are evidence that there is a living faith behind them. But it should be noticed that a different episode in Abraham's life

is taken in each Epistle, and this is a further reason for believing that neither writer refers to the other. St. Paul appeals to Abraham's faith in believing that he should have a son when he was a hundred, and Sarah ninety years of age (Rom. iv. 19). St. James appeals to Abraham's faith in offering up Isaac, when there seemed to be no possibility of the Divine promise being fulfilled if Isaac was slain. The latter required more faith than the former, and was much more distinctly an act of faith; a work, or series of works, that would never have been accomplished if there had not been a very vigorous faith to inspire and support the doer. The result (*ἐξ ἔργων*) was that Abraham was "justified," *i. e.*, he was counted righteous, and the reward of his faith was with still greater solemnity and fulness than on the first occasion (Gen. xv. 4-6) promised to him: "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen. xxii. 16-18).

With the expression "was justified as a result of works" (*ἐξ ἔργων ἐδικαιώθη*), which is used both of Abraham and of Rahab, should be compared our Lord's saying, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. xii. 37), which are of exactly the same form; literally, "As a result of thy words thou shalt be accounted righteous, and as a result of thy words thou shalt be condemned" (*ἐκ τῶν λόγων σου δικαιωθήσῃ, καὶ ἐκ τῶν λόγων σου καταδικασθήσῃ*); that is, it is from the consideration of the words in the one case, and of the works in the other, that the sentence of approval proceeds; they are the source of the justification. Of course from the point of view taken by St. James words are "works;" good words spoken for the love of God are quite as much fruits of faith and evidence of faith as good deeds. It is not impossible that this phrase is an echo of expressions which he had heard used by Christ.

That the words rendered "offered up Isaac his son upon the altar" really mean this, and not merely "brought Isaac his son as a victim up to the altar," is clear from other passages where the same phrase (*ἀναφέρειν ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον*) occurs. Noah "offering burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. viii. 20) and Christ "offering our sins on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24) might be interpreted either way, although the bringing up to the altar and to the tree does not seem so natural as the offering on them. But a passage in Leviticus about the offerings of the leper is quite decisive: "Afterward he shall kill the burnt offering: and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the meal offering upon the altar" (xiv. 19, 20). It would be very unnatural to speak of bringing the victim up to the altar after it had been slain. (Comp. Baruch i. 10; 1 Macc. iv. 53). The Vulgate, Luther, Beza, and all English versions agreed in this translation; and it is not a matter of small importance, not a mere nicety of rendering. In all completeness, both of will and deed, Abraham had actually surrendered and offered up to God his only son, when he laid him bound upon the altar, and took the knife to slay him—to slay that son of whom God had promised, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Then "was the Scripture fulfilled;" *i. e.*, what had been spoken and partly fulfilled before (Gen. xv. 6) received a more complete and a higher fulfilment. Greater faith hath no man than this, that a man gives back his own promises unto God. The real but incomplete faith of believing that aged parents could become the progenitors of countless thousands had been accepted and rewarded. Much more, therefore, was the perfect faith of offering to God the one hope of posterity accepted and rewarded. This last was a work in which his faith co-operated, and which proved the complete development of his faith; by it "was faith made perfect."

"He was called the Friend of God." Abraham was so called in Jewish tradition; and to this day this is his name among his descendants the Arabs, who much more commonly speak of him as "the Friend" (*El Khalil*), or "the Friend of God" (*El Khalil Allah*), than by the name Abraham. Nowhere in the Old Testament does he receive this name, although our Versions, both Authorised and Revised, would lead us to suppose that he is so called. The word is found neither in the Hebrew nor in existing copies of the Septuagint. In 2 Chron. xx. 7, "Abraham Thy friend" should be "Abraham Thy beloved;" and in Isaiah xli. 8, "Abraham My friend" should be "Abraham whom I loved." In both passages, however, the Vulgate has the rendering *amicus*, and some copies of the Septuagint had the reading "friend" in 2 Chron. xx. 7, while Symmachus had it in Isa. xli. 8 (See Field's "Hexapla," I. p. 744; II. p. 513). Clement of Rome (x., xvii.) probably derived this name for Abraham from St. James. But even if Abraham is nowhere styled "the friend of God," he is abundantly described as being such. God talks with him as a man talks with his friend, and asks, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17); which is the very token of friendship pointed out by Christ. "No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). It is worthy of note that St. James seems to intimate that the word is not in the sacred writings. The words "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness," are introduced with the formula, "The Scripture was fulfilled which saith." Of the title "Friend of God" it is simply said "he was called," without stating by whom.

"In like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works?" It is because of the similarity of her case to Abraham's, both of them being a contrast to the formal Christian and the demons, that Rahab is introduced. In her case also faith led to action, and the action had its result in the salvation of the agent. If there had been faith without action, if she had merely believed the spies without doing anything in consequence of her belief, she would have perished. She was glorified in Jewish tradition, perhaps as being a typical forerunner of proselytes from the Gentile world; and it may be that this accounts for her being mentioned in the genealogy of the Messiah, and consequently by St. James and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Talmud mentions a quite untrustworthy tradition that she married Joshua, and became the ancestress of eight persons who were both

priests and prophets, and also of Huldah the prophetess. St. Matthew gives Salmon the son of Naasson as her husband; he may have been one of the spies.

But the contrast between Abraham and Rahab is almost as marked as the similarity. He is the friend of God, and she is of a vile heathen nation and a harlot. His great act of faith is manifested towards God, hers towards men. His is the crowning act of his spiritual development; hers is the first sign of a faith just beginning to exist. He is the aged saint, while she is barely a catechumen. But according to her light, which was that of a very faulty moral standard, "she did what she could," and it was accepted.

These contrasts have their place in the argument, as well as the similarities. The readers of the Epistle might think, "Heroic Acts are all very suitable for Abraham; but we are not Abrahams, and must be content with sharing his faith in the true God; we cannot and need not imitate his acts." "But," St. James replies, (and he writes ὁμοίως δέ, not καὶ ὁμοίως), "there is Rahab, Rahab the heathen, Rahab the harlot; at least you can imitate her." And for the Jewish Christians of that day her example was very much in point. She welcomed and believed the messengers, whom her countrymen persecuted, and would have slain. She separated herself from her unbelieving and hostile people, and went over to an unpopular and despised cause. She saved the preachers of an unwelcome message for the fulfilment of the Divine mission with which they had been entrusted. Substitute the Apostles for the spies, and all this is true of the believing Jews of that age. And as if to suggest this lesson, St. James speaks not of "young men," as Joshua vi. 23, nor of "spies," as Hebrews xi. 31, but of "messengers," a term which is as applicable to those who were sent by Jesus Christ as to those who were sent by Joshua.

Plutarch, who was a young man at the time when this Epistle was written, has the following story of Alexander the Great, in his "Apothegms of Kings and Generals": The young Alexander was not at all pleased with the success of his father, Philip of Macedon. "My father will leave me nothing," he said. The young nobles who were brought up with him replied, "He is gaining all this for you." Almost in the words of St. James, though with a very different meaning, he answered, "What does it profit (τί ὄφελος) if I possess much and do nothing?" The future conqueror scorned to have everything done for him. In quite another spirit the Christian must remember that if he is to conquer he must not suppose that his heavenly Father, who has done so much for him, has left him nothing to do. There is the fate of the barren fig-tree as a perpetual warning to those who are royal in their professions of faith, and paupers in good works.

CHAPTER XIV.

HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS —THE POWERS AND PROPENSITIES OF THE TONGUE—THE SELF-DEFILEMENT OF THE RECKLESS TALKER.

JAMES iii. 1-8.

FROM the "idle faith" St. James goes on to speak of the "idle word." The change from the subject of faith and works to that of the temptations and sins of speech is not so abrupt and arbitrary as at first sight appears. The need of warning his readers against sins of the tongue has been in his mind from the first. Twice in the first chapter it comes to the surface. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (ver. 19), as if being slow to hear and swift to speak were much the same as being swift to wrath. And again, "If any man thinketh himself to be religious, while he bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his heart, this man's religion is vain" (ver. 25). And now the subject of barren faith causes him to return to the warning once more. For it is precisely those who neglect good works that are given to talk much about the excellence of their faith, and are always ready to instruct and lecture others. That controversies about faith and works suggested to him this section about offences of the tongue, is a gratuitous hypothesis. St. James shows no knowledge of any such controversies. As already pointed out, the purpose of the preceding section (ii. 14-26) is not controversial or doctrinal, but purely practical, like the rest of the Epistle. The paragraph before us is of the same character; it is against those who substitute words for works.

St. James is entirely of Carlyle's opinion that in the majority of cases, if "speech is silvern, silence is golden;" but he does not write twenty volumes to prove the truth of this doctrine. "In noble uprightness, he values only the strict practice of concrete duties, and hates talk" (Reuss); and while quite admitting that teachers are necessary, and that some are called to undertake this office, he tells all those who desire to undertake it that what they have to bear in mind is its perils and responsibilities. And it is obvious that true teachers must always be a minority. There is something seriously wrong when the majority in the community, or even a large number, are pressing forward to teach the rest.

"Be not many teachers, my brethren;" or, if we are to do full justice to the compact fulness of the original, "Do not many of you become teachers." St. James is not protesting against a usurpation of the ministerial office; to suppose this is to give far too specific a meaning to his simple language. The context points to no such sin as that of Korah and his company, but simply to the folly of incurring needless danger and temptation. In the Jewish synagogues any one who was disposed to do so might come forward to teach, and St. James writes at a time when the same freedom prevailed in the Christian congregations. "Each had a psalm, had a teaching, had a revelation, had a tongue, had an interpretation. . . . All could prophesy one by one, that all might learn and all be comforted" (1 Cor. xiv. 26, 31). But in both cases the freedom led to serious disorders. The desire to be called of men "Rabbi, Rabbi," told among Jews and Christians alike, and many were eager to expound who had still the very elements of true religion to learn. It is against this general desire to be prominent as instructors both in private and in public that St. James is here warning his readers. The Christian Church already has its ministers distinct from the laity, to whom the laity are to apply for spiritual help (v. 14); but it is not an invasion of their office by the laity to which St. James refers, when he says, "Do not many of you become teachers." These Jewish Christians of the Dispersion are like those at

Rome to whom St. Paul writes; each of them was confident that his knowledge of God and the Law made him competent to become "a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the Law the form of knowledge and of the truth" (Rom. ii. 17 ff.). But in teaching others they forgot to teach themselves; they failed to see that to preach the law without being a doer of the law was to cause God's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles; and that to possess faith and do nothing but talk was but to increase their own condemnation; for it was to place themselves among those who are condemned by Christ because "they say and do not" (Matt. xxiii. 3). The phrase "to receive judgment" (*κρῖμα λαμβάνειν*) is in form a neutral one: the judgment may conceivably be a favourable one, but in usage it implies that the judgment is adverse (Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47; Rom. xiii. 2). Even without the verb "receive" this word "judgment" in the New Testament generally has the meaning of a condemnatory sentence (Rom. ii. 2, 3; iii. 8; v. 16; 1 Cor. xi. 29; Gal. v. 10; 1 Tim. iii. 6; v. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 17; 2 Pet. ii. 3; Jude 4; Rev. xvii. 1; xviii. 20). And there is no reason to doubt that such is the meaning here; the context requires it. The fact that St. James with affectionate humility and persuasiveness includes himself in the judgment—"we shall receive"—by no means proves that the word is here used in a neutral sense. In this he is like St. John, who breaks the logical flow of a sentence in a similar manner, rather than seem not to include himself: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate" (1 John ii. 1); he is as much in need of the Advocate as others. So also here, St. James, as being a teacher, shares in the heavier condemnation of teachers. It was the conviction that the word is not neutral, but condemnatory, which produced the rendering in the Vulgate, "knowing that ye receive greater condemnation" (*scientes quoniam majus judicium sumitis*), it being thought that St. James ought not to be included in such a judgment.

But this is to miss the point of the passage. St. James says that "in many things we stumble—every one of us." He uses the strong form of the adjective (*ἅπαντες* for *πάντες*), and places it last with great emphasis. Every one of us sins, and therefore there is condemnation in store for every one of us. But those of us who are teachers will receive a heavier sentence than those of us who are not such; for our obligations to live up to the law which we know, and profess, and urge upon others, are far greater. Heaviest of all will be the condemnation of those who, without being called or qualified, through fanaticism, or an itch for notoriety, or a craze for controversy, or a love of fault-finding, push themselves forward to dispense instruction and censure. They are among the fools who "rush in where angels fear to tread," and thereby incur responsibilities which they need not, and ought not, to have incurred, because they do not possess the qualifications for meeting them and discharging them. The argument is simple and plain: "Some of us must teach. All of us frequently fall. Teachers who fall are more severely judged than others. Therefore do not many of you become teachers."

In what sphere is it that we most frequently fall? Precisely in that sphere in which the activity of teachers specially lies—in speech. "If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man." St. James is not thinking merely of the teacher who never makes a mistake, but of the man who never sins with the tongue. There is an obvious, but by no means exclusive, reference to teachers, and that is all. To every one of us, whatever our sphere in life, the saying comes home that one who offends not in word is indeed a perfect man. By "perfect" (*τέλειος*) he means one who has attained full spiritual and moral development, who is "perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (i. 4). He is no longer a babe, but an adult; no longer a learner, but an adept. He is a full and complete man, with perfect command of all the faculties of soul and body. He has the full use of them, and complete control over them. The man who can bridle the most rebellious part of his nature, and keep it in faultless subjection, can bridle also the whole. This use of "perfect," as opposed to what is immature and incomplete, is the commonest use of the word in the New Testament. But sometimes it is a religious or philosophical term, borrowed from heathen mysteries or heathen philosophy. In such cases it signifies the initiated, as distinct from novices. Such a metaphor was very applicable to the Gospel, and St. Paul sometimes employs it (1 Cor. ii. 6; Col. i. 28); but it may be doubted whether any such thought is in St. James's mind here, although such a metaphor would have suited the subject. He who never stumbles in word can be no novice, but must be fully initiated in Christian discipline. But the simpler interpretation is better. He who can school the tongue can school the hands and the feet, the heart and the brain, in fact, "the whole body," the whole of his nature, and is therefore a perfect man.

In his characteristic manner, St. James turns to natural objects for illustrations to enforce his point. "Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body." The changes made here by the Revisers are changes caused by a very necessary correction of the Greek text (*εἰ δέ*) instead of *ἴδε*, which St. James nowhere else uses, or *ἰδού*, which here has very little evidence in its favour); for the text has been corrupted in order to simplify a rather difficult and doubtful construction. The uncorrupted text may be taken in two ways. Either, "But if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths, that they may obey us, and so turn about their whole body"—(much more ought we to do so to ourselves); this obvious conclusion being not stated, but left for us to supply at the end of an unfinished sentence. Or, as the Revisers take it, which is simpler, and leaves nothing to be understood. A man who can govern his tongue can govern his whole nature, just as a bridle controls, not merely the horse's mouth, but the whole animal. This first metaphor is suggested by the writer's own language. He has just spoken of the perfect man bridling his whole body, as before he spoke of the impossibility of true religion in one who does not bridle his tongue (i. 26); and this naturally suggests the illustration of the horses.

The argument is *a fortiori* from the horse to the man, and still more from the ship to the man, so that the whole forms a climax, the point throughout being the same, viz., the smallness of the part to be controlled in order to have control over the whole. And in order to bring out the fact that the ships are a stronger illustration

than the horses, we should translate, "Behold, even the ships, though they are so great," etc., rather than "Behold, the ships also, though they are so great." First the statement of the case (ver. 2), then the illustration from the horses (ver. 3), then "even the ships" (ver. 4), and finally the application, "so the tongue also" (ver. 5). Thus all runs smoothly. If, as is certainly the case, we are able to govern irrational creatures with a small bit, how much more ourselves through the tongue; for just as he who has lost his hold of the reins has lost control over the horse, so he who has lost his hold on his tongue has lost control over himself. The case of the ship is still stronger. It is not only devoid of reason, but devoid of life. It cannot be taught obedience. It offers a dead resistance, which is all the greater because of its much greater size, and because it is driven by rough winds, yet its whole mass can be turned about by whoever has control of the little rudder, to lose command of which is to lose command of all. How much more, therefore, may we keep command over ourselves by having command over our tongues! There is nothing more in the metaphor than this. We may, if we please, go on with Bede, and turn the whole into a parable, and make the sea mean human life, and the winds mean temptations, and so on; but we must beware of supposing that anything of that kind was in the mind of St. James, or belongs to the explanation of the passage. Such symbolism is read into the text, not extracted from it. It is legitimate as a means of edifying, but it is not interpretation.

The expression "rough winds" (*σκληρῶν ἀνέμων*) is peculiar, "rough" meaning hard or harsh, especially to the touch, and hence of what is intractable or disagreeable in other ways (1 Sam. xxv. 3; Matt. xxv. 24; John vi. 60; Acts xxvi. 14; Jude 15). Perhaps in only one other passage in Greek literature, previous to this Epistle, is it used as an epithet of wind, viz., in Proverbs xxvii. 16, a passage in which the Septuagint differs widely from the Hebrew and from our versions. St. James, who seems to have been specially fond of the sapiential books of Scripture, may have derived this expression from the Proverbs.

"So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things." The tongue, like the bit, and the rudder, is only a very small part of the whole, and yet, like them, it can do great things. St. James says, "boasteth great things," rather than "doeth great things," not in order to insinuate that the tongue boasts of what it cannot or does not do, which would spoil the argument, but in order to prepare the way for the change in the point of the argument. Hitherto the point has been the immense influence which the small organ of speech has over our whole being, and the consequent need of controlling it when we want to control ourselves. We must take care to begin the control in the right place. This point being established, the argument takes a somewhat different turn, and the necessity of curbing the tongue is shown, not from its great power, but from its inherent malignity. It can be made to discharge good offices, but its natural bent is towards evil. If left unchecked, it is certain to do incalculable mischief. The expression "boasteth great things" marks the transition from the one point to the other, and in a measure combines them both. There are great things done; that shows the tongue's power. And it boasts about them; that shows its bad character.

This second point, like the first, is enforced by two illustrations taken from the world of nature. The first was illustrated by the power of bits and rudders; the second is illustrated by the capacity for mischief in fire and in venomous beasts. "Behold, what a fire kindles what a wood!" is the literal rendering of the Greek, where "what a fire" evidently means "how small a fire," while "what a wood" means "how large a wood." The traveller's camp-fire is enough to set a whole forest in flames, and the camp-fire was kindled by a few sparks. "Fire," it is sometimes truly said, "it is a good servant, but a bad master," and precisely the same may with equal truth be said of the tongue. So long as it is kept under control it does excellent service; but directly it can run on unchecked, and lead instead of obeying, it begins to do untold mischief. We sometimes speak of men whose "pens run away with them;" but a far commoner case is that of persons whose tongues run away with them, whose untamed and unbridled tongues say things which are neither seriously thought nor (even at the moment) seriously meant. The habit of saying "great things" and using strong language is a condition of constant peril, which will inevitably lead the speaker into evil. It is a reckless handling of highly dangerous material. It is playing with fire.

Yes, "the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body." The right punctuation of this sentence cannot be determined with certainty, and other possible arrangements will be found in the margin of the Revised Version; but on the whole this seems to be the best. The one thing that is certain is that the "so" of the Authorised version—"so is the tongue among our members"—is not genuine; if it were, it would settle the construction and the punctuation in favour of what is at least the second-best arrangement: "The tongue is a fire, that world of iniquity: the tongue is among our members that which defileth the whole body." The meaning of "the world of iniquity" has been a good deal discussed, but is not really doubtful. The ordinary colloquial signification is the right one. The tongue is a boundless store of mischief, an inexhaustible source of evil, a universe of iniquity; *universitas iniquitatis*, as the Vulgate renders it. It contains within itself the elements of all unrighteousness; it is charged with endless possibilities of sin. This use of "world" (*κόσμος*) seems not to occur in classical Greek; but it is found in the Septuagint of the Proverbs, and again in a passage where the Greek differs widely from the Hebrew (see above). What is still more remarkable, it occurs immediately after the mention of sins of speech: "An evil man listeneth to the tongue of the wicked; but a righteous man giveth no heed to false lips. The faithful man has the whole world of wealth; but the faithless not even a penny" (xvii. 4).

"Is the tongue." The word for "is" must be observed (not *ἐστι*, nor *ὑπάρχει*, but *καθίσταται*). Its literal meaning is "constitutes itself," and it occurs again in iv. 4, where the Revisers rightly translate it "maketh himself:" "Whosoever would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." The tongue was not created by God to be a permanent source of all kinds of evil; like the rest of creation, it was made "very

good," "the best member that we have." It is by its own undisciplined and lawless career that it makes itself "the world of iniquity," that it constitutes itself among our members as "that which defileth our whole body." This helps to explain what St. James means by "unspotted" (ἄσπιλον) or "undefiled" (i. 27). He who does not bridle his tongue is not really religious. Pure religion consists in keeping in check that "which defileth (ἡ σπιλοῦσα) our whole body." And the tongue defiles us in three ways;—by suggesting sin to ourselves and others; by committing sin, as in all cases of lying and blasphemy; and by excusing or defending sin. It is a palmary instance of the principle that the best when perverted becomes the worst—*corruptio optimi fit pessima.*

It "setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." We must be content to leave the precise meaning of the words rendered "the wheel of nature" (τὸν τροχὸν τῆς γενέσεως) undetermined. The general meaning is evident enough, but we cannot be sure what image St. James had in his mind when he wrote the words. The one substantive is obviously a metaphor, and the other is vague in meaning (as the latter occurs i. 23, the two passages should be compared in expounding); but what the exact idea to be conveyed by the combination is, remains a matter for conjecture. And the conjectures are numerous, of which one must suffice. The tongue is a centre from which mischief radiates; that is the main thought. A wheel that has caught fire at the axle is at last wholly consumed, as the fire spreads through the spokes to the circumference. So also in society. Passions kindled by unscrupulous language spread through various channels and classes, till the whole cycle of human life is in flames. Reckless language first of all "defiles the whole" nature of the man who employs it, and then works destruction far and wide through the vast machinery of society. And to this there are no limits; so long as there is material, the fire will continue to burn.

How did the fire begin? How does the tongue, which was created for far other purposes, acquire this deadly propensity? St. James leaves us in no doubt upon that point. It is an inspiration of the evil one. The enemy, who steals away the good seed, and sows weeds among the wheat, turns the immense powers of the tongue to destruction. The old serpent imbues it with his own poison. He imparts to it his own diabolical agency. He is perpetually setting it on fire (present participle) from hell.

The second metaphor by which the malignant propensity of the tongue is illustrated is plain enough. It is an untamable, venomous beast. It combines the ferocity of the tiger and the mockery of the ape with the subtlety and venom of the serpent. It can be checked, can be disciplined, can be taught to do good and useful things; but it can never be tamed, and must never be trusted. If care and watchfulness are laid aside, its evil nature will burst out again, and the results will be calamitous.

There are many other passages in Scripture which contain warnings about sins of the tongue: see especially Proverbs xvi. 27, 28; Ecclus. v. 13, 14, and xxviii. 9-23, from which St. James may have drawn some of his thoughts. But what is peculiar to his statement of the matter is this, that the reckless tongue defiles the whole nature of the man who owns it. Other writers tell us of the mischief which the foul-mouthed man does to others, and of the punishment which will one day fall upon himself. St. James does not lose sight of that side of the matter, but the special point of his stern warning is the insisting upon the fact that unbridled speech is a pollution to the man that employs it. Every faculty of mind or body with which he has been endowed is contaminated by the subtle poison which is allowed to proceed from his lips. It is a special application of the principle laid down by Christ, which was at first a perplexity even to the Twelve, "The things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man" (Mark vii. 15, 20, 23). The emphasis with which Christ taught this ought to be noticed. On purpose to insist upon it, "He called to Him the multitude again, and said unto them, Hear ye all of you, and understand: there is nothing from without the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man." And He repeats this principle a second and a third time to His disciples privately. "Are ye so without understanding also? . . . That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. . . . All these things proceed from within, and defile the man." If even an unspoken thought can defile, when it has not yet proceeded farther than the heart, much greater will be the pollution if the evil thing is allowed to come to the birth by passing the barrier of the lips. This flow of evil from us means nothing less than this, that we have made ourselves a channel through which infernal agencies pass into the world. Is it possible for such a channel to escape defilement?

CHAPTER XV.

THE MORAL CONTRADICTIONS IN THE RECKLESS TALKER.

JAMES iii. 9-12.

IN these concluding sentences of the paragraph respecting sins of the tongue St. James does two things—he shows the moral chaos to which the Christian who fails to control his tongue is reduced, and he thereby shows such a man how vain it is for him to hope that the worship which he offers to Almighty God can be pure and acceptable. He has made himself the channel of hellish influences. He cannot at pleasure make himself the channel of heavenly influences, or become the offerer of holy sacrifices. The fires of Pentecost will not rest where the fires of Gehenna are working, nor can one who has become the minister of Satan at the same time be a minister to offer praise to God.

When those who would have excused themselves for their lack of good works pleaded the correctness of their faith, St. James told them that such faith was barren and dead, and incapable of saving them from condemnation. Similarly, the man who thinks himself to be religious, and does not bridle his tongue, was told that his religion is vain (i. 26). And in the passage before us St. James explains how that is. His religion or religious worship (θρησκεία) is a mockery and a contradiction. The offering is tainted; it comes from a polluted altar and a

polluted priest. A man who curses his fellow-men and then blesses God, is like one who professes the profoundest respect for his sovereign, while he insults the royal family, throws mud at the royal portraits, and ostentatiously disregards the royal wishes. It is further proof of the evil character of the tongue that it is capable of lending itself to such chaotic activity. "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father," *i. e.*, God in His might and in His love; "and therewith curse we men, which are made after the likeness of God." The heathen fable tells us the apparent contradiction of being able to blow both hot and cold with the same breath; and the son of Sirach points out that "if thou blow the spark, it shall burn; if thou spit upon it, it shall be quenched; and both these come out of thy mouth" (Ecclus. xxviii. 12). St. James, who may have had this passage in his mind, shows us that there is a real and a moral contradiction which goes far beyond either of these: "Out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing." Well may he add, with affectionate earnestness, "My brethren, these things ought not so be."

Assuredly they ought not; and yet how common the contradiction has been, and still is, among those who seem to be, and who think themselves to be, religious people! There is perhaps no particular in which persons professing to have a desire to serve God are more ready to invade His prerogatives than in venturing to denounce those who differ from themselves, and are supposed to be, therefore, under the ban of Heaven. "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they do not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 2, 3). Hence they rashly and intemperately "curse whom the Lord hath not cursed, and defy whom the Lord hath not defied" (Num. xxiii. 8). There are still many who believe that not only in the psalms and hymns in which they bless the Lord, but also in the sermons and pamphlets in which they fulminate against their fellow-Christians, they are "offering service to God" (John xvi. 2). There are many questions which have to be carefully considered and answered before a Christian mouth, which has been consecrated to the praise of our Lord and Father, ought to venture to utter denunciations against others who worship the same God and are also His offspring and His image. Is it quite certain that the supposed evil is something which God abhors; that those whom we would denounce are responsible for it; that denunciation of them will do any good; that this is the proper time for such denunciation; that we are the proper persons to utter it? About every one of these questions the most fatal mistakes are constantly being made. The singing of *Te Deums* after massacres and *dragonnades* is perhaps no longer possible; but alternations between religious services and religious prosecutions, between writing pious books and publishing exasperating articles, are by no means extinct. For one case in which harm has been done because no one has come forward to denounce a wrongdoer, there are ten cases in which harm has been done because someone has been indiscreetly, or inopportunely, or uncharitably, or unjustly denounced. "Praise is not seasonable (*ὡραῖος*) in the mouth of a sinner" (Ecclus. xv. 9); and whatever may have been the writer's meaning in the difficult passage in which it occurs, we may give it a meaning that will bring it into harmony with what St. James says here. The praise of God is not seasonable in the mouth of one who is ever sinning in reviling God's children.

The illustrations of the fountain and the fig-tree are among the touches which, if they do not indicate one who is familiar with Palestine, at any rate agree well with the fact that the writer of this Epistle was such. Springs tainted with salt or with sulphur are not rare, and it is stated that most of those on the eastern slope of the hill-country of Judea are brackish. The fig-tree, the vine, and the olive were abundant throughout the whole country; and St. James, if he looked out of the window as he was writing, would be likely enough to see all three. It is not improbable that in one or more of the illustrations he is following some ancient saying or proverb. Thus, Arrian, the pupil of Epictetus, writing less than a century later, asks, "How can a vine grow, not vinewise, but olivewise, or an olive, on the other hand, not olivewise, but vinewise? It is impossible, inconceivable." It is possible that our Lord Himself, when He used a similar illustration in connection with the worst of all sins of the tongue, was adapting a proverb already in use. In speaking of "the blasphemy against the Spirit" He says, "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruit. Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things; and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii. 33-36). And previously, in the Sermon on the Mount, where He was speaking of deeds rather than of words, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matt. vii. 16-18).

Can it be the case that while physical contradictions are not permitted in the lower classes of unconscious objects, moral contradictions of a very monstrous kind are allowed in the highest of all earthly creatures? The "double-minded man," who prays and doubts, receives nothing from the Lord, because his petition is only in form a prayer; it lacks the essential characteristic of prayer, which is faith. But the double-tongued man, who blesses God and curses men, what does he receive? Just as the double-minded man is judged by his doubts, and not by his forms of prayer, so the double-tongued man is judged by his curses, and not by his forms of praise. In each case one or the other of the two contradictories is not real. If there is prayer, there are no doubts; and if there are doubts, there is no prayer—no prayer that will avail with God. So also in the other case: if God is sincerely and heartily blessed, there will be no cursing of His children; and if there is such cursing, God cannot acceptably be blessed; the very words of praise, coming from such lips, will be an offence to Him.

But it may be urged, our Lord Himself has set

us an example of strong denunciation in the woes which He pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees; and again, St. Paul cursed Hymenæus and Alexander (1 Tim. i. 20), the incestuous person at Corinth (1 Cor. v. 5), and Elymas the sorcerer (Acts xiii. 10). Most true. But firstly, these curses were uttered by those who could not err in such things. Christ "knew what was in man," and could read the hearts of all; and the fact that St. Paul's curses were supernaturally fulfilled proves that he was acting under Divine guidance in what he said. And secondly, these stern utterances had their source in love; not, as human curses commonly have, in hate. It was in order that those on whom they were pronounced might be warned, and schooled to better things, that they were uttered; and we know that in the case of the sinner at Corinth the severe remedy had this effect; the curse was really a blessing. When we have infallible guidance, and when we are able by supernatural results to prove that we possess it, it will be time enough to begin to deal in curses. And let us remember the proportion which such things bear to the rest of Christ's words and of St. Paul's words, so far as they have been preserved for us. Christ wrought numberless miracles of mercy: besides those which are recorded in detail, we are frequently told that "He healed many that were sick with divers diseases, and cast out many devils" (Mark i. 34); that "He had healed many" (iii. 10); that "wheresoever He entered, into villages or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the market-places, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole" (vi. 56); and so forth (John xxi. 25). But he wrought only one miracle of judgment, and that was upon a tree, which could teach the necessary lesson without feeling the punishment (Mark xi. 12-23). All this applies with much force to those who believe themselves to be called upon to denounce and curse all such as seem to them to be enemies of God and His truth: but with how much more force to those who in moments of anger and irritation deal in execrations on their own account, and curse a fellow-Christian, not because he seems to them to have offended God, but because he has offended themselves! That such persons should suppose that their polluted mouths can offer acceptable praises to the Lord and Father, is indeed a moral contradiction of the most startling kind. And are such cases rare? Is it so uncommon a thing for a man to attend Church regularly, and join with apparent devotion in the services, and yet think little of the grievous words which he allows himself to utter when his temper is severely tried? How amazed and offended he would be if he were invited to eat at a table which had been used for some disgusting purpose, and had never since been cleansed! And yet he does not hesitate to "defile his whole body" with his unbridled tongue, and then offer praise to God from this polluted source!

Nor is this the only contradiction in which such a one is involved. How strange that the being who is lord and master of all the animal creation should be unable to govern himself! How strange that man's chief mark of superiority over the brutes should be the power of speech, and that he should use this power in such a way as to make it the instrument of his own degradation, until he becomes lower than the brutes! They, whether tamed or untamed, unconsciously declare the glory of God; while he with his noble powers of consciously and loyally praising Him, by his untamed tongue reviles those who are made after the image of God, and thus turns his own praises into blasphemies. Thus does man's rebellion reverse the order of nature and frustrate the will of God.

The writer of this Epistle has been accused of exaggeration. It has been urged that in this strongly worded paragraph he himself is guilty of that unchastened language which he is so eager to condemn; that the case is overstated, and that the highly-coloured picture is a caricature. Is there any thoughtful person of large experience that can honestly assent to this verdict? Who has not seen what mischief may be done by a single utterance of mockery, or enmity, or bravado; what confusion is wrought by exaggeration, innuendo, and falsehood; what suffering is inflicted by slanderous suggestions and statements; what careers of sin have been begun by impure stories and filthy jests? All these effects may follow, be it remembered, from a single utterance in this case, may spread to multitudes, may last for years. One reckless word may blight a whole life. "Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have fallen by the tongue" (Ecclus. xxviii. 18). And there are persons who habitually pour forth such things, who never pass a day without uttering what is unkind, or false, or impure. When we look around us and see the moral ruin which in every class of society can be traced to reckless language—lives embittered, and blighted, and brutalised by words spoken and heard—can we wonder at the severe words of St. James, whose experience was not very different from our own? Violent and uncharitable language had become one of the besetting sins of the Jews, and no doubt Jewish Christians were by no means free from it. "Curse the whisperer and the double-tongued," says the son of Sirach, "for such have destroyed many that were at peace" (Ecclus. xxviii. 13). To which the Syriac Version adds a clause not given in the Greek, nor in our Bibles: "Also the third tongue, let it be cursed; for it has laid low many corpses." This expression, "third tongue," seems to have come into use among the Jews in the period between the Old and New Testament. It means a slanderous tongue, and it is called "third" because it is fatal to three sets of people—to the person who utters the slander, to those who listen to it, and to those about whom it is uttered. "A third tongue hath tossed many to and fro, and driven them from nation to nation; and strong cities hath it pulled down, and houses of great men hath it overthrown" (Ecclus. xxviii. 14); where not only the Syriac, but the Greek, has the interesting expression "third tongue," a fact obscured in our version.

The "third tongue" is as common and as destructive now as when the son of Sirach denounced it, or St. James wrote against it with still greater authority; and we all of us can do a great deal to check the mischief, not merely by taking care that we keep our own tongues from originating evil, but by refusing to repeat, or if possible even to listen to, what the third tongue says. Our unwillingness to hear may be a discouragement to the speaker, and our refusal to repeat will at least lessen the evil of his tale.

We shall have saved ourselves from becoming links in the chain of destruction.

There is one kind of sinful language to which the severe sayings of St. James specially apply, although the context seems to show that it was not specially in his mind—impure language. The foul tongue is indeed a "world of iniquity, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." In no other case is the self-pollution of the speaker so manifest, or the injury to the listener so probable, so all but inevitable. Foul stories and impure jests and innuendoes, even more clearly than oaths and curses, befoul the souls of those who utter them, while they lead the hearers into sin. Such things rob all who are concerned in them, either as speakers or listeners, of two things which are the chief safeguards of virtue—the fear of God, and the fear of sin. They create an atmosphere in which men sin with a light heart, because the grossest sins are made to look not only attractive and easy, but amusing. What can be made to seem laughable is supposed to be not very serious. There is no more devilish act that a human being can perform than that of inducing others to believe that what is morally hideous and deadly is "pleasant to the eye and good for food." And this devil's work is sometimes done merely to raise a laugh, merely for something to say. Does any one seriously maintain that the language of St. James is at all too strong for such these things as these? We hardly need his authority for the belief that a filthy tongue pollutes a man's whole being, and owes its inspiration to the Evil One.

It is of angry, ill-tempered, unkind words that we do not believe this so readily. Words that are not false or calumnious, not running out into blasphemies and curses, and certainly not tainted with anything like impurity, do not always strike us as being as harmful as they really are, not only to others, whom they irritate or sadden, but to ourselves, who allow our characters to be darkened by them. The captious word, that makes everything a subject for blame; the discontented word, that would show that the speaker is always being ill-treated; the biting word, that is meant to inflict pain; the sullen word, that throws a gloom over all who hear it; the provoking word, that seeks to stir up strife—of all these we are most of us apt to think too lightly, and need the stern warnings of St. James to remind us of their true nature and of their certain consequences. As regards others, such things wound tender hearts, add needlessly and enormously to the unhappiness of mankind, turn sweet affections sour, stifle good impulses, create and foster bad feelings, embitter in its smallest details the whole round of daily life. As regards ourselves, indulgence in such language weakens and warps our characters, blunts our sympathies, deadens our love for man, and therefore our love for God. "In particular it makes prayer either impossible or half useless. Whether we know it or not, the prayer that comes from a heart indulging in evil temper is hardly a prayer at all. We cannot really be face to face with God; we cannot really approach God as a Father; we cannot really feel like children kneeling at His feet; we cannot really be simply affectionate and truthful in what we say to Him, if irritation, discontent, or gloom, or anger, is busy at our breasts. An undisciplined temper shuts out the face of God from us. We may see His holy Law, but we cannot see Himself. We may think of Him as our Creator, our Judge, our Ruler, but we cannot think of Him as our Father, nor approach Him with love." "Salt water cannot yield sweet."

It was once pleaded on behalf of a man who had been criticised and condemned as unsatisfactory, that he was "a good man, all but his temper." "All but his temper!" was the not unreasonable reply; "as if temper were not nine-tenths of religion." "If any man stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM BELOW.

JAMES iii. 13-16.

THIS section, which again looks at first sight like an abrupt transition to another subject, is found, upon closer examination, to grow quite naturally out of the preceding one. St. James has just been warning his readers against the lust of teaching and talking. Not many of them are to become teachers, for the danger of transgressing with the tongue, which is great in all of us, is in them at a maximum, because teachers must talk. Moreover, those who teach have greater responsibilities than those who do not; for by professing to instruct others they deprive themselves of the plea of ignorance, and they are bound to instruct by example of good deeds, as well as by precept of good words. From this subject he quite naturally passes on to speak of the difference between the wisdom from above and the wisdom from below; and the connection is twofold. It is those who possess only the latter wisdom, and are proud of their miserable possession, who are so eager to make themselves of importance by giving instruction; and it is the fatal love of talk, about which he has just been speaking so severely, that is one of the chief symptoms of the wisdom that is from below.

This paragraph is, in fact, simply a continuation of the uncompromising attack upon sham religion which is the main theme throughout a large portion of the Epistle. St. James first shows how useless it is to be an eager hearer of the word, without also being a doer of it. Next he exposes the inconsistency of loving one's neighbour as oneself if he chances to be rich, and neglecting or even insulting him if he is poor. From that he passes on to prove the barrenness of an orthodoxy which is not manifested in good deeds, and the peril of trying to make words a substitute for works. And thus the present section is reached. Throughout the different sections is the empty religiousness which endeavours to avoid the practice of Christian virtue, on the plea of possessing zeal, or faith, or knowledge, that is mercilessly exposed and condemned. "Deeds, deeds, deeds," is the cry of St. James; "these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Without Christian practice, all the other good things which they possessed or professed were savourless salt.

"Who is wise and understanding among you?" The same two words meet us in the questionings of Job (xxviii. 12): "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understand-

ing?" Of all the words which signify some kind of intellectual endowment, *e. g.*, "prudence," "knowledge," and "understanding," "wisdom" always ranks as highest. It indicates, as Clement of Alexandria defines it ("Strom.," I. v.), "the understanding of things human and Divine, and their causes." It is the word which expresses the typical wisdom of Solomon (Matt. xii. 42; Luke xi. 31), the inspiration of St. Stephen (Acts vi. 10), and the Divine wisdom of Jesus Christ (Matt. xiii. 54; Mark vi. 2; and comp. Luke xi. 49 with Matt xxiii. 34). It is also employed in the heavenly doxologies which ascribe wisdom to the Lamb and to God (Rev. v. 12; vii. 12). St. James, therefore, quite naturally employs it to denote that excellent gift for which Christians are to pray with full confidence that it will be granted to them (i. 5, 6), and which manifests its heavenly character by a variety of good fruits (iii. 17).

Whether we are to understand any very marked difference between the two adjectives ("wise" and "understanding") used in the opening question, is a matter of little moment. The question taken as a whole amounts to this: Who among you professes to have superior knowledge, spiritual or practical? The main thing is not the precise scope of the question, but of the answer. Let every one who claims to have a superiority which entitles him to teach others prove his superiority by his good life. Once more it is a call for deeds, and not words—for conduct, and not professions. And St. James expresses this in a specially strong way. He might have said simply, "Let him by his conduct show his wisdom," just as he said above, "I by my works will show thee my faith." But he says, "Let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom." Thus the necessity for practice and conduct, as distinct from mere knowledge, is enforced twice over; and besides that, the particular character of the conduct, the atmosphere in which it is to be exhibited, is also indicated. It is to be done "in meekness of wisdom." There are two characteristics here specified which we shall find are given as the infallible signs of the heavenly wisdom; and their opposites as signs of the other. The heavenly wisdom is fruitful of good deeds, and inspires those who possess it with gentleness. The other wisdom is productive of nothing really valuable, and inspires those who possess it with contentiousness. The spirit of strife, and the spirit of meekness; those are the two properties which chiefly distinguish the wisdom that comes from heaven from the wisdom that comes from hell.

This test is a very practical one, and we can apply it to ourselves as well as to others. How do we bear ourselves in argument and in controversy? Are we serene about the result, in full confidence that truth and right should prevail? Are we desirous that truth should prevail, even if that should involve our being proved to be in the wrong? Are we meek and gentle towards those who differ from us? or are we apt to lose our tempers, and become heated against our opponents? If the last is the case we have reason to doubt whether our wisdom is of the best sort. He who loses his temper in argument has begun to care more about himself, and less about the truth. He has become, like the many would-be teachers rebuked by St. James; slow to hear, and swift to speak; unwilling to learn, and eager to dogmatise; much less ready to know the truth than to be able to say something, whether true or false.

The words "by his good life" are a change made by the Revisers for other reasons than the two which commonly weighed with them. As already stated (p. 592), their most valuable corrections are those which have been produced by the correction of the corrupt Greek text used by previous translators. Many more are corrections of mistranslations of the correct Greek text. The present change of "good conversation" into "good life" comes under neither of these two heads. It has been necessitated by a change which has taken place in the English language during the last two or three centuries. Words are constantly changing their meaning. "Conversation" is one of the many English words which have drifted from their old signification; and it is one of several which have undergone change since the Authorised Version was published, and in spite of the enormous influence exercised by that version. For there can be no doubt that our Bible has retained words in use which would otherwise have been dropped, and has kept words to their old meaning which would otherwise have undergone a change. This latter influence, however, fails to make itself felt where the changed meaning still makes sense; and that is the case with the passage in which "conversation" (as a rendering of *ἀναστροφή*) occurs in the New Testament. "Conversation" was formerly a word of much wider meaning, and its gradual restriction to intercourse by word of mouth is unfortunate. Formerly it covered the whole of a man's walk in life (*Lebenswandel*), his going out and coming in, his behaviour or conduct. Wherever he "turned himself about" and lived, there he had his "conversation" (*conversatio*, from *conversari*, the exact equivalent of *ἀναστροφή*, from *ἀναστρεφεσθαι*). It was exactly the word that was required by the translators of the Greek Testament. In the Septuagint it does not appear until the Apocrypha (Tobit iv. 14). But it causes serious misunderstanding to restrict the meaning of all the passages in which the word occurs to "conversation" in the modern sense, as if speaking were the only thing included; and the Revisers have done very rightly in removing this source of misunderstanding; but they have been unable to find any one expression which would serve the purpose, and hence have been compelled to vary the translation. Sometimes they give "manner of life" Gal. i. 13; Eph. iv. 22; 1 Tim. iv. 12; 1 Peter i. 18; iii. 16); once "manner of living" (1 Peter i. 15); three times "behaviour" (1 Peter ii. 12; iii. 1, 2); three times "life" (Heb. xiii. 7; 2 Peter ii. 7; and here); and once "living" (2 Peter iii. 11).

These different translations are worth collecting together, inasmuch as the give a good idea of the scope of "conversation" in the old sense, which really represents the word used by St. James. That "conversation," with the modern associations which inevitably cling to it now, should be used in the passage before us, is singularly unfortunate. It not only misrepresents, but it almost reverses the meaning of the writer. So far from telling a man to show his wisdom by what he says, in his intercourse with others, St. James rather exhorts him to show it by saying as little as possible, and doing a great deal. Let him show out of a noble life the conduct of a wise man in the gentle spirit which befits such.

In modern language, let him in the fullest sense be a Christian gentlemen.

"In meekness of wisdom." On this St. James lays great stress. He has already told his readers to "receive with meekness the implanted word" (i. 21), and what implies the same thing, although the word is not used, to "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (i. 19). And in the passage before us he insists with urgent repetition upon the peaceable and gentle disposition of those who possess the wisdom from above (vv. 17, 18). The Christian grace of meekness is a good deal more than the rather second-rate virtue which Aristotle makes to be the mean between passionateness and impassionateness, and to consist in a due regulation of one's angry feelings ("Eth. Nic." IV. v.). It includes submissiveness towards God as well as gentleness towards men; and exhibits itself in a special way in giving and receiving instruction, and in administering and accepting rebuke. It was, therefore, just the grace which the many would-be teachers, with their loud professions of correct faith and superior knowledge, specially needed to acquire. The Jew, with his national contempt for all who were not of the stock of Israel, was always prone to self-assertion, and these Christian Jews of the Dispersion had still to learn the spirit of their own psalms. "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way" (xxv. 9). "The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (xxxvii. 11). "The Lord upholdeth the meek" (cxlvii. 6). "He shall beautify the meek with salvation" (cxlix. 4). In all these passages the Septuagint has the adjective (*πραεῖς*) of the substantive used by St. James (*πραΰτης*). "But if," instead of this meekness, "ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not, and lie not against the truth." With a gentle severity St. James states as a mere supposition what he probably knew to be a fact. There was plenty of bitter zealousness and party spirit among them; and from this fact they could draw their own conclusions. It was an evil from which the Jews greatly suffered; and a few years later it hastened, if it did not cause, the overthrow of Jerusalem. This "jealousy" or zeal (*ζῆλος*) itself became a party name in the fanatical sect of the Zealots. It was an evil from which the primitive Church greatly suffered, as passages in the New Testament and in the sub-Apostolic writers prove; and can we say that it has ever become extinct? The same conclusion must be drawn now as then.

Jealousy or zeal may be a good or a bad thing, according to the motive which inspires it. God Himself is called "a jealous God," and is said to be "clad with zeal as a cloak" (Isa. lix. 17), and to "take to Him jealousy for complete armour" (Wisdom v. 17). To Christ His disciples applied the words, "The zeal of Thine house shall eat me up" (John ii. 17). But more often the word has a bad signification. It indicates "zeal not according to knowledge" (Rom. x. 2), as when the high-priest and Sadducees arrested the Apostles (Acts v. 17), or when Saul persecuted the Church (Phil. iii. 6). It is coupled with strife (Rom. xiii. 13), and is counted among the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 20). To make it quite plain that it is to be understood in a bad sense here, St. James adds the epithet "bitter" to it, and perhaps thereby recalls what he has just said about a mouth that utters both curses and blessings being as monstrous as a fountain spouting forth both bitter water and sweet. Moreover, he couples it with "faction" (*ἐριθεία*), a word which originally meant "working for hire," and especially "weaving for hire" (Isa. xxxviii. 12), and thence any ignoble pursuit, especially political canvassing, intrigue, or factiousness (Arist., "Pol.," V. ii. 6; iii. 9; Rom. ii. 8; Phil. i. 16; ii. 3). This also St. Paul classes among the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 20). What St. James seems to refer to in these two words is bitter religious animosity; a hatred of error (or what is supposed to be such), manifesting itself, not in loving attempts to win over those who are at fault, but in bitter thoughts, and words, and party combinations.

"Glory not and lie not against the truth." To glory with their tongues of their superior wisdom, while they cherished jealousy and faction in their hearts, was a manifest lie, a contradiction of what they must know to be the truth. In their fanatical zeal for the truth they were really lying against the truth, and ruining the cause which they professed to serve. Of how many a controversialist would that be true; and not only of those who have entered the lists against heresy and infidelity, but of those who are preaching a crusade against vice! "The whole Christianity of many a devotee consists only, we may say, in a bitter contempt for the sins of sinners, in a proud and loveless contention with what it calls the wicked world" (Stier).

"This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." The wisdom which is exhibited in such a thoroughly unchristian disposition is of no heavenly origin. It may be proof of intellectual advantages of some kind, but it is not such as those who lack it need pray for (i. 5), nor such as God bestows liberally on all who ask in faith. And then, having stated what it is not, St. James tells in three words, which form a climax, what the wisdom on which they plume themselves, in its nature, and sphere, and origin, really is. It belongs to this world, and has no connection with heavenly things. Its activity is in the lower part of man's nature, his passions and his human intelligence, but it never touches his spirit. And in its origin and manner of working it is demoniacal. Not the gentleness of God's Holy Spirit, but the fierce recklessness of Satan's emissaries, inspires it. Just as there is a faith which a man may share with demons (ii. 19), and a tongue which is set on fire by hell (iii. 6), so there is a wisdom which is demoniacal in its source and in its activity.

The second of the three terms of condemnation used by St. James (*ψυχικός*) cannot be adequately rendered in English, for "psychic" or "psychical" would convey either no meaning or a wrong one. It does not occur in the Septuagint, but is found six times in the New Testament—four times in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (ii. 14; xv. 44, 46), where most English versions have "natural;" once in Jude (19), where Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan have "fleshly," the Rhemish, the Authorised, and the Revised "sensual;" and once here, where Genevan, Rhemish, Authorised, and Revised all give "sensual," the last placing "natural or animal" in the margin. When man's nature is divided into body and soul, or flesh and spirit, every one understands that the body or flesh indicates the lower and material part, the soul or

spirit the higher and immaterial part. But when a threefold division is made, into body, soul, and spirit, we are apt to allow the more simple and more familiar division to disturb our ideas. "Soul" is allowed to keep its old meaning, and to be understood as much more allied with "spirit" than with "body" or "flesh." This causes serious misunderstanding. When the soul is distinguished, not only from the flesh, but from the spirit, it represents a part of our nature which is much more closely connected with the former than with the latter. The "natural" or "sensual" man, though higher than the carnal man, who is the slave of his animal passions, is far below the spiritual man, who is ruled by the highest portion of his nature, which is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The natural man does not soar above the things of this world. His inspirations are not heavenly. "Of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh." The wisdom from above is heavenly, spiritual, Divine; the wisdom from below is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Does this seem to be an exaggeration? St. James is ready to justify his strong language. "For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed." And who are the authors of confusion and vile deeds? Are they to be found in heaven, or in hell? Is confusion, or order, the mark of God's work? If one wished to sum up succinctly the manner in which the activity of demons specially exhibits itself, could one do so better than by saying "confusion and every vile deed"? "God is not a God of confusion, but of peace," says St. Paul, using the very word that we have here (1 Cor. xiv. 33); and every one heartily assents to the doctrine. The reason and conscience of every man tell him that disorder cannot in origin be Divine; it is part of that ruin which Satanic influences have been allowed to make in a universe which was created "very good." Jealousy and faction mean anarchy; and anarchy means a moral chaos in which every vile deed finds an opportunity. We know, therefore, what to think of the superior wisdom which is claimed by those in whose hearts jealousy and faction reign supreme. It may have a right to the name of wisdom, just as a correct belief about the nature of God may have a right to the name of faith, even when it remains barren, and therefore powerless to save. But an inspiration which prompts men to envy and intrigue, because, when many are rushing to occupy the post of teacher, others find a hearing more readily than themselves, is the inspiration of Cain and of Korah, rather than of Moses or of Daniel. The professed desire to offer service to God is really only a craving to obtain advancement for self. Self-seeking of this kind is always ruinous. It both betrays and aggravates the rottenness that lurks within. It was immediately after there had been a contention among the Apostles, "which of them was accounted to be greatest" (Luke xxii. 24), that they "all forsook Him and fled."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE.

JAMES iii. 17, 18.

AT the beginning of his Epistle St. James exhorts those of his readers who feel their lack of wisdom to pray for it. It is one of those good and perfect gifts from above, which come down from the Father of lights, who "giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not" (i. 5, 17). He now, after having sketched its opposite, states, in a few clear, pregnant words, what the characteristics of this heavenly gift of wisdom are. In both passages he probably had in his mind, and wished to suggest to the minds of his readers, well-known utterances on the same subject in the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, and Wisdom.

"My son, if thou cry after discernment, and lift up thy voice for understanding; if thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. ii. 3-6).

Again, the magnificent "Praise of Wisdom" in the twenty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, in which Wisdom is made to tell her own glories, opens thus: "I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a cloud;" and it continues, "Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and He that created me caused my tabernacle to rest, and said, Let thy dwelling be in Jacob, and thine inheritance in Israel. Before time was, from the beginning, He created me, and until times cease, I shall in nowise fail" (vv. 3, 8, 9).

And in the similar passage in the Book of Wisdom, in which the praise of Wisdom is put into the mouth of Solomon, he says, "Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me. . . . She is the breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation from the glory of the Almighty: therefore doth no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the effulgence (ἀπαύγασμα: Heb. i. 3) of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness. And being one, she can do all things; and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new; and in all generations entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth nothing but him that dwelleth with wisdom" (vii. 22, 25-28).

Three thoughts are conspicuous in these passages. Wisdom originates with God. It is consequently pure and glorious. God bestows it upon His people. These thoughts reappear in St. James, and to them he adds another, which scarcely appears in the earlier writers. Wisdom is "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy, and good fruits." In Proverbs we do indeed read that "all her paths are peace" (iii. 17); but the thought is not followed up. It does not seem to occur to the son of Sirach; and not one of the twenty-one epithets which the writer of Wisdom piles up in praise of this heavenly gift (vii. 22, 23) touches upon its peaceable and placable nature. It was left to the Gospel to teach, both by the example of Christ and by the words of His Apostles, how inevitably the Divine wisdom produces, in those who possess it, gentleness, self-repression, and peace.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated." The "first" and the "then" may be seriously misunderstood. St. James does not mean that the heavenly wisdom cannot be peaceable and gentle until all its surroundings have been made pure from everything that would op-

pose or contradict it; in other words, that the wise and understanding Christian will first free himself from the society of all whom he believes to be in error, and then, but not till then, will he be peaceable and gentle. That is, so long as folly and falsehood remain, they must be denounced, and made either to recant or to retire; for only when they have disappeared will wisdom show itself easy to be entreated. Purity, *i. e.*, freedom from all that would dim the brightness of truth, must precede peace, and there can be no peace until it is obtained.

This interpretation contradicts the context, and makes St. James teach the opposite of what he says very plainly in the sentences which precede, and in those which follow, the words which we are considering. It tries to enlist him on the side of partisanship and persecution, at the very moment when he is pleading most earnestly against them. He is stating a logical, and not a chronological order, when he declares that true wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable." In its inmost being it is pure; among its very various external manifestations are the six or seven beneficent qualities which follow the "then." If there were no one to be gentle to, no one coming to entreat, no one needing mercy, the wisdom from above would still be pure; therefore this quality comes first.

When the author of the Book of Wisdom says that wisdom is "a pure emanation from the glory of God: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her" (vii. 25), he is thinking of a pure stream, into which no foul ditch is able to empty its polluting contents, or of a pure ray of light, which does not admit of mixture with anything that would colour or darken it. He does not use the word for pure which we have here (ἁγνός) but one which signifies "unmixed," and hence "unsullied" (εἰλικρινής) and which occurs Phil. i. 10 and 2 Pet. iii. 1. The word used here by St. James is akin to "holy" (ἅγιος), and primarily signifies what is associated with religious awe (ἅγος), and hence "hallowed," especially by sacrifice. From this it became narrowed in meaning to what is free from the pollution of unchastity or bloodshed. As a Biblical word it sometimes has this narrow meaning; but generally it implies freedom from all stain of sin, and therefore is not far removed in meaning from "holy." But it is worth noting that whereas Christ and good men are spoken of as both pure and holy, yet God is called holy, but never pure. Divine holiness cannot be assailed by any polluting influence. Human holiness, even that of Christ, can be so assailed, and in resisting the assault it remains "pure."

In the passage before us "pure" must certainly not be limited to mean simply "chaste." The word "sensual," applied to the wisdom from below, does not mean unchaste, but living wholly in the world of sense; and the purity of the heavenly wisdom does not consist merely in victory over temptations of the flesh, but in freedom from worldly and low motives. Its aim is that truth should become known and prevail, and it condescends to no ignoble arts in prosecuting this aim. Contradiction does not ruffle it, and hostility does not provoke it to retaliate, because its motives are thoroughly disinterested and pure. Thus, its peaceable and placable qualities flow out of its purity. It is "first pure, then peaceable." It is because the man who is inspired with it has no ulterior selfish ends to serve that he is gentle, sympathetic, and considerate towards those who oppose him. He strives, not for victory over his opponents, but for truth both for himself and for them; and he knows what it costs to arrive at truth. We have a noble illustration of this temper in some of the opening passages of St. Augustine's treatise against the so-called "Fundamental Letter" of Manichæus. He begins thus:—

"My prayer to the one true God Almighty, of whom, and through whom, and in whom are all things, has been and is, that in refuting and disproving the heresy of you Manichæans, to which you adhere perchance more through thoughtlessness than evil intent, He would give me a mind composed and tranquil, and aiming rather at your amendment than your discomfiture. . . . It has been our business, therefore, to prefer and choose the better part, that we might have an opportunity for your amendment, not in contention, and strife, and persecutions, but in gentle consolation, affectionate exhortation, and quiet discussion; as it is written, The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all, teachable, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves. . . .

"Let those rage against you who know not with what toil truth is found, and how difficult it is to avoid errors. . . . Let those rage against you who know not with how great difficulty the eye of the inner man is made whole, so that it can behold its Sun. . . . Let those rage against you who know not with what sighs and groans it is made possible, in however small a degree, to comprehend God. Finally, let those rage against you who have never been deceived by such an error as that whereby they see you deceived. . . .

"Let neither of us say that he has already found the truth. Let us seek it as if it were unknown to us both. For it can be sought for with zeal and unanimity only if there be no rash assumption that it has been found and is known."

And to the same effect, although in a different key, a critical writer of our own day has remarked that "by an intellect which is habitually filled with the wisdom which is from heaven, in all its length and breadth, 'objections' against religion are perceived at once to proceed from imperfect apprehension. Such an intellect cannot rage against those who give words to such objections. It sees that the objectors do but intimate the partial character of their own knowledge." *

It will be observed that while the writer just quoted speaks about the intellect, St. James speaks about the heart. The difference is not accidental, and it is significant of a difference in the point of view. The modern view of wisdom is that it is a matter which mainly consists in the strengthening and enrichment of the intellectual powers. Increase of capacity for acquiring and retaining knowledge; increase in the possession of knowledge: this is what is meant by growth in wisdom. And by knowledge is meant acquaintance with the nature and history of man, and with the nature and history of the universe. All this is the sphere of the intellect rather than of the heart. The purification and development of the moral powers, if not absolutely excluded from the scope of wisdom, is commonly left in

* Mark Pattison, "Essays: Life of Bishop Warburton," vol. ii. pp. 163, 164 (Oxford: 1889).

the background and almost out of sight. What St. James says here is fully admitted: the highest wisdom keeps a man from the bitterness of party spirit. But why? Because his superior intelligence and information tell him that the opposition of those who dissent from him is the result of ignorance, which requires, not insult and abuse, but instruction. St. James does not dissent from this view, but he adds to it. There are further and higher reasons why the truly wise man does not rail at others, or try to browbeat and silence them. Because, while he abhors folly, he loves the fool, and would win him over from his foolish ways; because he desires not only to impart knowledge, but to increase virtue; and because he knows that strife means confusion, and that gentleness is the parent of peace. Christians are charged to be "wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

The Scriptural view of wisdom does not contradict the modern one, but it is taken from the other side. In it the education of the moral and spiritual powers is the main thing, while intellectual advancement is in the background or out of sight. There is nothing in the teaching of Christ or his Apostles that is hostile to intellectual progress; but neither by His example, nor by the directions which His disciples received or delivered, do we find that culture was regarded as part of, or necessary to, or even a very desirable companion for, the Gospel. Neither Christ nor any one of His immediate followers came forward as a great promoter of intellectual pursuits. Why is this? It would perhaps be a sound and sufficient answer to say, that valuable as such work would have been, there was much more serious and important work to be done. To convert men from sin to righteousness was far more urgent than to improve their minds. But there is more to be said than this. That perverse generation had to "turn, and become as little children," before it could enter into the kingdom of heaven. To develop a man's intellectual powers is not always the best way to make him "humble himself as a little child." Increase of knowledge may make a Newton feel like a child picking up pebbles on the shore of truth, but it is apt to make "the natural man" less childlike. But for no one, whether catechumen, or convert, or mature Christian, can the cultivation of his intellect be as pressing a duty as the cultivation of his heart. "To speak with the tongues of men and of angels," and to "know all mysteries and all knowledge," is as nothing in comparison with love. And it is in some measure possible to see why this is so. Man's moral nature certainly suffered, and ruinously suffered, at the Fall. It is not so certain that his intellectual nature suffered also. If it did suffer, it suffered through the moral nature, because depravation of the heart depraved the brain. In neither case would there be any necessity for the Gospel to pay special attention to the regeneration of the intellect. If man's intellect was unscathed by his fall from innocence, it could continue its natural development, and go on from strength to strength towards perfection. If, however, the loss of innocence has entailed a loss of mental capacity, then the wound inflicted on the intellectual nature through the moral nature must be healed in the same way. First purify the heart and regenerate the will, and then the recovery of the intellect will follow in due course. It is easy to reach the intellect through the heart, and this is what the wisdom that is from above aims at doing. If we begin with the intellect, we shall very likely end there; and in that case the man is not raised from his degradation, but equipped with additional powers of mischief. "Into a soul that deviseth evil, wisdom will not enter, nor yet dwell in a body that is sunk in sin" (Wisdom i. 4).

"Full of mercy and good fruits." The wisdom from above is not only peaceable, reasonable, and conciliatory, when under provocation or criticism, it is also eager to take the initiative in doing all the good in its power to those whom it can reach or influence. Thus it goes hand in hand with that pure and undefiled religion which visits "the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (i. 27). Just as St. James has no sympathy with a faith which does not clothe the naked and feed the hungry, and offer of its best to God (ii. 15, 16, 21), nor with a tongue which blesses God and curses men (ii. 9), so he has no belief in the heavenly character of a wisdom which holds itself aloof in calm superiority to all cavil and complaint, with a condescending air of passionless impartiality. The intellectual miser, who gloats over the treasures of his own accumulated knowledge, and smiles with lofty indifference upon the criticisms and squabbles of the imperfectly instructed, has no share in the wisdom that is from above. He is peaceful and moderate, not out of love and sympathy, but because his time is too precious to be wasted in barren controversy, and because he is too proud to place himself on a level with those who would dispute with him. No selfish arrogance of this kind has any place in the character of the truly wise. His wisdom not only enlightens his intellect, but warms his heart and strengthens his will. He believes that "the wise man alone is king," and that "the wise man alone is happy," yet not because he has the crown of knowledge and abundance of intellectual enjoyment, but because he "fulfils the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (ii. 8), and because happiness is to be found in promoting the happiness of others.

"Without variance, without hypocrisy." These are the last two of the goodly qualities which St. James gives as marks of the heavenly wisdom. Similarity in sound, which cannot well be preserved in English, has evidently had something to do with their selection (*ἀδιάκριτος*, *ἀνυπόκριτος*). The first of the two has pehplexed translators, and the English versions give us considerable choice: "without variance," "without wrangling," "without partiality," "without doubtfulness," "without judging." Purvey has for the two epithets "deeming without feigning," following the Sixtine edition of the Vulgate, which has *judicans sine simulatione*, instead of *non judicans, sine simulatione*. The word occurs nowhere else either in the Old or in the New Testament; but it is cognate with a word which St. James uses twice at the beginning of this Epistle (*διακρινόμενος*, i. 6), and which is there rendered "doubting" or "wavering." Of the various possible meanings of the word before us we may therefore prefer "without doubtfulness." The wisdom from above is unwavering, steadfast, singleminded. Thus Ignatius charges the Magnesians (xv.) to "possess an unventuring spirit" (*ἀδιάκριτον πνεῦμα*), and tells the Trallians (i.) that he has "learned

that they have a mind unblameable and unwavering in patience" (ἀδιάκριτον ἐν ὑπομονῇ). And Clement of Alexandria ("Pæd.," II. iii., p. 190) speaks of "unwavering faith" (ἀδιακρίτῳ πίστει), and a few lines farther on he reminds his readers, in words that suit our present subject, that "wisdom is not bought with earthly coin, nor is sold in the market, but in heaven." If he had said that wisdom is not sold in the market, but given from heaven, he would have made the contrast both more pointed and more true.

"The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." The Greek may mean either "for them that make peace," or "by them that make peace;" and we need not attempt to decide. In either case it is the peacemakers who sow the seed whose fruit is righteousness, and the peacemakers who reap this fruit. The whole process begins, progresses, and ends in peace.

It is evident that the heavenly wisdom is preeminently a practical wisdom. It is not purely or mainly intellectual; it is not speculative; it is not lost in contemplation. Its object is to increase holiness rather than knowledge, and happiness rather than information. Its atmosphere is not controversy and debate, but gentleness and peace. It is full, not of sublime theories or daring hypotheses, but of mercy and good fruits. It can be confident without wrangling, and reserved without hypocrisy. It is the twin sister of that heavenly love which "envieth not, vaunteth not itself, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh no account of evil."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ST. JAMES AND PLATO ON LUSTS AS THE CAUSES OF STRIFE; THEIR EFFECT ON PRAYER.

JAMES iv. 1-13.

THE change from the close of the third chapter to the beginning of the fourth is startling. St. James has just been sketching with much beauty the excellences of the heavenly wisdom, and especially its marked characteristic of always tending to produce an atmosphere of peace, in which the seed that produces the fruit of righteousness will grow and flourish. Gentleness, good-will, mercy, righteousness, peace—these form the main features of his sketch. And then he abruptly turns upon his readers with the question, "Whence come wars, and whence come fightings among you?"

The sudden transition from the subject of peace to the opposite is deliberate. Its object is to startle and awaken the consciences of those who are addressed. The wisdom from below produces bitter jealousy and faction; the wisdom from above produces gentleness and peace. Then how is to be explained the origin of the wars and fightings which prevail among the twelve tribes of the Dispersion? That ought to set them thinking. These things must be traced to causes which are earthly or demoniacal rather than heavenly; and if so, those who are guilty of them, instead of contending for the office of teaching others, ought to be seriously considering how to correct themselves. Here, again, there is the strangest contradiction between their professions and their practice. Clement of Rome seems to have this passage in his mind when he writes (*cir.* A. D. 97) to the Church of Corinth, "Wherefore are there strifes and wraths, and factions and divisions, and war among you?" (xlvi.).

"Wars" (πόλεμοι) and "fightings" (μάχαι) are not to be understood literally. When the text is applied to international warfare between Christian states in modern times, or to any case of civil war, it may be so interpreted without doing violence to its spirit; but that is not the original meaning of the words. There was no civil war among the Jews at this time, still less among the Jewish Christians. St. James is referring to private quarrels and law-suits, social rivalries and factions, and religious controversies. The subject-matter of these disputes and contentions is not indicated, because that is not what is denounced. It is not for having differences about this or that, whether rights of property, or posts of honour, or ecclesiastical questions, that St. James rebukes them, but for the rancorous, greedy, and worldly spirit in which their disputes are conducted. Evidently the lust of possession is among the things which produce the contentions. Jewish appetite for wealth is at work among them.

It was stated in a former chapter (p. 567) that there are places in this Epistle in which St. James seems to go beyond the precise circle of readers addressed in the opening words, and to glance at the whole Jewish nation, whether outside Palestine or not, and whether Christian or not. These more comprehensive addresses are more frequent in the second half of the Epistle than in the first, and one is inclined to believe that the passage before us is one of them. In that case we may believe that the bitter contentions which divided Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Essenes, Zealots, and Samaritans from one another are included in the wars and fightings, as well as the quarrels which disgraced Christian Jews. In any case we see that the Jews who had entered the Christian Church had brought with them that contentious spirit which was one of their national characteristics. Just as St. Paul has to contend with Greek love of faction in his converts at Corinth, so St. James has to contend with a similar Jewish failing among the converts from Judaism. And it would seem as if he hoped through these converts to reach many of those who were not yet converted. What he wrote to Christian synagogues would possibly be heard of and noted in synagogues which were not Christian. At any rate this Epistle contains ample evidence that the grievous scandals which amaze us in the early history of the Apostolic Churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus were not peculiar to converts from heathenism: among the Christians of the circumcision, who had had the advantage of life-long knowledge of God and of His law, there were evils as serious, and sometimes very similar in kind. The notion that the Church of the Apostolic age was in a condition of ideal perfection is a beautiful but baseless dream.

"Whence wars, and whence fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures which war in your members?" By a common transposition, St. James, in answering his own question, puts the pleasures which excite and gratify the lusts instead of the lusts themselves, in much the same way as we use

"drink" for intemperance, and "gold" for avarice. These lusts for pleasures have their quarters or camp in the members of the body, *i. e.*, in the sensual part of man's nature. But they are there, not to rest, but to make war, to go after, and seize, and take for a prey that which has roused them from their quietude and set them in motion. There the picture, as drawn by St. James, ends. St. Paul carries it a stage farther, and speaks of the "different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (Rom. vii. 23). St. Peter does the same, when he beseeches his readers, "as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter ii. 11); and some commentators would supply either "against the mind" or "against the soul" here. But there is no need to supply anything, and if one did supply anything the "wars and fightings among you" would rather lead us to understand that the lusts in each one's members make war against everything which interferes with their gratification, and such would be the possessions and desires of other people. This completion of St. James's picture agrees well also with what follows: "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill and covet, and cannot obtain." But it is best to leave the metaphor just where he leaves it, without adding anything. And the fact that he does not add "against the mind" or "against the soul" is some slight indication that he had not seen either the passage in Romans or in the Epistle of St. Peter. (See above, p. 569.)

In the "Phædo" of Plato (66, 67) there is a beautiful passage, which presents some striking coincidences with the words of St. James. "Wars, and factions, and fightings have no other source than the body and its lusts. For it is for the getting of wealth that all our wars arise, and we are compelled to get wealth because of our body, to whose service we are slaves; and in consequence we have no leisure for philosophy, because of all these things. And the worst of all is that if we get any leisure from it, and turn to some question, in the midst of our inquiries the body is everywhere coming in, introducing turmoil and confusion, and bewildering us, so that by it we are prevented from seeing the truth. But indeed it has been proved to us that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything we must get rid of the body, and with the soul by itself must behold things by themselves. Then, it would seem, we shall obtain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; when we are dead, as the argument shows, but in this life not. For if it be impossible while we are in the body to have pure knowledge of anything, then of two things one—either knowledge is not to be obtained at all, or after we are dead; for then the soul will be by itself, apart from the body, but before that not. And in this life, it would seem, we shall make the nearest approach to knowledge if we have no communication or fellowship whatever with the body, beyond what necessity compels, and are not filled with its nature, but remain pure from its taint, until God Himself shall set us free. And in this way shall we be pure, being delivered from the foolishness of the body, and shall be with other like souls, and shall know of ourselves all that is clear and cloudless, and that is perhaps all one with the truth."

Plato and St. James are entirely agreed in holding that wars and fightings are caused by the lusts that have their seat in the body, and that this condition of fightings without, and lusts within, is quite incompatible with the possession of heavenly wisdom. But there the agreement between them ceases. The conclusion which Plato arrives at is that the philosopher must, so far as is possible, neglect and excommunicate his body, as an intolerable source of corruption, yearning for the time when death shall set him free from the burden of waiting upon this obstacle between his soul and the truth. Plato has no idea that the body may be sanctified here and glorified hereafter; he regards it simply as a necessary evil, which may be minimised by watchfulness, but which can in no way be turned into a blessing. The blessing will come when the body is annihilated by death. St. James, on the contrary, exhorts us to cut ourselves off, not from the body, but from friendship with the world. If we resist the Evil One, who tempts us through our ferocious lusts, he will flee from us. God will give us the grace we need, if we pray for that rather than for pleasures. He will draw nigh to us if we draw nigh to Him; and if we purify our hearts He will make His Spirit to dwell in them. Even in this life the wisdom that is from above is attainable, and where that has found a home factions and fightings cease. When the passions cease to war, those who have hitherto been swayed by their passions will cease to war also. But those whom St. James addresses are as yet very far from this blessed condition.

"Ye lust, and have not: ye kill and covet, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war." In short, sharp, telling sentences he puts forth the items of his indictment; but it is not easy to punctuate them satisfactorily, nor to decide whether "ye kill" is to be understood literally or not. In none of the English versions does the punctuation seem to bring out a logical sequence of clauses. The following arrangement is suggested for consideration: "Ye lust, and have not; ye kill. And ye covet, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war." In this way we obtain two sentences of similar meaning, which exactly balance one another. "Ye lust, and have not," corresponds with, "Ye covet, and cannot obtain," and "ye kill" with "ye fight and war;" and in each sentence the last clause is the consequence of what precedes. "Ye lust, and have not; therefore ye kill." "Ye covet, and cannot obtain; therefore ye fight and war." This grouping of the clauses yields good sense, and does no violence to the Greek.

"Ye lust, and have not; therefore ye kill." Is "kill" to be understood literally? That murder, prompted by avarice and passion, was common among the Christian Jews of the Dispersion, is quite incredible. That monstrous scandals occurred in the Apostolic age, especially among Gentile converts, who supposed that the freedom of the Gospel meant lax morality, is unquestionable; but that these scandals ever took the form of indifference to human life we have no evidence. And it is specially improbable that murder would be frequent among those who, before they became Christians, had been obedient to the Mosaic Law. St. James may have a single case in his mind, like that of the incestuous marriage at Corinth; but in that case he would probably have expressed himself dif-

ferently. Or again, as was suggested above, he may in this section be addressing the whole Jewish race, and not merely those who had become converts to Christianity; and in that case he may be referring to the brigandage and assassination which a combination of causes, social, political, and religious, had rendered common among the Jews, especially in Palestine, at this time. Of this evil we have plenty of evidence both in the New Testament and in Josephus. Barabbas and the two robbers who were crucified with Christ are instances in the Gospels. And with them we may put the parable of the man "who fell among robbers," and was left half-dead between Jerusalem and Jericho; for no doubt the parable, like all Christ's parables, is founded on fact, and is no mere imaginary picture. In the Acts we have Theudas with his four hundred followers (B. C. 4), Judas of Galilee (A. D. 6), and the Egyptian with his four thousand "Assassins," or "Sicarii" (A. D. 58); to whom we may add the forty who conspired to assassinate St. Paul (v. 36, 37; xxi. 38; xxiii. 12-21). And Josephus tells us of another Theudas, who was captured and put to death with many of his followers by the Roman Procurator Cuspius Fadus (*cir.* A. D. 45); and he also states that about fifty years earlier, under Varus, there were endless disorders in Judea, sedition and robbery being almost chronic. The brigands inflicted a certain amount of damage on the Romans, but the murders which they committed were on their fellow-countrymen the Jews ("Ant.," XVII. x. 4, 8; XX. v. 1).

In either of these ways, therefore, the literal interpretation of "kill" makes good sense; and we are not justified in saying, with Calvin, that "kill in no way suits the context." Calvin, with Erasmus, Beza, Hornejus, and others, adopts the violent expedient of correcting the Greek from "kill" (*φονεύετε*) to "envy" (*φθονεῖτε*), a reading for which not a single MS., version, or Father can be quoted. It is accepted, however, by Tyndale and Cranmer and in the Genevan Bible, all of which have, "Ye envy and have indignation, and cannot obtain." Wiclif and the Rhemish of course hold to the *occiditis* of the Vulgate, the one with "slay," and the other with "kill."

But although the literal interpretation yields good sense, it is perhaps not the best interpretation. It was pointed out above that "ye kill" balances "ye fight and war," and that "wars and fightings" evidently are not to be understood literally, as the context shows. If then, "ye fight and war" means "ye quarrel, and dispute, and intrigue, and go to law with one another," ought not "ye kill" to be explained in a similar way? Christ had said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. v. 21, 22). And St. John tells us that "every one who hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15). "Every one who hateth" (*πᾶς ὁ μισῶν*) is an uncompromising expression, and it covers all that St. James says here. Just as the cherished lustful thought is adultery in the heart (Matt. v. 28), so cherished hatred is murder in the heart.

But there is an explanation, half literal and half metaphorical, which is well worth considering. It has been pointed out how frequently St. James seems to have portions of the Book of Ecclesiasticus in his mind. We read there that "the bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbour's living slayeth him (*φονεύων*); and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire is a bloodshedder" (xxxiv. 21, 22). If St. James was familiar with these words, and still more if he could count on his readers also being familiar with them, might he not mean, "Ye lust, and have not; and then, to gratify your desire, you deprive the poor of his living"? Even Deut. xxiv. 6 might suffice to give rise to such a strong method of expression: "No man shall take the mill or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge." Throughout this section the language used is strong, as if the writer felt very strongly about the evils which he condemns.

While "ye lust, and have not, and thereupon take a man's livelihood from him," would refer specially to possessions, "Ye covet (or envy) and cannot obtain, and thereupon fight and war," might refer specially to honours, posts, and party advantages. The word rendered "covet" (*ζηλοῦτε*) is that which describes the thing which love never does: "Love envieth not" (1 Cor. xiii. 4). When St. James was speaking of the wisdom from below (iii. 14-16) the kind of quarrels which he had chiefly in view were party controversies, as was natural after treating just before of sins of the tongue. Here the wars and fightings are not so much about matters of controversy as those things which minister to a man's "pleasures," his avarice, his sensuality, and his ambition.

How is it that they have not all that they want? How is it that there is any need to despoil others, or to contend fiercely with them for possession? "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." That is the secret of these gnawing wants and lawless cravings. They do not try to supply their needs in a way that would cause loss to no one, viz., by prayer to God; they prefer to employ violence and craft against one another. Or if they do pray for the supply of their earthly needs, they obtain nothing, because they pray with evil intent. To pray without the spirit of prayer is to court failure. That God's will may be done, and His Name glorified, is the proper end of all prayer. To pray simply that our wishes may be satisfied is not a prayer to which fulfilment has been promised; still less can this be the case when our wishes are for the gratification of our lusts. Prayer for advance in holiness we may be sure is in accordance with God's will. About prayer for earthly advantages we cannot be sure; but we may pray for such things so far as they are to His glory and our own spiritual welfare. Prayer for earthly goods, which are to be used as instruments, not of His pleasure, but of ours, we may be sure is not in accordance with His will. To such a prayer we need expect no answer, or an answer which at the same time is a judgment; for the fulfilment of an unrighteous prayer is sometimes its most fitting punishment.

St. James is not blaming his readers for asking God to give them worldly prosperity. About the lawfulness of praying for temporal

blessings, whether for ourselves or for others, there is no question. St. John prays that Gaius "in all things may prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospereth" (3 John 2), and St. James plainly implies that when one has temporal needs one ought to bring them before God in prayer, only with a right purpose and in a right spirit. In the next chapter he specially recommends prayer for the recovery of the sick. The asking amiss consists not in asking for temporal things, but in seeking them for a wrong purpose, viz., that they may be squandered in a life of self-indulgence. The right purpose is to enable us to serve God better. Temporal necessities are often a hindrance to good service, and then it is right to ask God to relieve them. But in all such things the rule laid down by Christ is the safe one, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." A life consecrated to the service of God is the best prayer for temporal blessings. Prayer that is offered in a grasping spirit is like that of the bandit for the success of his raids.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SEDUCTIONS OF THE WORLD AND THE JEALOUSY OF THE DIVINE LOVE.

JAMES iv. 4-6.

THE Revisers are certainly right in rejecting, without even mention in the margin, the reading, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses." The difficulty of the revised reading pleads strongly in its favour, and the evidence of MSS. and versions is absolutely decisive. The interpolation of the masculine was doubtless made by those who supposed that the term of reproach was to be understood literally, and who thought it inexplicable that St. James should confine his rebuke to female offenders.

But the context shows that the term is not to be understood literally. It is not a special kind of sensuality, but greed and worldliness generally, that the writer is condemning. It is one of the characteristics of the letter that being addressed to Jewish, and not Gentile converts, and occasionally to Jews whether Christians or not, it says very little about the sins of the flesh; and "adulteresses" here is no exception. The word is used in its common Old Testament sense of spiritual adultery—unfaithfulness to Jehovah regarded as the Husband of His people. "They that are far from Thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all them that go a-whoring from Thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 27). "Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt" (Ezek. xxiii. 27). "Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not My wife, neither am I her Husband" (Hos. ii. 2). The fifty-seventh chapter of Isaiah contains a terrible working out of this simile; and indeed the Old Testament is full of it. Our Lord is probably reproducing it when he speaks of the Jews of His own time as an "adulterous and sinful generation" (Matt. xii. 39; xvi. 4; Mark viii. 38). And we find it again in the Apocalypse (ii. 22).

But why does St. James use the feminine? Had he accused his readers of adultery, or called them an adulterous generation, the meaning would have been clear enough. What is the exact meaning of "Ye adulteresses"?

St. James wishes to bring home to those whom he is addressing that not only the Christian Church as a whole, or the chosen people as a whole, is espoused to God, but that each individual soul stands to Him in the relation of a wife to her husband. It is not merely the case that they belong to a generation which in the main has been guilty of unfaithfulness, and that in this guilt they share; but each of them, taken one by one, has in his or her own person committed this sin against the Divine Spouse. The sex of the person does not affect the relationship: any soul that has been wedded to God, and has then transferred its affection and allegiance to other beings, is an unfaithful wife. St. James, with characteristic simplicity, directness, and force, indicates this fact by the stern address, "Ye adulteresses."

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" He implies that they might know this, and that they can scarcely help doing so; it is so obvious that to love His opponent is to be unfaithful and hostile to Him. At the beginning of the section St. James had asked whence came the miserable condition in which his readers were found; and he replied that it came from their own desires, which they tried to gratify by intrigue and violence, instead of resorting to prayer; or else from the carnal aims by which they turned their prayers into sin. Here he puts the same fact in a somewhat different way. This vehement pursuit of their own pleasures, in word, and deed, and even in prayer —what is it but a desertion of God for Mammon, a sacrifice of the love of God to the friendship (such as it is) of the world? It is a base yielding to seductions which ought to have no attractiveness, for they involve the unfaithfulness of a wife and the treason of a subject. There can be no true and loyal affection for God while some other than God is loved, and not loved for His sake. If a woman "shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery" (Mark. xi. 12); and if a soul shall put away its God, and marry another, it committeth adultery. A wife who cultivates friendship with one who is trying to seduce her becomes the enemy of her husband; and every Christian and Jew ought to know "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God."

St. John tells us (and the words are probably not his, but Christ's) that "God loved the world" (John iii. 16). He also charges us not to love the world (1 John ii. 15). And here St. James tells us that to be friends with the world is to be the enemy of God. It is obvious that "the world" which God loves is not identical with "the world" which we are told not to love. "World" (*κόσμος*) is a term which has various meanings in Scripture, and we shall go seriously astray if we do not carefully distinguish them. Sometimes it means the whole universe in its order and beauty; as when St. Paul says, "For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made" (Rom. i. 20). Sometimes it means this planet, the earth; as when the Evil One showed to Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. iv. 8). Again, it means the inhabitants of the earth; as when Christ is said to "take

away the sin of the world" (John i. 2; 1 John iv. 14). Lastly, it means those who are alienated from God—unbelievers, faithless Jews and Christians, and especially the great heathen organisation of Rome (John viii. 23; xii. 31). Thus a word which originally signified the natural order and beauty of creation comes to signify the unnatural disorder and hideousness of creatures who have rebelled against their Creator. The world which the Father loves is the whole race of mankind, His creatures and His children. The world which we are not to love is that which prevents us from loving Him in return, His rival and His enemy. It is from this world that the truly religious man keeps himself unspotted (i. 25). Sinful men, with their sinful lusts, keeping up a settled attitude of disloyalty and hostility to God, and handing this on as a living tradition, are what St. Paul, and St. James, and St. John mean by "the world."

This world has the devil for its ruler (John xiv. 30). It lies wholly in the power of the Evil One (1 John v. 19). It cannot hate Christ's enemies, for the very reason that it hates Him (John vii. 7). And for the same reason it hates all those whom He has chosen out of its midst (xv. 18, 19). Just as there is a Spirit of God, which leads us into all the truth, so there is a "spirit of the world," which leads to just the opposite (1 Cor. ii. 12). This world, with its lusts, is passing away (1 John ii. 17), and its very sorrow worketh death (2 Cor. vii. 10). "The world is human nature, sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and the eternal to that which touches the senses and which perishes with time. The world is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, moulding it, degrading it. Of the millions of millions of human beings who have lived, nearly every one probably has contributed something, his own little addition, to the great tradition of materialised life which St. [James] calls the world. Every one, too, must have received something from it. According to his circumstances the same man acts upon the world, or in turn is acted on by it. And the world at different times wears different forms. Sometimes it is a solid compact mass, an organisation of pronounced ungodliness. Sometimes it is a subtle, thin, hardly suspected influence, a power altogether airy and impalpable, which yet does most powerfully penetrate, inform, and shape human life."

There is no sin in a passionate love of the ordered beauty and harmony of the universe, as exhibited either in this planet or in the countless bodies which people the immensity of space; no sin in devoting the energies of a lifetime to finding out all that can be known about the laws and conditions of nature in all its complex manifestations. Science is no forbidden ground to God's servants, for all truth is God's truth, and to learn it is a revelation of Himself. If only it be studied as His creature, it may be admired and loved without any disloyalty to Him.

Still less is there any sin in "the enthusiasm of humanity," in a passionate zeal for the amelioration of the whole human race. A consuming love for one's fellow-men is so far from involving enmity to God that it is impossible to have any genuine love of God without it. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John iv. 20). The love of the world which St. James condemns is a passion which more than anything else renders a love of mankind impossible. Its temper is selfishness, and the principle of its action is the conviction that every human being is actuated by purely selfish motives. It has no belief in motives of which it has no experience either in itself or in those among whom it habitually moves. Next to a cultivation of the love of God, a cultivation of the love of man is the best remedy for the deadly paralysis of the heart which is the inevitable consequence of choosing to be a friend of the world.

This choice is a very important element in the matter. It is lost in the Authorised Version, but is rightly restored by the Revisers. "Whosoever, therefore, would be (*βουληθῇ εἶναι*) a friend of the world maketh himself (*καθίσταται*) an enemy of God." It is useless for him to plead that he has no wish to be hostile to God. He has of his own free will adopted a condition of life which of necessity involves hostility to Him. And he has full opportunity of knowing this; for although the world may try to deceive him by confusing the issue, God does not. The world may assure him that there is no need of any choice: he has no need to abandon God; it is quite easy to serve God, and yet remain on excellent terms with the world. But God declares that the choice must be made, and that it is absolute and exclusive. "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deut. x. 12, 13; comp. vi. 5 and xxx. 6).

The next two verses are a passage of known difficulty, the most difficult in this Epistle, and one of the most difficult in the whole of the New Testament. In the intensity of his detestation of the evil against which he is inveighing, St. James has used condensed expressions which can be understood in a variety of ways, and it is scarcely possible to decide which of the three or four possible meanings is the one intended. But the question has been obscured by the suggestion of explanations which are not tenable. The choice lies between those which are given in the margin of the Revised Version and the one before us in the text; for we may safely discard all those which depend upon the reading "dwelleth in us" (*κατῴκησεν*) and we must stand by the reading "made to dwell in us" (*κατῴκισεν*).

The questions which cannot be answered with certainty are these: 1. Are two Scriptures quoted, or only one? and if two are quoted, where is the first of them to be found? 2. Who is it that "longeth" or "lusteth"? is it God, or the Holy Spirit, or our own human spirit? 3. What is it that is longed for by God or the Spirit? Let us take these three questions in order.

1. The words which follow "Think ye that the Scripture speaketh in vain?" do not occur in the Old Testament, although the sense of them may be found piecemeal in a variety of passages. Therefore, either the words are not a quotation at all, or they are from some book no longer extant, or they are a condensation of several

utterances in the Old Testament. The first of these suppositions seems to be the best, but neither of the others can be set aside as improbable. We may paraphrase, therefore, the first part of the passage thus:—

"Ye unfaithful spouses of Jehovah! know ye not that to be friendly with the world is to be at enmity with Him? Or do ye think that what the Scripture says about faithlessness to God is idly spoken?" But as regards this first question we must be content to remain in great uncertainty.

2. Who is it that "longeth" or "lusteth" (ἐπιποθεῖ). To decide whether "longeth" or "lusteth" is the right translation will help us to decide this second point, and it will also help us to decide whether the sentence is interrogative or not. Is this word of desiring used here in the good sense of longing or yearning, or in the bad sense of lusting? The word occurs frequently in the New Testament, and in every one of these passages it is used in a good sense (Rom. i. 11; 2 Cor. v. 2; ix. 14; Phil. i. 8; ii. 26; 1 Thess. iii. 10; 2 Tim. i. 4; 1 Peter ii. 2). Nor is this the whole case. Substantives and adjectives which are closely cognate with it are fairly common, and these are all used in a good sense (Rom. xv. 23; 2 Cor. vii. 7, 11; Phil. iv. 1). We may therefore set aside the interpretations of the sentence which require the rendering "lusteth," whether the statement that man's spirit lusteth enviously, or the question, Doth the Divine Spirit in us lust enviously? The word here expresses the mighty and affectionate longing of the Divine love. And it is the Spirit which God made to dwell in us which longeth over us with a jealous longing. If we make the sentence mean that God longeth, then we are compelled to take the Spirit which He made to dwell in us as that for which He longs; God has a jealous longing for His own Spirit implanted in us. But this does not yield very good sense; we decide, therefore, for the rendering, "Even unto jealousy doth the Spirit which He made to dwell in us yearn over us." "Even unto jealousy;" these words stand first, with great emphasis. No friendship with the world or any alien object can be tolerated.

3. The third question has been solved by the answer to the second. That which is yearned for by the Spirit implanted in us is ourselves. The meaning is not that God longs for man's spirit (the human spirit would hardly be spoken of as that which God "made to dwell in us"), or that He longs for the Holy Spirit in us (a meaning which would be very hard to explain), but that His Holy Spirit yearns for us with a jealous yearning. God is a jealous God, and the Divine love is a jealous love; it brooks no rival. And when His Spirit takes up its abode in us it cannot rest until it possesses us wholly, to the exclusion of all alien affections.

At one of the conferences between the Northern and the Southern States of America during the war of 1861-1865 the representatives of the Southern States stated what cession of territory they were prepared to make, provided that the independence of the portion that was not ceded to the Federal Government was secured. More and more attractive offers were made, the portions to be ceded being increased, and those to be retained in a state of independence being proportionately diminished. All the offers were met by a steadfast refusal. At last President Lincoln placed his hand on the map so as to cover all the Southern States, and in these emphatic words delivered his ultimatum: "Gentlemen, this Government must have the whole." The constitution of the United States was at an end if any part, however small, was allowed to become independent of the rest. It was a vital principle, which did not admit of exceptions or degrees. It must be kept in its entirety, or it was not kept at all.

Just such is the claim which God, by the working of His Spirit, makes upon ourselves. He cannot share us with the world, however much we may offer to Him, and however little to His rival. If a rival is admitted at all, our relation to Him is violated and we have become unfaithful. His government must have the whole.

Do these terms seem to be harsh? They are not really so, for the more we surrender, the more He bestows. We give up the world, and that appears to us to be a great sacrifice. "But He giveth more grace." Even in this world He gives far more than we give up, and adds a crown of life in the world to come (i. 12). "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29, 30). "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Those who persist in making friends with the world, in seeking its advantages, in adopting its standards, in accepting its praise, God resists. By choosing to throw in their lot with His enemy they have made themselves His enemies, and He cannot but withstand them. But to those who humbly submit their wills to His, who give up the world, with its gifts and its promises, and are willing to be despised by it in order to keep themselves unspotted from it, He gives grace—grace to cling closer to Him, in spite of the attractions of the world; a gift which, unlike the gifts of the world, never loses its savour.

Was St. James acquainted with the "Magnificat"? May not he, the Lord's brother, have sometimes heard the Mother of the Lord recite it? The passage before us is almost like an echo of some of its words: "His mercy is unto generations and generations of them that fear Him. He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He hath put down princes from their thrones, and hath exalted them of low degree. The hungry He hath filled with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away." At any rate the "Magnificat" and St. James teach the same lesson as the Book of Proverbs and St. Peter, who, like St. James, quotes it (1 Peter v. 5), that God resists and puts down those who choose to unite themselves with the world in preference to Him, and gives more and more graces and blessings to all who by faith in Him and His Christ have overcome the world. It is only by faith that we can overcome. A conviction that the things which are seen are the most important and pressing, if not the only realities, is sure to betray us into a state of

captivity in which the power to work for God, and even the desire to serve Him, will become less and less. We have willed to place ourselves under the world's spell, and such influence as we possess tells not for God, but against Him. But a belief that the chief and noblest realities are unseen enables a man to preserve an attitude of independence and indifference towards things which, even if they are substantial advantages, belong to this world only. He knows how insignificant all that this life has to offer is, compared with the immeasurable joys and woes of the life to come, and he cannot be guilty of the folly of sacrificing a certain and eternal future to a brief and uncertain present. The God in whom he believes is far more to him than the world which he sees and feels. "This is the victory which hath overcome the world, even his faith."

CHAPTER XX.

THE POWER OF SATAN AND ITS LIMITS —HUMILITY THE FOUNDATION OF PENITENCE AND OF HOLINESS.

JAMES iv. 7-10.

SUBMISSION to God is the beginning, middle, and end of the prodigal's return from disastrous familiarity with the world to the security of the Father's home. A readiness to submit to whatever He may impose is the first step in the conversion, just as unwillingness to surrender one's own will is the first step towards revolt and desertion. "I am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants." As soon as the resolve to make this act of submission is formed, the turning-point between friendship with the world and fidelity to God has been passed. The homeward path is not an easy one, but it is certain, and those who unflinchingly take it are sure of a welcome at the end of it. The prodigal was tenderly received back by his offended father, and these adulterous souls will be admitted to their old privileges again, if they will but return. God has given them no bill of divorcement to put them away for ever (Isa. l. 1). "If a man put away his wife, and she go from him and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii. 1). An amount of mercy and forgiveness which cannot be shown by an earthly husband to his unfaithful wife is readily promised by God.

But the return must be a complete one. There must be every guarantee that the penitent is in earnest and has utterly broken with the past. And St. James with affectionate sternness points out the necessary steps towards reconciliation. He will not be guilty of the crime of those who "have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people lightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. viii. 11). The results of intimacy with the world cannot be undone in a day, and there is painful work to be done before the old relationship can be restored between the soul and its God.

Among the most grievous consequences of yielding to the world and its ways are the weakening of the will and the lowering of the moral tone. They come gradually, but surely; and they act and react upon one another. The habitual shirking of the sterner duties of life, and the living in an atmosphere of self-indulgence, enervate the will; and the conscious adoption of a standard of life which is not approved by conscience is in itself a lowering of tone. And this is one of the essential elements of worldliness. The pleas that "I can't help it," and that "everybody does it," are among the most common excuses urged by those whose citizenship is not in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), but in that commonwealth of which Satan is the presiding power. They like to believe that temptations are irresistible, and that there is no obligation to rise above the standard of morality which those about them profess to accept. Such men deliberately surrender to what they know to be evil, and place what they think to be expedient above what they know to be right, forgetting that even the worldlings who set them this low standard, and openly defend it, very often do not really approve it, but despise while they applaud the man that conforms to it.

St. James enters an earnest and simple protest against the weak plea that temptations are irresistible. To maintain that is to assert that the Evil One has more will and power to destroy mankind than God has to save them. The truth is exactly the other way. God not only allows to Satan no power to coerce a man into sin, but He Himself is ever ready to aid when He is faithfully prayed to do so. Every Christian is endowed with sufficient power to withstand Satan, if only the will to withstand is present, because he has the power to summon God to his assistance. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;" that is one side of the blessed truth; and the other is its correlative: "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

It will be observed that St. James, quite as much as St. Peter, or St. Paul, or St. John, speaks of the chief power of evil as a person. The passage is not intelligible on any other interpretation; for there is a manifest and telling antithesis between the devil who yields to opposition, and the God who responds to invitation. It is a contrast between two personal agencies. Whether St. James was aware of the teaching of the Apostles on this point is not of great moment; his own teaching is clear enough. As a Jew he had been brought up in the belief that there are evil spiritual beings of whom Satan is the chief, and since he became a Christian he had never been required to revise this belief. He was probably well aware of the teaching of Jesus Christ as to the real source of temptations. He may have heard Christ's own interpretation of the birds in the parable of the Sower: "And when they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them" (Matt. iv. 15). He probably had heard of Christ's declaration to St. Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31), where we have a contrast similar to this, an infernal person on one side, and a Divine Person on the other, of the man assailed by temptation. How easy to have interpreted the birds in the parable as the impersonal solicitations of a depraved nature, the hearers' own evil tendencies; and perhaps if we had not

possessed Christ's own explanation we should so have explained the birds by the wayside. But Christ seems to have made use of this, the queen of all the parables (Mark iv. 13), in order to teach that a personal enemy there is, who is ever on the watch to deprive us of what will save our souls. And the warning to St. Peter might easily have been given in a form that would not have implied a personal tempter. Nor do these two striking passages stand alone in our Lord's teaching. How unnecessary to speak of the woman who "was bowed together, and could in nowise lift up herself," as one "whom Satan had bound," unless He desired to sanction and enforce this belief (Luke xiv. 11, 16). And why speak of having "beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven" (Luke x. 18). unless He had this desire? When the Jews said that He cast out devils by the aid of the prince of the devils, it would have been a much more complete contradiction to have replied that no such person existed, than to argue that Satan was not likely to fight against his own interests. If the belief in personal powers of evil is a superstition, Jesus Christ had ample opportunities of correcting it; and He not only steadfastly abstained from doing so, but in very marked ways, both by His acts and by His teaching, He did a great deal to encourage and inculcate the belief. He showed no sympathy with the scepticism of the Sadducees about such things. He argued convincingly against them as regards the doctrine of the resurrection and a future life, and He gave full sanction to the belief in angels and spirits, both good and bad. There is no need to lay much stress upon the disputed meaning of the last petition in the Lord's Prayer; the evidence is quite ample without that. Yet those who are convinced that "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil," must mean, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the tempter," have a very important piece of evidence to add to all the rest. Is a gross superstition embodied in the very wording of the model prayer?

On p. 407 of this volume is a passage on this subject respecting which a very friendly critic has said that he cannot quite see the force of it. As the argument is of value, it may be worth while to state it here more clearly. The statement criticised is the concluding sentence of the following passage: "It has been said that if there were no God we should have to invent one; and with almost equal truth we might say that if there were no devil we should have to invent one. Without a belief in God bad men would have little to induce them to conquer their evil passions; without a belief in a devil good men would have little hope of ever being able to do so." The meaning of the last statement is this, that if good men were compelled to believe that all the devilish suggestions which rise up in their minds come from themselves alone, they might well be in despair of ever getting the better of themselves or of curing a nature capable of producing such offspring. But when they know that "a power, not themselves, which makes for" wickedness is the source of these diabolical temptations, then they can have confidence that their own nature is not so hopelessly corrupt but that, with the help of "the Power, not themselves, that makes for righteousness" they will be able to gain the victory.

The plea that the devil is irresistible, and that therefore to yield to temptation is inevitable, is only another form of the fallacy, against which St. James has already protested, of trying to shift the responsibility of temptation from oneself to God (i. 13-15). It is the old fallacy carried a stage farther. The former plea has reference to the temptation; the present one has reference to the fall. As regards both the facts are conclusive. We often provoke our own temptations; we always can resist them if we in faith draw nigh to God for protection. "To this end the Son of man was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). And the Son of God preserveth every child of God, "and the evil one toucheth him not" (1 John v. 18). But the man himself must consent and co-operate, for God saves no man against his will. "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you," is the principle of the Old Covenant (Zech. i. 3); and "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you," is the principle of the New.

The converse of this is true also, and it is a fact of equal solemnity and of great awfulness. Resist God, and He will depart from you. Draw nigh to the devil, and he will draw nigh to you. If we persist in withstanding God's grace, He will at last leave us to ourselves. His Spirit will not always strive with us; but at last He Himself hardens the heart which we have closed against him, for He allows things to take their course, and the heart which refuses to be softened by the dew of His grace must become harder and harder. And the more we place ourselves in the devil's way, by exposing ourselves to needless temptations, the more diligently he will seek us and abide with us. Those who voluntarily take up their abode in the tents of ungodliness have surrendered all claim to be kept unspotted from the world. They have lost their right to join in the cry, "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?"

But the hands which one raises in prayer to God must be cleansed by withholding them from all evil practices, and from all grasping after the contaminating gifts of the world; and the heart must be purified by the quenching of unholy desires and the cultivation of a godly spirit. In this St. James is but repeating the principles laid down by the Psalmist: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps. xxiv. 3, 4). And in similar language we find Clement of Rome exhorting the Corinthians, "Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him" (xxix.). In all these instances the external instruments of human conduct are mentioned along with the internal source of it.

St. James is not addressing two classes of people when he says, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." Every one whose hands have wrought unrighteousness is a sinner who needs this cleansing; and every one who attempts to draw nigh to God, without at the same time surrendering all unholy desires, is a double-minded man who needs this purification. The "halting between two opinions," between God and Mammon, and between Christ and the world, is fatal to true conversion and efficacious

prayer. What is necessary, therefore, for these sinners of double mind, is outward amendment of life and inward purification of the desires. "The sinner that goeth two ways" must with "a single eye" direct his path along the narrow way. "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be delivered; but he that walketh perversely in two ways shall fall at once" (Prov. xxviii. 18). The whole exhortation is in spirit very similar to the second half of the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus. Note especially the concluding verses: "They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts and humble their souls in His sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men; for as His majesty is, so is His mercy."

There must be no "light healing," or treatment of the grievous sins of the past as of no moment. There must be genuine sorrow for the unfaithfulness which has separated them so long from their God, and for the pride which has betrayed them into rebellion against Him. "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep." The first verb refers to the inward feeling of wretchedness, the other two to the outward expression of it. These two are found in combination in several passages, both in the Old Testament and in the New (2 Sam. xix. 2; Neh. viii. 9; Mark xvi. 10; Luke vi. 25; Rev. xviii. 15, 19). The feelings of satisfaction and self-sufficiency in which these friends of the world have hitherto indulged, and the glowing complacency which has been manifest in their demeanor, have been quite out of place, and must be exchanged for feelings and manifestations of grief. Their worldly merriment also must be abandoned; those who have cut themselves off from God have no true spring of joy. "Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." The last word (*κατήφεια*), which occurs nowhere else in Scripture, refers primarily to the dejected look which accompanies heaviness of heart. The writer of the Book of Wisdom uses the adjective (*κατηφής*) to express the "gloomy phantoms with unsmiling faces" which he supposes to have appeared to the Egyptians during the plague of darkness (xvii. 4). The term admirably expresses the opposite of boisterous lightheartedness.

St. James ends as he began, with submission to the Almighty. He began his exhortation as to the right method of conversion with "Be subject unto God." He ends with "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you." The root of their worldliness and their grasping at wealth and honour is pride and self-will, and the cure for that is self-abasement and self-surrender. If it is God's will that they should occupy a lowly place in society, let them humbly accept their lot, and not try to change it by violence or fraud. If they will but remember their own transgressions against the Lord, they will admit that the humblest place is not too humble for their merits; and it is the humble whom God delights to honour. Here, again, St. James is reproducing the teaching of his Divine Brother: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xiv. 11; Matt. xxiii. 12). And the Old Testament teaches the same lesson. "The humble person He shall save," says Eliphaz the Temanite (Job xxii. 29); and the Psalmist gives us both sides of the Divine law of compensation: "Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but the haughty eyes Thou wilt bring down" (xviii. 27).

"Humble yourselves;" "He that humbleth himself." Everything depends on that. It must be self-abasement. There is nothing meritorious in chancing to be in a humble position, still less in being forced to descend to one. It is the voluntary acceptance, or the choice, of a lowly place that is pleasing to God. We must choose it as knowing that we deserve nothing better, and as wishing that others should be promoted rather than ourselves. And this must be done "in the sight of the Lord;" not in self-consciousness, "to be seen of men," which is "the pride that apes humility," but in the consciousness of the ineffable presence of God. That is the source of all true self-abasement and humility. To realise that we are in the presence of the All-holy and All-pure, in whose sight the stars are not clean, and who charges even the angels with folly, is to feel that all differences of merit between man and man have faded away in the immeasurable abyss which separates our own insignificance and pollution from the majesty of His holiness. "Now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," is the language of Job (xlii. 5, 6). And it was the same feeling which wrung from St. Peter, as he fell down at Jesus' knees, the agonising cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v. 8). Hence it is that the most saintly persons are always the most humble; for they realise most perfectly the holiness of God and the ceaselessness of His presence, and are therefore best able to appreciate the contrast between their own miserable imperfections and His unapproachable purity. The language which they at times use about themselves is sometimes suspected of unreality and exaggeration, if not of downright hypocrisy; but it is the natural expression of the feelings of one who knows a great deal about the difference between a creature who is habitually falling into sin and One who, in holiness, as in wisdom and power, is absolute and infinite perfection. Humility is thus the beginning and end of all true religion. The sinner who turns to God must be humble; and this is the humility which St. James is urging. And the saint, as he approaches nearer to God, will be humble; for he knows what the approach has cost him, and how very far off he still remains.

"And He will exalt you." This is the result, not the motive. To strive to be humble in order to be exalted would be to poison the virtue at its source. Just as the conscious pursuit of happiness is fatal to its attainment, so also the conscious aim at Divine promotion. The way to be happy is not to think about one's own happiness, but to sacrifice it to that of others; and the way to be exalted by God is not to think of one's own advancement, but to devote oneself to the advancement of others. The exaltation is sure to come, if only humility is attained; an exaltation of which there is a foretaste even in this life, but the full fruition of which lies in those unknown glories which await the humble Christian in the world to come.

CHAPTER XXI.

SELF-ASSURANCE AND INVASION OF DIVINE PREROGATIVES INVOLVED IN THE LOVE OF CENSURING OTHERS.

JAMES iv. 11, 12.

FROM sins which are the result of a want of love to God St. James passes on, and abruptly, to some which are the result of a want of love for one's neighbour. But in thus passing on he is really returning to his main subject, for the central portion of the Epistle is chiefly taken up with one's duty towards one's neighbour. And of this duty he again singles out for special notice the necessity for putting a bridle on one's tongue (i. 26; iii. 1-12). Some have supposed that he is addressing a new class of readers; but the much gentler address, "brethren," as compared with "ye adulteresses" (ver. 4), "ye sinners," "ye double-minded" (ver. 8), does not at all compel us to suppose that. After a paragraph of exceptional sternness, he returns to his usual manner of addressing his readers (i. 2, 16, 19; ii. 1, 5, 14; iii. 1, 10, 12; v. 7, 9, 10, 12, 19), and with all the more fitness because the address "brethren" is in itself an indirect reproof for unbrotherly conduct. It implies what Moses expressed when he said, "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?" (Acts vii. 26).

"Speak not against one another, brethren." The context shows what kind of adverse speaking is meant. It is not so much abusive or calumnious language that is condemned, as the love of finding fault. The censorious temper is utterly unchristian. It means that we have been paying an amount of attention to the conduct of others which would have been better bestowed upon our own. It means also that we have been paying this attention, not in order to help, but in order to criticise, and criticise unfavourably. It shows, moreover, that we have a very inadequate estimate of our own frailty and shortcomings. If we knew how worthy of blame we ourselves are, we should be much less ready to deal out blame to others. But over and above all this, censoriousness is an invasion of the Divine prerogatives. It is not merely a transgression of the royal law of love, but a setting oneself above the law, as if it were a mistake, or did not apply to oneself. It is a climbing up on to that judgment-seat on which God alone has the right to sit, and a publishing of judgments upon others which He alone has the right to pronounce. This is the aspect of it on which St. James lays most stress.

"He that speaketh against a brother, or judgeth a brother, speaketh against the law and judgeth the law." St. James is probably not referring to Christ's command in the Sermon on the Mount, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matt. vii. 1, 2). It is a law of far wider scope that is in his mind, the same as that of which he has already spoken, "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (i. 25); "the royal law, according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (ii. 8). No one who knows this law, and has at all grasped its meaning and scope, can suppose that observance of it is compatible with habitual criticism of the conduct of others, and frequent utterance of unfavourable judgments respecting them. No man, however willing he may be to have his conduct laid open to criticism, is fond of being constantly subjected to it. Still less can any one be fond of being made the object of slighting and condemnatory remarks. Every man's personal experience has taught him that; and if he loves his neighbour as himself, he will take care to inflict on him as little pain of this kind as possible. If, with full knowledge of the royal law of charity, and with full experience of the vexation which adverse criticism causes, he still persists in framing and expressing unfriendly opinions respecting other people, then he is setting himself up as superior, not only to those whom he presumes to judge, but to the law itself. He is, by his conduct, condemning the law of love as a bad law, or at least as so defective that a superior person like himself may without scruple disregard it. In judging and condemning his brother he is judging and condemning the law; and he who condemns a law assumes that he is in possession of some higher principle by which he tests it and finds it wanting. What is the higher principle by which the censorious person justifies his contempt for the law of love? He has nothing to show us but his own arrogance and self-confidence. He knows what the duty of other persons is, and how signally they fall short of it. To talk of "hoping all things, and enduring all things," and of "taking not account of evil," may be all very well theoretically of an ideal state of society; but in the very far from ideal world in which we have to live it is necessary to keep one's eye open to the conduct of other people, and to keep them up to the mark by letting them and their acquaintances know what we think of them. It is no use mincing matters or being mealy-mouthed; wherever abuses are found, or even suspected, they must be denounced. And if other persons neglect their duty in this particular, the censorious man is not going to share such responsibility. This is the kind of reasoning by which flagrant violations of the law of love are frequently justified. And such reasoning, as St. James plainly shows, amounts really to this, that those who employ it know better than the Divine Lawgiver the principles by which human society ought to be governed. He has clearly promulgated a law; and they ascend His judgment-seat, and intimate that very serious exceptions and modifications are necessary; indeed, that in some cases the law must be entirely superseded. They, at any rate, are not bound by it.

This proneness to judge and condemn others is further proof of that want of humility about which so much was said in the previous section. Pride, the most subtle of sins, has very many forms, and one of them is the love of finding fault; that is, the love of assuming an attitude of superiority, not only towards other persons, but towards the law of charity and Him who is the Author of it. To a truly humble man this is impossible. He is accustomed to contrast the outcome of his own life with the requirements of God's law, and to know how awful is the gulf which separates the one from the other. He knows too much against himself to take delight in censuring the faults of others. Censoriousness is a sure sign that he who is addicted to it is ignorant of the immensity of his own short-

comings. No man who habitually considers his own transgressions will be eager to be severe upon the transgressions of others, or to usurp functions which require full authority and perfect knowledge for their equitable and adequate performance.

Censoriousness brings yet another evil in its train. Indulgence in the habit of prying into the acts and motives of others leaves us little time and less liking for searching carefully into our own acts and motives. The two things act and react upon one another by a natural law. The more seriously and frequently we examine ourselves, the less prone we shall be to criticise others; and the more pertinaciously we busy ourselves about the supposed shortcomings and delinquencies of our neighbours, the less we are likely to investigate and realise our own grievous sins. All the more will this be the case if we are in the habit of giving utterance to the uncharitable judgments which we love to frame. He who constantly expresses his detestation of evil by denouncing the evil doings of his brethren is not the man most likely to express his detestation of it by the holiness of his own life; and the man whose whole life is a protest against sin is not the man most given to protesting against sinners. To be constantly speculating, to be frequently deciding, to be ready to make known our decisions, as to whether this man is "awakened" or not, whether he is "converted" or not, whether he is a "Catholic" or not, whether he is a "sound Churchman" or not—what is this but to climb up into the White Throne, and with human ignorance and prejudice anticipate the judgments of Divine Omniscience and Justice, as to who are on the right hand, and who on the left?

"One only is Lawgiver and Judge, even He who is able to save and to destroy." There is one and only one Source of all law and authority, and that Source is God Himself. Jesus Christ affirmed the same doctrine when He consented to plead, as a prisoner charged with many crimes, before the judgment-seat of His own creature, Pontius Pilate. "Thou wouldest have no power against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). It was Christ's last word to the Roman Procurator, a declaration of the supremacy of God in the government of the world, and a protest against the claim insinuated in "I have power to release Thee, and I have power to crucify Thee," to be possessed of an authority that was irresponsible. Jesus declared that Pilate's power over Himself was the result of a Divine commission; for the possession and exercise of all authority are the gift of God, and can have no other origin. And this sole Fount of authority, this one only Lawgiver and Judge, has no need of assessors. While He delegates some portions of His power to human representatives, He requires no man. He allows no man, to share his judgment-seat, or to cancel or modify His laws. It is one of those cases in which the possession of power is proof of the possession of right. "He who is able to save and to destroy," who has the power to execute sentences respecting the weal and woe of immortal souls, has the right to pronounce such sentences. Man has no right to frame and utter such judgments, because he has no power to put them into execution; and the practice of uttering them is a perpetual usurpation of Divine prerogatives. It is an approach to that sin which brought about the fall of the angels.

Is not the sin of a censorious temper in a very real sense diabolical? It is Satan's special delight to be "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. xii. 10). His names, Satan ("adversary") and devil (*διάβολος* = "malicious accuser"), bear witness to this characteristic, which is brought prominently forward in the opening chapters of the Book of Job. It is of the essence of censoriousness that its activity is displayed with a sinister motive. The charges are commonly uttered, not to the person who is blamed, but to others, who will thereby be prejudiced against him; or if they are made to the man's own face, it is with the object of inflicting pain, rather than with the hope of thereby inducing him to amend. It is no "speaking truth in love" (Eph. iv. 15), but reckless or malevolent speaking evil, without much caring whether it be true or false. It is the poisoning of the wells out of which respect and affection for our fellow-men flow. Thus the presumption which grasps at functions that belong to God alone leads to a fall and a course of action which is indeed Satanical.

"One only is the Lawgiver and the Judge, even He who is able to save and to destroy." St. Peter and St. Paul teach the same doctrine in those Epistles which (as has been already pointed out) it is possible that the writer of this Epistle may have seen. "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme (*i. e.*, to the Roman Emperor); or unto governors, as sent by him" (1 Peter ii. 13). However much of human origination (*κτίσις ἀνθρωπίνη*) there may be about civil government, yet its sanctions are Divine. And St. Paul affirms that its real origin is Divine also: "There is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). The ultimate sanction of even Pilate's misused jurisdiction was "from above;" and it was to inhabitants of Rome, appalled by the frantic atrocities of Nero, that St. Paul declared that the authority of their Emperor existed by "the ordinance of God." If to resist this delegated authority be a serious matter, how much more to attempt to anticipate or to contradict the judgments of Him from whom it springs!

"But who art thou, that judgest thy neighbour?" St. James concludes this brief section against the sin of censoriousness by a telling *argumentum ad hominem*. Granted that there are grave evils in some of the brethren among whom and with whom you live; granted that it is quite necessary that these evils should be noticed and condemned; are you precisely the persons that are best qualified to do it? Putting aside the question of authority, what are your personal qualifications for the office of a censor and a judge? Is there that blamelessness of life, that gravity of behaviour, that purity of motive, that severe control of tongue, that freedom from contamination from the world, that overflowing charity which marks the man of pure religion? To such a man finding fault with his brethren is real pain; and therefore to be fond of finding fault is strong evidence that these necessary qualities are not possessed. Least of all is such a one fond of disclosing to others the sins which he has discovered in an erring brother. Indeed, there is scarcely a bet-

ter way of detecting our own "secret faults", than that of noticing what blemishes we are most prone to suspect and denounce in the lives of our neighbours. It is often our own personal acquaintance with iniquity that makes us suppose that others must be like ourselves. It is our own meanness, dishonesty, pride, or impurity that we see reflected on what is perhaps only the surface of a life whose secret springs and motives lie in a sphere quite beyond our grovelling comprehension. Here, again, St. James is quite in harmony with St. Paul, who asks the same question: "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. . . . But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at naught thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God?" (Rom. xiv. 4, 10).

But are not St. James and St. Paul requiring of us what is impossible? Is it not beyond our power to avoid forming judgments about our brethren? Certainly this is beyond our power, and we are not required to do anything so unreasonable as to attempt to avoid such inevitable judgments. Whenever the conduct of others comes under our notice we necessarily form some kind of an opinion of it, and it is out of these opinions and judgments, of which we form many in the course of a day, that our own characters are to a large extent slowly built up; for the way in which we regard the conduct of others has a great influence upon our own conduct. But it is not this necessary judging that is condemned. What is condemned is the inquisitorial examination of our neighbours' views and actions, undertaken without authority and without love. Such judging is sinister in its purpose, and is disappointed if it can find nothing to blame. It is eager, rather than unwilling, to think evil, its prejudices being against, rather than in favour of, those whom it criticises. To discover some grievous form of wrong-doing is not a sorrow, but a delight.

But what both St. James and St. Paul condemn, even more than the habit of forming these unfavourable judgments about our neighbours, is the giving effect to them. "Speak not one against another." "Why dost thou set at naught thy brother?" This at any rate we all can avoid. However difficult, or impossible, it may be to avoid forming unfavourable opinions of other people, we can at any rate abstain from publishing such opinions to the world. The temper which delights in communicating suspicions and criticisms is even more fatal than the habit of forming and cherishing them; it is the difference between a disease which is infectious, and one which is not. The bitterness and misery which are caused by the love of evil speaking is incalculable. It is one enormous item in that tragic sum of human suffering which is entirely preventable. Much of human suffering is inevitable and incurable; it may be compensated or consoled, but it can be neither escaped nor remedied. There is much, however, that need never be incurred at all, that is utterly wanton and gratuitous. And this pathetic burden of utterly needless misery in great measure consists of that which we heedlessly or maliciously inflict upon one another by making known, with quite inadequate reason, our knowledge or suspicion of the misconduct of other people. Experience seems to do little towards curing us of this fault. Over and over again we have discovered, after having communicated suspicions, that they are baseless. Over and over again we have found out that to disclose what we know to the discredit of a neighbour does more harm than good. And not infrequently we have ourselves had abundant reason to wish that we had never spoken; for curses are not the only kind of evil speaking that is wont to "come home to roost." And yet, each time that the temptation occurs again, we persuade ourselves that it is our duty to speak out, to put others on their guard, to denounce an unquestionable abuse, and so forth. And forthwith we set the whisper in motion, or we write a letter to the papers, and the supposed delinquent is "shown up." An honest answer to the questions, "Should I say this of him if he were present? Why do I not speak to him about it, instead of to others? Am I sorry or glad to make this known?" would at once make us pause, and perhaps abstain. It would lead us to see that we are not undertaking a painful duty, but needlessly indulging in unchristian censoriousness, and thereby inflicting needless pain. It is not given to many of us to do a great deal towards making other persons holier; but it is within the power of all of us to do a very great deal towards making others happier; and one of the simplest methods of diminishing the miseries and increasing the joys of society is to maintain a firm control over our tempers and our tongues, and to observe to the utmost St. James's pregnant rule, "Speak not one against another, brethren."

CHAPTER XXII.

SELF-ASSURANCE AND INVASION OF DIVINE PREROGATIVES INVOLVED IN PRESUMING UPON OUR FUTURE—THE DOCTRINE OF PROBABILISM.

JAMES iv. 13-17.

WORLDLINESS and want of humility are the two kindred subjects which form the groundwork of this portion of the Epistle. This fourth chapter falls into three main divisions, of which the third and last is before us; and these two subjects underlie all three. In the first the arrogant grasping after the pleasures, honours, and riches of the world, in preference to the love of God, is condemned. In the second the arrogant judging of others in defiance of the Divine law of charity is forbidden. In the third arrogant trust in the security of human undertakings, without consideration of God's will, is denounced. The transition from the false confidence which leads men to judge others with a light heart, to the false confidence which leads men to account the future as their own, is easily made; and thus once more, while we seem to be abruptly passing to a fresh topic, we are really moving quite naturally from one branch of the main subject to another. The assurance which finds plenty of time for censuring others, but little or none for censuring self, is closely akin to the assurance which counts on having plenty of time for all its

schemes, without thought of death or of the Divine decrees. This, then, is the subject before us—presumptuous security as to future undertakings. The future is God's, not ours, just as to judge mankind belongs to Him and not to us. Therefore to think and speak of the future as if we had the power to control it is as presumptuous as to think and speak of our fellow-men as if we had the power to judge them. In both cases we assume a knowledge and an authority which we do not possess.

"Go to now" (*ἄγε νῦν*) is a vigorous form of address, which occurs nowhere in the New Testament, exceping here and at the beginning of the next section. Although originally an imperative singular, it has become so completely an adverb that it can be used, as here, when a number of persons are addressed. It serves to attract attention. Those who think that they can acquit themselves of the charge of censoriousness have yet another form of presumptuous confidence to consider. The parable of the Rich Fool, who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much good laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke xii. 19), should be compared with this exhortation. And it is remarkable that it was just after our Lord had refused to be made a judge over two contending brothers that He spoke the parable of the Rich Fool.

There is no special emphasis on "ye that say," as if the meaning were, "ye who not only have these presumptuous thoughts, but dare to utter them." In the previous section giving utterance to unfavourable judgments about one's neighbours is evidently worse than merely thinking them, and is a great aggravation of the sin; but here thinking and saying are much the same. The presumptuous people look far ahead, think every step in the plan quite secure, and speak accordingly. To-day and to-morrow are quite safe. The journey to the proposed city is quite safe. That they will spend a year there is regarded as certain, and that they will be able to spend it as they please, viz., in trading. Lastly, they have no doubts as to the success of the whole enterprise; they will "get gain." All this is thought of and spoken of as being entirely within their own control. They have only to decide on doing it, and the whole will be done. That there is a Providence which needs to be considered is entirely left out of sight. That not even their own lives can be counted on for a single day is a fact that is equally ignored.

It was long ago remarked that "All men are mortal" is a proposition which each man believes to be true of every one excepting himself. Not that any one seriously believes that he himself will be exempt from death; but each one of us habitually thinks and acts as if in his case death were such an indefinite distance off that practically there is no need to take account of it—at any rate at present. The young and the strong rarely think of death as a subject that calls for serious attention. Those who are past the prime of life still think that they have many years of life in store. And even those who have received the solemn warning which is involved in reaching man's allotted threescore and ten years remember with satisfaction that many persons have reached fourscore and ten or more, and that therefore there is good reason for believing that they themselves have a considerable portion of life still in front of them. Perhaps the man of ninety finds himself sometimes thinking, if not talking to others, of what he means to do, not only to-morrow, but next year.

Such habits of thought and language are very common, and a man has to be carefully on the watch against himself in order to avoid them. They are entirely opposed to the spirit of both the Old and the New Testament, and in the most literal sense of the term may be stigmatised as godless. The security which ignores the will of God in its calculations, and thinks and acts as an independent power, is godless. Dependence upon God is the centre both of Judaism and of Christianity. A story of the Rabbinists brings this out as clearly on the Jewish side as the parable of the Rich Fool does on the Christian.

At his son's circumcision a Jewish father set wine that was seven years old before his guests, with the remark that with this wine he would continue for a long time to celebrate the birth of his son. The same night the Angel of Death meets the Rabbi Simeon, who accosts him and asks him, "Why art thou thus wandering about?" "Because," said the angel, "I slay those who say, We will do this or that, and think not how soon death may come upon them. The man who said that he would continue for a long time to drink that wine shall die in thirty days." It is in this way that "the careless ease of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. i. 32). And hence the warning, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. xxvii. 1). The man who makes plans for the future without taking account of Providence is not far removed from "the fool, who says in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1; liii. 1). "Set not thy heart upon thy goods; and say not, I have enough for my life. Follow not thine own mind and thy strength, to walk in the ways of thy heart; and say not, Who shall control me? for the Lord will surely avenge thy pride" (Ecclus. v. 1-3). "There is that waxeth rich by his wariness and pinching, and this is the portion of his reward. Whereas he saith, I have found rest, and now will eat continually of my good; and yet he knoweth not what time shall come upon him, and that he must leave those things to others, and die" (Ecclus. xi. 18, 19).

The Cyrenaics and their more refined followers the Epicureans started from the same premises, viz., the utter uncertainty of the future, and the inability of man to control it, but drew from them a very different conclusion. Dependence upon God was one of the last doctrines likely to be inculcated by those who contended that there is no such thing as Providence, for the gods do not concern themselves with the affairs of men. True wisdom, they said, will consist in the skilful, calm, and deliberate appropriation of such pleasure as our circumstances afford moment by moment, unruffled by passion, prejudice, or superstition. The present alone is ours, and we must resolutely make the most of it, without remorse for a past which we can never alter, and without disquietude about a future which we cannot determine and may never possess. This is not very profound as philosophy, for in the wear and tear of life it can neither fortify nor console; and as a substitute for religion it is still less satisfying. The whole difference which separates Paganism from

Christianity lies between two such stanzas as these;—

"Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quærere; et
Quem Fors dierum cunque dabit, lucro
Appone, nec dulces amores
Sperne, puer, neque tu choreas;"

and—

"Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on:
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

"We will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain." The frequent conjunctions separate the different items of the plan, which are rehearsed thus one by one with manifest satisfaction. The speakers gloat over the different steps of the programme which they have arranged for themselves. St. James selects trading and getting gain as the end of the supposed scheme, partly in order to show that the aims of these presumptuous schemers are utterly worldly, and partly because a restless activity in commercial enterprise was a common feature among the Jews of the Dispersion. Such pursuits are not condemned; but they are liable to become too absorbing, especially when not pursued in a God-fearing way; and it is this which St. James denounces.

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." It is not easy to determine the original Greek text with certainty, but about the general sense there is no doubt. It is possible, however, that we ought to read, "Whereas ye know not as to the morrow of what kind your life will be: for ye are a vapour," etc. In any case, "Whereas ye know not" represents words which literally mean, "Since ye are people of such nature as not to know" (οἵτινες οὐκ ἐπίστασθε). As human beings, whose life is so full of changes and surprises, it is impossible for them to know what vicissitudes the next day will bring. The real uncertainty of life is in marked contrast to their unreal security.

"What is your life?" Of what kind is it? What is its nature (ποία)? Bede remarks that St. James does not ask, "What is *our* life?" He says, "What is *your* life?" It is the value of the life of the godless that is in question, not that of the godly. Those who, by their forgetfulness of the Unseen, their desire for material advantages, and their friendliness with the world, have made themselves enemies of God—what is their life worth? Such persons "are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." But it may be doubted whether St. James is here speaking of the emptiness of an ungodly life. He is addressing godless persons, and in rebuking them reminds them how unstable and fleeting life is, not merely to them, but to all men. It is the same thought as we find in Job's complaint, "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more" (vii. 9); and we shall see that in the next two sections (v. 1-6, 7-11) there are coincidences with the Book of Job. But it is perhaps the Book of Wisdom that is specially in the writer's mind: "Our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, and shall be dispersed as a mist, that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof" (ii. 4). "For the hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day" (v. 14). And if these passages are the source of St. James's metaphor, Bede's interpretation becomes more probable; for in both of them it is the life of the ungodly that is likened to everything that is unsubstantial and transitory.

"For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." We must beware of understanding these words in such a way as to lose the spirit of them. It is one of many passages of Scripture which are often taken according to the letter, when the letter is of little or no importance. As in so much of the teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, we have a principle given in the form of a rule. Rules are given that they may be observed literally. Principles are given that they may be applied intelligently and observed according to their spirit. We do not obey Christ when we allow the thief who has taken our upper garment to have our under one also; nor do we obey St. James when we say, "If the Lord will," or "Please God," of every future event, and make a plentiful use of "D. V." in all our correspondence. Nor is it enough to say that everything depends upon the spirit in which the second garment is surrendered, and in which the "Please God" is uttered, or the "D. V." written. It is quite possible to keep Christ's precept without ever surrendering the second garment at all; and indeed we ought not to surrender it. And it is quite possible to keep His brother's precept without ever writing "D. V." or saying "Please God," the habitual use of which would be almost certain to generate formalism and cant in ourselves, and would be quite certain to provoke needless criticism and irreverent ridicule. St. James means that we should habitually feel that moment by moment we are absolutely dependent upon God, not only for the way in which our lives are henceforth to be spent, but for their being prolonged at all. At any instant we may be called upon to surrender, not only all the materials of enjoyment which He has bestowed upon us, but life itself, which is equally His gift; and whenever He does so call upon us we shall have neither the right nor the power to resist. "Shall He not do what He will with His own?" "The Lord gave; and the Lord may take away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The man who is thoroughly impressed with the fact of his utter dependence upon God for life and all things is sure to express this in his bearing, his tone, and his manner of speaking about the future, even although such phrases as "Please God" and "If the Lord will" never come from his lips or his pen. Indeed, the more complete his realisation of this truth is, the less likely will he be to be constantly expressing it in a formula. It is the habitual setting of his thoughts, and does not need to be stated any more than the conditions of time and space. On rare occasions it may be well to remind others of this truth by giving expression to it in words; but in most cases it will be wisest

to retain it as an unforgotten but unexpressed premise in the mind. But it is for each one of us to take care that it is not forgotten. Only those who have it constantly in their hearts can safely absolve themselves from the obligation of obeying the words of St. James literally.

"But now ye glory in your vauntings: all such glorying is evil." The carnal self-confidence with which people serenely talk about what they mean to do next year, or many years hence, is only part of a general spirit of arrogance and worldliness which pervades their whole life and conduct; it is one of the results of the thoroughly vitiated moral atmosphere which they have chosen for themselves, and to the noxiousness of which they are constantly contributing. The word here rendered "vaunting," and in 1 John ii. 16 "vainglory" (ἀλαζονεία) indicates insolent and empty assurance; and here the assurance lies in presumptuous trust in the stability of oneself and one's surroundings. Pretentious ostentation is the radical signification of the word, and in Classical Greek it is the pretentiousness which is most prominent, in Hellenistic Greek the ostentation. There is manifest ostentation in speaking confidently about one's future; and seeing how transitory everything human is, the ostentation is empty and pretentious. To be guilty of such vaunting is serious enough; but these fellow-countrymen of St. James, with their minds absorbed in material interests, gloried in their godless view of life. The simple character of his comment makes its severity all the more impressive: "all such glorying is evil." He uses the very word which is commonly used to express "the evil one" (ὁ πονηρός), and thereby indicates the character and source of such glorying.

In concluding this section of his letter, St. James brings the conduct which he has been condemning within the sweep of a very comprehensive principle: "To him, therefore, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." No Jew, whether Christian or not, could plead ignorance as an excuse for his transgressions in this matter. Every human being has experienced the uncertainty of the future and the transitoriness of human life; and every Jew was well instructed in the truth that man and all his surroundings are absolutely dependent upon the Divine will. Moreover, those whom St. James is addressing prided themselves on their spiritual knowledge (i. 19); they were professed hearers of God's Word (i. 22, 23), and were anxious to become teachers of others (iii. 1). Theirs is the case of servants who knew their master's will, and neglected to do it (Luke xii. 47). They themselves declared, "We see;" and the rejoinder is, "Your sin remaineth" (John ix. 41). They knew, long before St. James instructed them on the subject, what was seemly for human beings living as creatures in dependence upon their Creator; and they neglected to do what is seemly. To them this neglect is sin.

The passage is very commonly understood as applying to all sins of omission; and no doubt it is very capable of such application, but it does not follow that St. James was thinking of more than the particular case before him. The words may be interpreted in three different degrees of comprehensiveness, and St. James may have meant one, or two, or all three of them.

1. The relation in which a creature ought to stand to the Creator is one of humility and entire dependence; and he who knows that he is a creature, and adopts an attitude of self-confidence and independence, sins.

2. In all cases of transgression knowledge of what is right aggravates the sin, which is then a sin against light. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John xv. 22).

3. This applies not only to transgressions, but to omissions. Knowledge of what is evil creates an obligation to avoid it, and knowledge of what is good constitutes an obligation to perform it. The latter truth is not so readily admitted as the former. Every one recognises that an opportunity of doing evil is not a thing about which any choice is allowable. We are not permitted to use the opportunity or not, just as we please; we must on no account make use of it. But not a few persons imagine that an opportunity of doing good is a thing about which they have full right of choice; that they may avail themselves of the opportunity or not, just as they please; whereas there is no more freedom in the one case than in the other. We are bound to make use of the opportunity of doing good. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Some of those who think that St. James knew the Epistle to the Romans see here an allusion to the principle which St. Paul there lays down: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (xiv. 23). For reasons already stated (p. 569), it must remain doubtful whether St. James had knowledge of that Epistle; and even if he had, we could not by any means be sure that he had it in his mind when he wrote the words before us. But his words and St. Paul's, when combined, give us a complete statement of a great moral principle respecting the possession or non-possession of knowledge as to what is right and wrong in any given case. So long as we have no knowledge that a given act is right, *i. e.*, so long as we are in doubt as to whether it is allowable or not, it is sin to do it. As soon as we have knowledge that a given act is right it is sin to leave it undone.

This principle cuts at the root of that unwholesome growth which in moral theology is known as the doctrine of Probabilism, and which has worked untold mischief, especially in the Roman Church, in which its chief supporters are to be found. This doctrine teaches that in all cases in which there is doubt as to whether a given act is allowable or not the less safe course may be followed, even when the balance of probability is against its being allowable, if only there are grounds for believing that it is allowable. And some supporters of this doctrine go so far as to maintain that the amount of probability need not be very great. So long as it is not certain that the act in question is forbidden it may be permitted. The object of which teaching is not that which ought to be the object of all moral teaching, viz., to save beings with immortal souls from making serious mistakes of conduct, but to enable beings with strong desires and passions to gratify them without scruple. The moral law is not so much explained as explained away. The very titles of some of the treatises in which the doctrine of Probabilism is advocated indicate their tendency, *e. g.*, "The Art of Perpetual Enjoyment."

To all such special pleading, and making the Word of God of none effect by human glosses, the simple principles laid down by St. Paul and St. James are the best antidote: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FOLLIES AND INIQUITIES OF THE RICH; THEIR MISERABLE END.

JAMES v. 1-6.

HERE, if anywhere in the Epistle, the writer glances aside from the believing Jews of the Dispersion, to whom the letter as a whole is addressed, and in a burst of righteous indignation which reminds us of passages in the old Hebrew Prophets, denounces members of the twelve tribes who not even in name are Christians. In the preceding section such a transition is in preparation. When he is condemning the godless presumption of those seekers after wealth who dared, without thought of their own frailty and of God's absolute control over their lives and fortunes, to think and speak confidently of their schemes for future gains, he seems to be thinking almost as much of unbelieving Jews as of those who have accepted the Gospel. Here he appears for the moment to have left the latter entirely out of sight, and to be addressing those wealthy Jews who not only continued the policy and shared the guilt of the opponents and murderers of Christ, but by scandalous tyranny and injustice oppressed their poor brethren, many of whom were probably Christians. The severity of the condemnation is not the only or the main reason for thinking that the paragraph is addressed to unconverted Jews. The first ten verses of chapter iv. are very severe; and there also, as here, the affectionate form of address, "brethren," so frequent elsewhere in the Epistle, is wanting; but there is no doubt that those ten verses, like the paragraphs which immediately precede and follow them, are addressed to Christians. What is so exceptional in the passage now under consideration is the entire absence of any exhortation to repentance, or of any indication that there is still hope of being reconciled to the offended Jehovah. They are to "weep and howl," not in penitence, but in despair. The end is at hand; the day of reckoning is approaching; and it is a fearful account which awaits them. In this respect there is a very marked difference between this paragraph and the one which follows it. In both the nearness of the Day of Judgment is the motive; but this nearness is to "the rich" a terror, to "the brethren" a comfort. This difference would be very difficult to explain if both paragraphs were addressed to believing Jews.

Throughout the Epistle there are strains which sound like echoes from the Prophets of the Old Testament, with whom St. James has much in common; but the passage before us is specially in their spirit. It would not surprise us to meet with it in Isaiah or Jeremiah. One or two similar passages are worth comparing: "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou hast made an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee" (Isa. xxxiii. 1). "Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil? Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many peoples, and hast sinned against thy soul. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it" (Hab. ii. 9). In the New Testament the passage which most resembles it is our Lord's denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 13-36).

"Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you." We have the same combination of words in Isaiah: "In their streets they gird themselves with sackcloth: on their housetops, and in their broad places, every one howleth, weeping abundantly" (xv. 3). And in an earlier chapter we have a still closer parallel to the spirit of this verse: "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand" (xiii. 6). The miseries to which St. James alludes are those which shall befall them at "the coming of the Lord" (ver. 8). It is the impending judgment of the tyrannous rich that is primarily in his mind. He may also have foreseen something of the horrors of the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem, and in accordance with Christ's prophecy may have considered these calamities typical of the judgment, or part and parcel of it. In the Jewish war the wealthy classes suffered terribly. Against them, as having been friendly to the Romans, and having employed Roman influence in oppressing their own countrymen, the fury of the fanatical party of the Zealots was specially directed; and although the blow fell first and heaviest upon the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea, yet it was felt by all Jews throughout the world.

They imagined themselves to be rich; they were really most poor and most miserable. So sure is the doom that is coming upon them, that in prophetical style St. James begins to speak of it as already here; like a seer, he has it all before his eyes. "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted." We have here three kinds of possessions indicated. First, stores of various kinds of goods. These are "corrupted;" they have become rotten and worthless. Secondly, rich garments, which in the East are often a very considerable portion of a wealthy man's possessions. They have been stored up so jealously and selfishly that insects have preyed upon them and ruined them. And thirdly, precious metals. These have become tarnished and rusted, through not having been put to any rational use. Everywhere their avarice has been not only sin, but folly. It has failed of its sinful object. The unrighteous hoarding has tended not to wealth, but to ruin. And thus the rust of their treasures becomes "a testimony against them." In the ruin of their property their own ruin is portrayed; and just as corruption, and the moths, and the rust consume their goods, so shall the fire of God's judgment consume the owners and abusers of them. They have reserved all this store for their selfish enjoyment, but God has reserved them for His righteous anger.

"Ye laid up your treasure in the last days."

There was the monstrous folly of it. The end of all things was close at hand; "the last days" had already begun; and these besotted graspers after wealth were still heaping up treasures which they would never have any opportunity of using. The Authorised Version spoils this by a small, but rather serious, mistranslation. It has, "Ye have heaped up treasure together for the last days," instead of "in the last days" (*ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις*). The case is precisely that which Christ foretold: "As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt. xxiv. 37-39). "Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed" (Luke xvii. 28-30).

That the "last days" mean the days immediately preceding the Second Advent can scarcely be doubted. The context renders this very probable, and the exhortation in the next section renders it practically certain. "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged: behold, the Judge standeth before the doors." That the first Christians believed that Jesus Christ would return in glory during the lifetime of many who were then living, will hardly be disputed by any one who is acquainted with the literature of the Apostolic age and of the period immediately following. Nor, perhaps, will many at the present time care to dispute that this erroneous opinion was shared, for a time at any rate, even by Apostles. "Ye are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time," says St. Peter (1 Peter i. 5). "We that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in nowise precede them that are fallen asleep" (1 Thess. iv. 15; *cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 51); and again, writing some years later, "In the last days grievous times shall come," about which Timothy is to be on his guard, says St. Paul (2 Tim. iii. 1). And much nearer to the close of the Apostolic age we have St. John telling his little children that "it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18). Some twenty or thirty years later St. Ignatius writes to the Ephesians, "These are the last times. Henceforth let us be reverent; let us fear the longsuffering of God, lest it turn into a judgment against us. For either let us fear the wrath which is to come, or let us love the grace which now is" (xi.).

Only very gradually did the Christian Church attain to something like a true perspective as to the duration of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Only very gradually did even the Apostles obtain a clear vision as to the nature of the kingdom which their Lord had founded and left in their charge, for them to occupy until He came. Pentecost did not at once give them perfect insight into the import of their own commission. Much still remained to be learned, slowly, by experience. And if this was the case with Apostles, we need not wonder that it was so with James, the Lord's brother. It is remarkable that Christ's solemn warning against speculating as to the time of His return seems to have made only partial impression upon the disciples. "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark xiii. 32, 33). But it is our gain that they were allowed for a time to hold a belief that the Lord would return very speedily. The Epistles and Gospels were written by men under the influence of that belief, and such influence is a very considerable guarantee for the honesty of the writers. It was because the rich whom St. James here denounces had no such belief in a speedy judgment, indeed had very little thought of a judgment at all, that they were guilty of such folly and iniquity.

Having indicated their folly in amassing wealth which was no blessing to themselves or others, but simply deteriorated by being hoarded, St. James passes on to point out their iniquity. And first of all he mentions the gross injustice which is frequently inflicted by these wealthy employers of labour upon those who work for them. The payment of the wages which have been earned is either unfairly delayed or not paid at all. "Behold, the hire of the labourers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth out." Several passages in the Old Testament appear to be in the writer's mind. "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates: in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee" (Deut. xxiv. 14, 15; *cf.* 17, and Lev. xix. 13). "And I will come near you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against . . . those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn away the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith the Lord" (Mal. iii. 5; *cf.* Jer. xxii. 13). Perhaps also, "Their cry came upon unto God by reason of the bondage" (Exod. ii. 23); and "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. iv. 10). The frequency with which the subject is mentioned seems to show that the evil which St. James here denounces had long been a common sin among the Jews. Tobit, in his charge to his son, says, "What is hateful to thee do not thou to others. Let not the wages of any man, which hath wrought for thee, tarry with thee (abide with thee all night), but give him it out of hand" (Tobit iv. 14). And in Ecclesiasticus, which St. James seems so often to have in his thoughts, we read, "The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that defraudeth him thereof (*ὁ ἀποστερῶν αὐτήν*) is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbour's living slayeth him; and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire (*ὁ ἀποστερῶν μισθὸν μισθίου*) is a blood-shedder" (Ecclus. xxxiv. 21, 22).

But none of these passages determine for us a point of some interest in the construction used by St. James. The words translated "of you," in "of you kept back by fraud," literally mean "from you" (*ἀφ' ὑμῶν*, not *ὑφ' ὑμῶν*). Two

explanations are suggested: 1. The fraudulent action proceeds from them, and hence "from" becomes nearly equivalent to "by;" and the use of "from" (ἀπό), rather than "by" (ὑπό), is all the more natural because the word for "kept back by fraud" has the former preposition compounded with it. 2. "From you," being placed between "kept back by fraud" and "crieth out" (ὁ ἀπεστερημένος ἀφ' ὑμῶν κράζει), may go with either, and it will be better to take it with "crieth out:" "The hire kept back by fraud crieth out from you." The wrongfully detained wages are with the rich employers, and therefore it is from the place where they are detained that their cry goes up to heaven. The passage quoted above from Exodus ii. 23 slightly favours this view, for there the Septuagint has, "Their cry came up unto God from their labours" (ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων); but the passages are not really parallel.

The word used for "fields" (χώρας) is worth noting. It implies extensive lands, and therefore adds point to the reproach. The men who own such large properties are not under the temptations to fraud which beset the needy, and it is scandalous that those who can so well afford to pay what is due should refuse. Moreover, the labour of mowing and reaping such fields must be great, and therefore the labourers have well earned their wage. The words "into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth" probably come from Isaiah (v. 9), and perhaps St. James was led to them by the thought that these extensive fields are the result of fraud or violence; for the verse which precedes the words in Isaiah run thus: "Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!" No other New Testament writer uses the expression "the Lord of Sabaoth," although St. Paul once quotes it from Isaiah (Rom. ix. 29). Bede may be right in thinking that its point here is that the rich fancy that the poor have no protector; whereas the Lord of hosts hears their cry. And there is possibly another point in mowers and reapers being selected as the representatives of all hired labourers. Calvin suggests that it is specially iniquitous that those whose toil supplies us with food should themselves be reduced to starvation; and to this it has been added that the hard-heartedness of the grasping employers is indeed conspicuous when not even the joy of the harvest moves them to pay the poor who work for them their hardly earned wage.

The second feature in the iniquity of the rich is the voluptuous and prodigal life which they lead themselves, at the very time that they inflict such hardships upon the poor. "Ye lived delicately on the earth, and took your pleasure; ye nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter." The aorists should perhaps be translated as aorists throughout these verses: "Ye laid up your treasure, . . . ye lived delicately," etc. rather than, "Ye have laid up, ye have lived," etc. The point of view is that of the Day of Judgment, when these wealthy sinners are confronted by the enormities which they committed during their lives. But it is a case in which it is quite permissible to render the Greek aorist by the English perfect. "On the earth" may either mean "during your lifetime," or may be in contrast to "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." All the while that the cry against their iniquity was ascending to heaven, as an accumulating charge that would at last overwhelm them, they were living in luxury on earth, thinking nothing of the wrath to come. It was the converse of the old Epicurean doctrine, so graphically described by the late Laureate in "The Lotus-eaters." There it is the gods who "lie beside their nectar" in ceaseless enjoyment, "careless of mankind," who send up useless lamentations, which provoke no more than a smile among the neglectful deities. Here it is the men who revel in boundless luxury, careless of the righteous God, whose vengeance they provoke by persistent neglect of His commands.

The meaning of "in a day of slaughter" is not easily determined. The "as"—"as in a day of slaughter"—must certainly be omitted. It was inserted to make more evident one of the possible interpretations of "day of slaughter." "Ye fattened your heart with perpetual banqueting, as if life were made up of killing and eating." "And in that day did the Lord, the Lord of hosts, call to weeping and to mourning, and baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" (Isaiah xxii. 12, 13). If this be the idea which is expressed by the words in question, then the meaning would be, "Ye fared sumptuously every day." But it is possible that "in a day of slaughter" here balances "in the last days" just above. As the folly of heaping up treasure was augmented by the fact that it was done when the end of all things was at hand, so the iniquity of voluptuous living was augmented by the fact that their own destruction was at hand. In this case the wealthy owners, like stalled oxen, were unconsciously fattening themselves for the slaughter. Instead of sacrificing themselves to God's love and mercy, they had sacrificed and devoured their poor brethren. They had fed themselves, and not the flock; and unwittingly they were preparing themselves as a sacrifice to God's wrath. For a sacrifice, either willingly or unwillingly, every one must be.

Did any of those whom St. James here condemns remember his words when, a few years later, thousands of the Jews of the Dispersion were once more gathered together at Jerusalem for the sacrifice of the Passover, and there became unwilling sacrifices to God's slow but sure vengeance? As already pointed out, it was the wealthy among them who specially suffered. Their prosperity and their friendship with the Romans provoked the envy and enmity of the fanatical Zealots, and they perished in a day of slaughter. Josephus tells us that it was all one whether the richer Jews stayed in the city during the siege or tried to escape to the Romans; for they were equally destroyed in either case. Every such person was put to death, on the pretext that he was preparing to desert, but in reality that the plunderers might get his possessions. People who were evidently half-starved were left unmolested, when they declared that they had nothing; but those who bodies showed no signs of privation were tortured to make them reveal the treasures which they were supposed to have concealed ("Bell. Jud.," V. x. 2).

"Ye condemned, ye killed the righteous one;

he doth not resist you." Does this refer to the condemnation and death of Jesus Christ? This interpretation has found advocates in all ages—Cassiodorus, Bede, Œcumenius, Grotius, Bengel, Lange, and other modern commentators; and it is certainly attractive. St. Peter, addressing the Jews in Solomon's Porch, says, "But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life" (Acts iii. 14, 15). St. Stephen, in his speech before the Sanhedrin, asks, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which showed before of the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers" (Acts vii. 52; *cf.* xxii. 14, and 1 Pet. iii. 18). It is certainly no objection to this interpretation that St. James uses the aorist —"ye condemned, ye killed." That tense might fittingly be used either of a course of action in the past, as in the aorists immediately preceding, or of a single action, as of Abraham's offering Isaac (ii. 21). Nor is it any objection that in "He doth not resist you" St. James changes to the present tense. In any case the change from past to present has to be explained, and it is as easy to explain it of the present long-suffering of Christ, or of His abandoning them to their wickedness, as of the habitual meekness of the righteous man. Nor, again, is it any objection that the Jews addressed in this Epistle could not rightly be charged with the condemnation and death of Christ, for twenty or thirty years had elapsed since that event. It is by no means improbable that among the Jews then living there were many who had cried "Crucify Him" on Good Friday; and even if there were not, the words of St. James are quite justifiable. The Crucifixion was in a very real sense the act of the whole nation, far more so than was the murder of Zacharias the son of Jehoiada, and yet Jesus says to the Jews respecting Zacharias, "whom *ye* slew between the sanctuary and the altar." If at the present day the English might be told that they condemned and killed Charles I., and the French be told that they condemned and killed Louis XVI., much more might the Jews in the middle of the first century be said to have condemned and killed Jesus Christ.

But nevertheless, this attractive and tenable interpretation is probably not the right one; the context is against it. It is the evil that is inherent in class tyrannising over class that is condemned, the rich oppressing the poor, and the godless persecuting the godly. "The righteous one" is here not an individual, but the representative of a class. The iniquitous violence which slew Jesus Christ and His martyrs, James the son of Zebedee and Stephen, illustrates what St. James says here, just as his own martyrdom does; but it does not follow from this that he is alluding to any one of these events in particular. The Book of Wisdom seems once more to be in the writer's mind: "Let us oppress the poor righteous man; let us not spare the widow, nor reverence the ancient grey hairs of the aged. . . . Let us lie in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education. . . . He is grievous to us even to behold: for his life is not like other men's; his ways are of another fashion. . . . Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness, and prove his patience. Let us condemn him with a shameful death; for by his own saying he shall be respected" (ii. 10-20).

Julius Cæsar on one occasion stated his financial position by confessing that he needed half a million of money in order to be worth nothing. The spiritual condition of many prosperous men might be expressed in a similar way. Cæsar never allowed lack of funds to stand between him and his political aims; when he had nothing he borrowed at enormous interest. So also with us. In pursuing our worldly aims we sink deeper and deeper in spiritual ruin, and accumulate debts for an eternal bankruptcy. Riches are not a whit less perilous to the soul now than they were in the first century, and yet how few among the wealthy really believe that they are perilous at all. The wisdom of our forefathers has placed in the Litany a petition which every well-to-do person should say with his whole heart: "In all time of our wealth, Good Lord, deliver us."

CHAPTER XXIV.

PATIENCE IN WAITING—THE ENDURANCE OF JOB—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MENTION OF JOB BY ST. JAMES.

JAMES v. 7-11.

"BE patient, therefore, brethren." The storm of indignation is past, and from this point to the end of the Epistle St. James writes in tones of tenderness and affection. In the paragraph before us he, as it were, rounds off his letter, bringing it back to the point from which he started; so that what follows (vv. 12-20) is of the nature of a postscript or appendix. He began his letter with the exhortation, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold trials; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (i. 2-4). He draws to a close with the charge, "Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord."

The "therefore" shows that this sympathetic exhortation of the brethren is closely connected with the stern denunciation of the rich in the preceding paragraph. The connection is obvious. These brethren are in the main identical with the righteous poor who are so cruelly oppressed by the rich; and St. James offers them consolation mainly on two grounds: First, their sufferings will not last for ever; on the contrary, the end of them is near at hand. Secondly, the end of them will bring not only relief, but reward.

As has been already pointed out (p. 623), St. James evidently shared the belief, which prevailed in the Apostolic age, that Jesus Christ would very speedily return in glory to punish the wicked and reward the righteous. This belief, as Neander observes, was very natural: "Christ Himself had not chosen to give any information respecting the time of his coming. Nay, He had expressly said that the Father had re-

served the decision to Himself alone (Mark xiii. 32); that even the Son could determine nothing respecting it. But still, the longing desire of the Apostolic Church was directed with eager haste to the appearing of the Lord. The whole Christian period seemed only as the transition-point to the eternal, and thus as something that must soon be passed. As the traveller, beholding from afar the object of all his wanderings, overlooks the windings of the intervening way, and believes himself already near his goal, so it seemed to them, as their eye was fixed on that consummation of the whole course of events on earth."

Thus, by a strange but unperceived incongruity, St. James makes the unconscious impatience of primitive Christianity a basis for his exhortation to conscious patience. Early Christians, in their eagerness for the return of their Lord, impatiently believed that His return was imminent; and St. James uses this belief as an argument for patient waiting and patient endurance. It is only for a short time that they will have to wait and endure, and then the rich reward will be reaped. Ploughing and harrowing are toilsome and painful, but they have to be gone through, and then, after no intolerable waiting, the harvest comes.

Above, when St. James was rebuking his readers for their presumptuous confidence respecting their future plans, he reminded them of the shortness of life. "What is your life? For ye are a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (iv. 14). Here the shortness of the interval between the present moment and the end of all things is urged as a reason both for circumspection and for patience. In both cases, with his characteristic fondness for illustrations drawn from nature, he employs physical phenomena to enforce his lesson. In the one case life is a vapour, not substantial at any time, and soon dispersed; in the other case life is the work and the waiting which must precede the harvest.

The key-note of the whole passage is *patience*, which in one form or another occurs six times in five verses. In the original two different words are used—one (*μακροθυμεῖν* and *μακροθυμία*) four times in the first four verses; and the other (*ὑπομένειν* and *ὑπομενή*) twice in the last verse, where we certainly need "the endurance of Job" rather than "the patience of Job," in order to preserve the transition from the one word to the other. "Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience (*μακροθυμίας*) the prophets who spake in the Name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed which endured (*τοὺς ὑπομείναντας*): ye have heard of the endurance (*ὑπομενήν*) of Job." It was perhaps because "the patience of Job" has become a proverbial formula that the Revisers banished "endurance" to the margin, instead of placing it in the text. The two words are not infrequently found together (2 Cor. vi. 4-6; Col. i. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 10; Clement of Rome, lviii.; Ignatius, "Ephes.," iii.). The difference between the two is, on the whole, this, that the first is the longsuffering which does not retaliate upon oppressive persons, the second the endurance which does not succumb under oppressive things. The persecuted prophets exhibited the one; the afflicted Job exhibited the other. The oppressed and poor Christians whom St. James addresses are able to practise both these forms of patience, which Chrysostom extols as the "queen of the virtues."

There is a remarkable diversity of readings in the illustration about the husbandman's waiting. Some authorities make him wait for the early and latter rain, others for the early and latter fruit. The best witnesses leave the substantive to be understood, and this is doubtless the original reading; it accounts for the other two. Some copyists thought that rain was to be understood, and therefore inserted it; while others for a similar reason inserted fruit. No doubt it is rain that is intended, in accordance with several passages in the Old Testament (Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23; Zech. x. 1). The rains of autumn and of spring are meant, not "morning rain and evening rain" as Luther renders it in his version; and no moral or spiritual facts are symbolised by these natural phenomena, such as the penitential tears of youth and of old age, which would not fit the context. The point of the simile lies in the patient waiting, not in that which is waited for.

"Murmur not, brethren, one against another." The literal meaning of the Greek is "Groan not;" that is, "Grumble not." Earlier English versions have "Grudge not;" and "grudge" once had the meaning of "murmur," as in "They will run here and there for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied" (Ps. lix. 15). It is altogether a mistake to suppose that "one against another" includes the wealthy oppressors spoken of in the preceding section. It is the common experience of every one that men who are irritated and exasperated by trying persons or circumstances are liable to vent their vexation on those who are in no way responsible for what tries them. St. James is well aware of this danger, and puts his readers on their guard against it. "Be longsuffering," he says, "and do not retaliate on those who maltreat you; and do not let the smart of your troubles betray you into impatience towards one another. He who is to judge your oppressors will judge you also, and He is close at hand." We can hardly doubt that Christ's saying, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt. vii. 1), is in his mind. The way to lighten one's burden is not to groan over it, still less to murmur against those who are in the same case, but to try to console and help them. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It is a good thing to take as an example of patience the prophets and others among God's suffering saints; but it is a still better thing to give such an example ourselves.

By the prophets St. James no doubt means the prophets of the Old Testament—Elijah, Jeremiah, and others. It is not likely that he includes any of the persecuted disciples of the New Testament, such as James the son of Zebedee, and Stephen. Here again we seem to have an echo of Christ's words: "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you" (comp. "We call them blessed which endured"): "for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. v. 11, 12). It is the ceaseless reproach against the Jews that they boasted that theirs were the prophets, and yet were the persecutors of the prophets. "The children of Israel . . . have slain Thy prophets with the sword," says Elijah (1 Kings xix. 10, 14). "That I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets," says God to Elisha

(2 Kings ix. 7). They "slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them again to Thee," says Nehemiah, in his prayer (Neh. ix. 26). "Your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion," is the accusation of Jeremiah (ii. 30). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her!" is the lamentation of Christ (Matt. xxiii. 37). And Stephen, just before he was himself added to the number of the slain, asks, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them which showed before of the coming of the Righteous One" (Acts vii. 52). Certainly those who try to do God's work in the world have no lack of examples of patient suffering for such work. The reasonable question would seem to be, not, "Why should I be made to suffer for endeavouring to do good?" but, "Why should I not be made to suffer? Seeing what others have had to endure, why should I be spared?"

"Ye have heard of the endurance of Job." It is possible that this refers specially to the reading of the Book of Job in public service; but there is no need to restrict the hearing to such occasions. We need not doubt that the endurance of Job was a familiar topic among the Jews long before this Epistle was written, and independently of the book being read in the synagogues. Yet, in spite of this familiarity, the passage before us is the only reference in the whole of the New Testament to the story of Job, and there is only one quotation from the Book: "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (Job v. 13) is quoted by St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 19). There are several loose quotations from it in the Epistle of Clement of Rome (xvii., xx., xxvi., xxxix., lvi.); and the remarkable insertion in the Vulgate Version of Tobit ii. 12-15 is worthy of quotation: "This trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job. For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept His commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life. For as the kings insulted over holy Job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying, Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedest the dead? But Tobias rebuked them, saying, Speak not so; for we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him."

"Ye have heard of the endurance of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful." A well-supported, but, on the whole, less probable reading, gives us the imperative, "see the end of the Lord," instead of the indicative, "ye have seen" (ἴδετε instead of εἴδετε). If it be correct, it may be taken either with what precedes or with what follows: either, "Ye have heard of the endurance of Job: see also the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful;" or, "Ye have heard of the endurance of Job and the end of the Lord: see that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful."

But a more important question than either the reading or the division of the clauses is the meaning of the expression "the end of the Lord." Bede follows Augustine in understanding it of the death of Christ, which no doubt many of the readers of the Epistle had witnessed—"Exitum quoque Domini in cruce quem longanimiter suscepit, adstantes ipsi vidistis": and in this interpretation Bede is followed by Wetstein, Lange, and some other modern writers. It cannot be considered as probable. St. James would hardly couple the endurance of Job with the death of Christ in this abrupt way; and the words which follow—"that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful"—do not fit on to this interpretation. "The end of the Lord" much more probably means the end to which the Lord brought the sufferings of Job. It may have special reference to the concluding portion of the Book of Job, in which Jehovah is represented as bringing the argument to a close: "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" etc., etc. (xxxviii.-xlii.). This appearance of Jehovah to end the trials of Job would then be analogous to the appearance of Christ to end the trials of the persecuted Christians; and it is possible that the combination "ye have heard . . . and have seen" was suggested by the last words of Job: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (xlii. 5, 6).

Stier remarks that the mention of Job in Ezekiel (xiv. 14, 16, 20), and here by St. James, shows us "that the man Job actually lived, like Noah, Daniel, and all the prophets; that the narrative of his life is not a didactic poem, but a real history." But is that a necessary conclusion? Let us leave on one side the question whether or no there really was such a person as Job, who experienced what is recorded in the book which bears his name, and let us consider whether the mention of him by Ezekiel and by St. James proves that there was such a person. It proves nothing of the sort. It shows no more than this, that the story of Job was well known, and was employed for moral and spiritual instruction. Let us suppose that the Book of Job is a parable, like that of Dives and Lazarus. Would the fact that its contents are not historical prevent Ezekiel or St. James from speaking of Job as a well-known person of exemplary life? There would be nothing unnatural in coupling together Dives, who is probably an imaginary person, and the rich young man, who is certainly a real person, as examples of men to whom great wealth has proved disastrous, nor, again, in speaking of Lazarus and the penitent thief as instances of souls that had passed from great earthly suffering to the rest of Paradise. Such combinations would not commit the writer or speaker who made use of them to the belief that Dives and Lazarus were historical persons. Why, then, should the fact that an inspired writer couples Job with Noah and Daniel commit us to the belief that Job is a real person? He may have been so, just as Lazarus may have been so, but the mention of him by Ezekiel and by St. James does not prove that he was. We know too little about the effects of inspiration to be justified in saying dogmatically that an inspired writer would never speak of an unhistorical person as an example to be imitated. Is the merchant who sold all that he had in order to buy one pearl of great price an historical person? and is he not put

before us as an example to be imitated? It is quite possible that the story of Job is in the main a narrative of facts, and not an inspired fiction; but the mention of him by Ezekiel and by St. James is no proof of it. It is neither fair nor prudent to cite either of them as witnesses to the historical character of the Book of Job. It is not fair, because we are ignorant of their opinion on the subject, and are also ignorant as to whether their opinion on the subject would be under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And it is not prudent, because it may be demonstrated hereafter that the story of Job is not historical; and then we shall have pledged the testimony of inspired persons to the truth of a narrative which is, after all, fictitious. If St. Paul may cite Jannes and Jambres as instances of malignant opposition to the truth, without compelling us to believe that those names are historical, St. James may quote Job as an example of patient endurance, without obliging us to believe that Job is an historical personage. In each case the historical character of the illustrations must be decided on other grounds than the fact that they are employed by writers who were inspired.

Questions of this kind are among the many spheres in which we need that virtue on which St. James here insists with such simple earnestness—patience. When certainty has not been attained, and perhaps is not attainable, let us learn to wait patiently in uncertainty. Was there ever such a person as Job? Who wrote the Book of Job? What is its date? Does inspiration produce infallibility? and if so, what are the limits to such infallibility? There are men to whom uncertainty on such questions as these seems intolerable. They cannot "learn to labour and to wait;" they cannot work patiently, and wait patiently, until a complete solution is found. And hence they hurry to a definite conclusion, support it by evidence that is not relevant, and affirm that it is demonstrated by what is perhaps relevant, but is far short of proof. Intellectual probation is part of our moral probation in this life, and it is a discipline much needed in an age of great mental activity. Impatience of the intellect is a common blemish, and it is disastrous both to him who allows himself to be conquered by it and to the cause of truth. He does good service both to himself and to others, who cultivates a dread of jumping to unproved conclusions, and who in speaking and writing watchfully distinguishes what is certain from what is only probable, and what is probable from what is only not known to be untrue.

The great example of patience is not given by St. James, although we can read it into his words. In a sense not meant by him there is the Husbandman, who waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, until it receive the early and the latter rain. There is that precious harvest of human souls which must receive and welcome the dew of God's grace before it is ready for His garner. On some it has never yet fallen; on some it has fallen, but as yet in vain; and meanwhile the Husbandman waiteth, "being patient over it," until it receive the one thing needful. Through long, long centuries He has been waiting, and He continues so doing. St. Augustine tells us why. God is "patient, because He is eternal" (*patiens quia æternus*). He who is "from everlasting to everlasting" can afford to wait. He waits patiently for us, generation after generation. Can we not wait for Him one hour? Let us patiently abide until "the end of the Lord" comes, the end which He has prepared for us, and towards which all things under His guiding hand are working. When we have seen it we shall once more see "that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROHIBITION OF SWEARING—THE RELATION OF THE LANGUAGE OF ST. JAMES TO RECORDED SAYINGS OF CHRIST.

JAMES v. 12.

THE main portion of the Epistle is already concluded. St. James has worked through his chief topics back to the point from which he started, viz., the blessedness of steadfast and patient endurance of trials and temptations. But one or two other subjects occur to him, and he reopens his letter to add them by way of a farewell word of counsel.

One of the leading thoughts in the letter has been warning against sins of the tongue (i. 19, 26; iii. 1-12; iv. 11, 13; v. 9). He has spoken against talkativeness, unrestrained speaking, love of correcting others, railing, cursing, boasting, murmuring. One grievous form of sinful speech he has not mentioned particularly; and about this he adds a strong word of warning in this postscript to the Epistle: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not."

Two questions are raised by this remarkable prohibition—first, the exact meaning of it, especially whether it forbids swearing for any purpose whatever; and secondly, its relation to the almost identical prohibition uttered by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 35, 36). It will be obvious that whatever this relation may be, the meaning of our Lord's injunction determines the meaning of St. James in his injunction. It is hardly worth arguing that he did not mean either more or less than Christ meant.

I. The immediate context of the prohibition is worth noting in each case; it seems to throw light upon the scope of the prohibition. Jesus Christ, after saying "Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, . . . nor by the earth. . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay," goes on to forbid retaliation of injuries, and to enjoin love towards enemies. St. James enjoins longsuffering towards enemies, thence goes on to forbid swearing, and then again returns to the subject of how to behave under affliction and ill-treatment: "Is any among you suffering? let him pray." Prayer, not cursing and swearing, is the right method of finding relief. There is, therefore, some reason for thinking that both in the Sermon on the Mount and here the prohibition of swearing has special reference to giving vent to one's feelings in oaths when one is exasperated by injury or adversity. No kind of oath is allowable for any such purpose.

But it is quite clear that this is not the whole meaning of the injunction in either place. "But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay;" and, "But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay," manifestly refers to strengthening affirmations

and negations by adding to them the sanction of an oath. There was an old saying, now unhappily quite grotesque in its incongruity with facts, that "an Englishman's word is as good as his bond." What Christ and St. James say is that a Christian's word should be as good as his oath. There ought to be no need of oaths. Anything over and above simple affirming or denying "cometh of the Evil One." It is because Satan, the father of lies, has introduced falsehood into the world that oaths have come into use. Among Christians there should be no untruthfulness, and therefore no oaths. The use of oaths is an index of the presence of evil; it is a symptom of the prevalence of falsehood.

But the use of oaths is not only a sign of the existence of mischief, it is also apt to be productive of mischief. It is apt to produce a belief that there are two kinds of truth, one of which it is a serious thing to violate, viz., when you are on your oath; but the other of which it is a harmless, or at least a venial thing to violate, viz., when falsehood is only falsehood, and not perjury. And this, both among Jews and among Christians, produces the further mischievous refinement that some oaths are more binding than others, and that only when the most stringent form of oath is employed is there any real obligation to speak the truth. How disastrous all such distinctions are to the interests of truth, abundant experience has testified: for a common result is this;—that people believe that they are free to lie as much as they please, so long as the lie is not supported by the particular kind of oath which they consider to be binding.

Thus much, then, is evident, that both our Lord and St. James forbid the use of oaths (1) as an expression of feeling, (2) as a confirmation of ordinary statements; for the prohibitions plainly mean as much as this, and we know from other sources that these two abuses were disastrously common among both Jews and Gentiles at that time. That converts to Christianity were exempt from such vices is most improbable; and hence the need that St. James should write as he does on the subject.

But the main question is whether the prohibition is absolute; whether our Lord and St. James forbid the use of oaths for any purpose whatever; and it must be admitted that the first impression which we derive from their words is that they do. This view is upheld by not a few Christians as the right interpretation of both passages. Christ says, "Swear not at all (*μὴ ὀμόσαι ὅλως*) . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay." St. James says, "Swear not, neither by the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath (*μήτε ἄλλον τινὰ ὅρκον*): but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." In both cases we have an unqualified prohibition of what is to be avoided, followed by a plain command as to what is to be done.

But further investigation does not confirm the view which is derived from a first impression as to the meaning of the words. Against it we have, first, the fact that the Mosaic Law not only allowed, but enjoined the taking of an oath in certain circumstances; and Christ would hardly have abrogated the law, and St. James would hardly have contradicted it, without giving some explanation of so unusual a course; secondly, the indisputable practice of the early Church, of St. Paul, and of our Lord Himself.

In Deuteronomy we read, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; and Him shalt thou serve, and shalt swear by His Name" (vi. 13); and, "to Him shalt thou cleave, and by His Name shalt thou swear" (x. 20). The Psalmist says, "The king shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped" (lxiii. 11). Isaiah says, "He that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth" (lxv. 16); and still more strongly Jeremiah: "Thou shalt swear, As the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness" (iv. 2); and, "If they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by My Name, As the Lord liveth; even as they taught My people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built up in the midst of My people" (xii. 16. Comp. xxiii. 7, 8). An absolute prohibition of all swearing would have been so surprisingly at variance with these passages of Scripture that it is difficult to believe that it would have been made without any allusion to them. Even the Essenes, who were very strict about swearing, and considered it to be worse than perjury (for a man is condemned already who cannot be believed except upon his oath), imposed "terrific oaths" (*ὅρκους φρικώδεις*) upon those who wished to enter their community, before admitting them (Josephus, "Bell. Jud.," II. viii. 6, 7; "Ant.," XV. x. 4); and we can hardly suppose that St. James means to take up a more extreme position than that of the Essenes.

But even if we suppose that he does mean this we have still to explain the practice of those who were well aware of Christ's command respecting swearing, and certainly had no intention of deliberately violating it. If the first Christians were willing on certain occasions to take certain oaths, it must have been because they were fully persuaded that Jesus Christ had not forbidden them to do so. When called upon by heathen magistrates to take an oath, the distinction which they drew was not between swearing and not swearing, but between taking oaths that committed them to idolatry and oaths which did nothing of the kind. The latter oaths they were willing to take. Thus Tertullian says that they would not swear by the genii of the emperors, because these were supposed to be demons; but by the safety of the emperors they were willing to swear ("Apol.," xxxii.). Origen writes to much the same effect ("Con. Celsum," viii., lxv.). The oath by the *genius*, or *numen*, or "fortune" (*τύχη*) of the emperor was recognised as a formula for abjuring Christianity. Thus the proconsul presses Polycarp again and again: "Swear by the genius of Cæsar; swear the oath, and I will release thee" ("Mart. Pol.," ix., x.); and the fear of being betrayed into an act of idolatry was one of the main reasons why the early Christians disliked taking oaths. But there was also the feeling that for Christians oaths ought to be quite unnecessary. Thus Clement of Alexandria says that the true Christian ought to maintain a life calculated to inspire such confidence in those without that an oath would not even be demanded of him. And of course, when he swears, he swears truly; but he is not apt to swear, and rarely has recourse to an oath. And his speaking the truth on oath arises from his harmony with the truth ("Strom.," vii., viii.). Pelagius maintained that

all swearing was forbidden; but Augustine contends, on the authority of Scripture, that oaths are not unlawful, although he would have them avoided as much as possible ("Ep.," clvii. Comp. "Epp.," cxxv., cxxvi.).

But there is not only the evidence as to how the primitive Church understood the words of Christ and of St. James; there is also the practice of St. Paul, who frequently calls God to witness that he is speaking the truth (2 Cor. i. 23; xi. 31; xii. 19; Gal. i. 20; Phil. i. 8), or uses other strong asseverations which are certainly more than plain Yea and Nay (Rom. ix. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 31; 2 Cor. i. 18; xi. 10). Augustine quotes St. Paul in defence of swearing, but adds that St. Paul's swearing, when there was weighty reason for it, is no proof that we may swear whenever we think proper to do so. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews the fact that men swear in order to settle disputes is mentioned without any intimation that the practice is utterly wrong. On the contrary, we are told that God has condescended to do the same, in order to give us all the assurance in His power (vi. 16-18).

Lastly, we have the convincing fact that Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be put upon His oath. After having kept silence for a long time, He was adjured by the High Priest to answer; and then He answered at once. The full meaning of the High Priest's words are, "I exact an oath of Thee (ἐξορκίζω σε) by the Living God" (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64). Had this been an unlawful thing for the High-priest to do, our Lord would have kept silence all the more, or would have answered under protest.

II. It remains to consider the relation of the prohibition of swearing in this Epistle to the almost identical prohibition in the Sermon on the Mount. Is St. James quoting Christ's words? and if so, whence did he derive his knowledge of them?

No one who compares the two passages will believe that the similarity between them is accidental. Even if such an hypothesis could reasonably be entertained, it would be shattered by the number of other coincidences which exist between passages in this Epistle and the recorded words of Christ. In this instance we have the largest amount of coincidence; and therefore the discussion of this point has been reserved until this passage was reached, although numerous other cases of coincidence have already occurred.

The remark is sometimes made that there are more quotations of Christ's words in the Epistle of St. James than in all the Epistles of St. Paul, or than in all the other books of the New Testament other than the Gospels. It would be better to word the remark somewhat differently, and say that there are more coincidences which cannot be fortuitous between this Epistle and the recorded words of Christ than in all the Epistles of St. Paul; or that there is far more evidence of the influence of Christ's discourses upon the language of St. James than there is of any such influence upon the language of St. Paul. St. Paul tells us much about Christ and His work, but he very rarely reproduces any of His sayings. With St. James it is exactly the opposite; he says very little indeed about Christ, but, without quoting them as such, he frequently reproduces His words. It will be found that the largest number of these coincidences are between St. James and sayings that are recorded by St. Matthew, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. But this does not warrant us in asserting that St. James must have seen St. Matthew's Gospel or any other written Gospels. The coincidences, as will be seen, are not of a character to show this. Moreover, it is extremely doubtful whether any of the Gospels were written so early as A. D. 62, the latest date which can be given to our Epistle; and if any earlier date be assigned to it, the improbability of the writer's having seen a written Gospel becomes all the greater. The resemblances between the words of St. James and the recorded words of Christ are such as would naturally arise if he had himself heard Christ's teaching, and was consciously or unconsciously reproducing what he remembered of it, rather than such as would be found if he had had a written document to quote from. If this be so, we have a strong confirmation of the view adopted at the outset, that this Epistle is the work of the Lord's brother, who had personal experience of Christ's conversation, and was independent of both the oral and the written tradition of His teaching. It will be worth while to tabulate the principal coincidences, so that the reader may be able to judge for himself as to their significance. They suffice to show how full the mind of St. James must have been of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and they lead to the highly probable conjecture that in other parts of the Epistle we have reminiscences of Christ's words of which we have no record in the Gospels. It is not likely that St. James has remembered and reproduced only those sayings of which there is something recorded by the Evangelists.

ST. MATTHEW.	ST. JAMES.
1. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (v. 10-12).	Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience (i. 2, 3). Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold, we call them blessed which endured (v. 10, 11).
2. Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (v. 48).	And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing (i. 4).
3. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth (vii. 7, 8).	But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him (i. 5).
4. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v. 3. Comp. Luke vi. 20).	Let the brother of low degree glory in his high estate (i. 9). Did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom? (ii. 5).
5. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. . . . And every one that heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand (vii. 21, 26).	Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror (i. 22, 23).

St. Matthew (*continued*).	St. James (*continued*).	St. Luke.	St. James.
6. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (v. 7.)	So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment (ii. 12, 13).	16. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep (vi. 25).	Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness (iv. 9).
If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (vi. 15).			Go to now, ye rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you (v. 1).
With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged (vii. 2).			
7. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (vii. 16).	Can a fig-tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? (iii. 12).	17. Woe unto you that are rich for ye have received your consolation (vi. 24).	
8. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon (vi. 24).	Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God (iv. 4).	St. John.	St. James.
9. Whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted (xxiii. 12).	Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you (iv. 10.)	18. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them (xiii. 17).	Being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing (i. 25).
10. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow (vi. 34).	Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow (iv. 14).	19. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, . . . therefore the world hateth you (xv. 19. Comp. xvii. 14).	Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God (iv. 4).
11. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume (vi. 19).	Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver are rusted (v. 2, 3).		
12. Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one (v. 34–37).	But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven nor by the earth, nor by any other oath. But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; that ye fall not under judgment (v. 12).		

These twelve parallels are by no means exhaustive, but they are among the most striking. The following are worthy of consideration, although those which have been quoted above are more than sufficient for our purpose:—

St. Matthew i. 19	St. James v. 19
" i. 20	" v. 22
" ii. 8	" vii. 12
" ii. 10, 11	" v. 27
" iii. 17, 18	" v. 9
" iv. 3	" vii. 8

Let us now consider some coincidences between the language of St. James and our Lord's words as recorded by the other three Evangelists.

St. Mark	St. James.
13. Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt (διακριθῇ) in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it (xi. 23).	If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting (διακρινόμενος): for he that doubteth, etc. (i. 5, 6).
14. They shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten (xiii. 9).	Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment-seats? (ii. 6).
15. Know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors (xiii. 29; Matt. xxiv. 33).	Behold, the Judge standeth before the doors (v. 9).

It will be observed that these reminiscences of the teaching of Christ are all of one kind. They are all of them concerned with the morality of the Gospel, with Christian conduct and Christian life. Not one of them is doctrinal, or gives instruction as to the Christian creed. This, again, is what we might expect if the brother of the Lord is the writer of the Epistle. At the time when he listened to his Divine Brother's teaching he did not believe on Him. The doctrinal part of His discourses was precisely that part which did not impress him; it seemed to him as the wild fancies of an enthusiast (Mark iii. 21). But the moral teaching of Jesus impressed many of those who rejected His claims to be the Messiah, and it is this element which St. James remembers.

Before concluding, let us return to the moral precept contained in the verse which we have been considering: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." The prohibition has not ceased to be necessary, as our daily experience proves. The vice of profane swearing (and all swearing about ordinary matters is profane) is a strange one. Where is the pleasure of it? Where, before it becomes a fashion or a habit, is the temptation to it? Where, in any case, is the sense of it? There is pleasure in gluttony, in drunkenness, in lust, in pride, in avarice, in revenge. But where is the pleasure in an oath? The sensualist, the hypocrite, the miser, and the murderer can at least plead strong temptation, can at least urge that they get something, however pitiful, in exchange for eternal loss. But what can the blasphemer plead? what does he get in exchange for his soul? In times of strong excitement it is no doubt a relief to the feelings to use strong language; but what is gained by making the strong language trebly culpable by adding blasphemy to it? Besides which, there is the sadly common case of those who use blasphemous words when there is no temptation to give vent to strong feeling in strong language, who habitually swear in cold blood. Let no one deceive himself with the paltry excuse that he cannot help it, or that there is no harm in it. A resolution to do something disagreeable every time an oath escaped one's lips would soon bring about a cure. And let those who profess to think that there is no harm in idle swearing ask themselves whether they expect to repeat that plea when they give an account for every idle word at the day of judgment (Matt. xii. 36).

CHAPTER XXVI.

WORSHIP THE BEST OUTLET AND REMEDY FOR EXCITEMENT—THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WORSHIP AND CONDUCT.

JAMES v. 13.

THE subject of this verse was probably suggested by that of the preceding one. Oaths are not a right way of expressing one's feelings, however strong they may be, and of whatever kind they may be. There is, however, no need to stifle such feelings, or to pretend to the world that we have no emotions. In this respect, as in many others, Christianity has no sympathy with the precepts of Stoicism or Cynicism. It is not only innocent, but prudent, to seek an outlet for excited feelings; the right and wrong of the matter lie in the kind of outlet which we allow ourselves. Language of some kind, and in most cases articulate language, is the natural instrument for expressing and giving vent to our feelings. But we need some strong safeguard, or the consequences of freely giving expression to our emotions in speech will be calamitous. This safeguard is clearly indicated by the rules here laid down by St. James. Let the expression of strongly excited feelings be an act of worship; then we shall have an outlet for them which is not likely to involve us in harmful results. By the very act in which we exhibit our emotions we protect ourselves from the evil which they might produce. The very mode of expressing them moderates them, and serves as an antidote to their capacity for evil. Prayer and praise, or (in one word) worship, according to St. James, is the Christian remedy for "allaying or carrying off the fever of the mind." In all cases in which the mind is greatly agitated, whether painfully or pleasantly, whether by sorrow, anger, regret, or by joy, pleasure, hope,—the wise thing to do is to take refuge in an act of worship.

Mental excitement is neither right nor wrong, any more than physical hunger or thirst. Everything depends on the method of expressing the one or gratifying the other. It will be easy in both cases to indulge a legitimate craving in such a way as to turn a natural and healthy symptom into a disease. Neither a heated mind nor a heated body can without danger be kept heated, or treated as if it was at its normal temperature. The advice of St. James is that in all cases in which our minds are agitated by strong emotion we should turn to Him who gave us minds capable of feeling such emotion; we should cease to make ourselves our own centre, and turn our thoughts from the causes of our excitement to Him who is the unmoved Cause of all movement and rest.

We need not tie ourselves to the distribution of prayer and praise expressed in the text. It is the most natural and most generally useful distribution; but it is not the only one, and perhaps it is not the highest. The precept will hold good with equal truth if we transpose the two conclusions: "Is any among you suffering? let him sing praise. Is any cheerful? let him pray." "In everything give thanks," says St. Paul: which involves our frequently giving thanks in suffering. This was what Job, to whom St. James has just directed his readers, did in his trouble. He "fell upon the ground and worshipped: and he said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (i. 20, 21). And the Psalmist teaches much the same lesson as St. Paul: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (xxxiv. 1). But if praise is as suitable as prayer for suffering, prayer is as suitable as praise for cheerfulness. He who is cheerful has indeed great reason to bless and praise God. He has a priceless gift, which is a blessing to himself and to all around him, a gift which makes life brighter to the whole circle in which he moves. We most of us take far too little pains to cultivate it, to retain it when it has been granted to us, to regain it when we have lost it or thrown it away. Yet cheerfulness has its dangers. The light-hearted are apt to be light-headed, and to be free from care leads to being free from carefulness. The cheerful may easily lose sobriety, and be found off their guard. The remedy is prayer. Prayer steadies without dimming the bright flame of cheerfulness; and just as thanksgiving sweetens sorrow, so supplication sanctifies joy. "Is any suffering? let him sing praise. Is any cheerful? let him pray."

But there is another advantage in making religious worship, whether public or private, the outlet for our emotions. It secures a real connection between worship and life. Missionaries tell us that this is a frequent difficulty in their work. It is a hard enough thing to win converts from heathenism; but it is perhaps still harder to teach the newly converted that the worship of God has any bearing whatever upon their conduct. This idea is quite strange to them, and utterly alien to their whole mode of thought. They have never been taught anything of the kind before. They have been accustomed to regard the worship of the gods as a series of acts which must be religiously performed in order to win the favour of the deities, or at least to avert their wrath. But it has never occurred to them, nor have their priests impressed upon them, that their lives must be in accordance with their worship, or that the one has any connection with the other, any more than the colour of their clothes with the amount that they eat and drink. From this it follows that when the idolater has been induced to substitute the worship of God for the worship of idols, there still remains an immense amount to be done. The convert has still to be taught that there can no longer be this divorce of religion from conduct, but that prayer and praise must go hand in hand with work and life.

Converts from heathenism are by no means the only persons who are in need of this lesson. We all of us require to be reminded of it. All of us are apt to draw far too strong a line of distinction between Church and home, between Sunday and week-day, between the time that we spend on our knees and that which we spend in work and recreation. Not, alas! that we are too scrupulous about allowing worldly thoughts to invade sacred times and places, but that we are very jealous about allowing thoughts of God and of His service to mingle with our business and our pleasures, or at least take no pains to

bring about and keep up any such mingling. Our worship is often profaned by being shared with the world; our work is rarely consecrated by being shared with God.

What St. James recommends here is a remedy for this. There can be no wall of partition between conduct and religion if our feelings of joy and sorrow, of elation and despondency, of hope and fear, of love and dislike, are daily and hourly finding expression in praise and prayer. Our emotions will thus become instruments for moving us towards God. So much of life is filled with either vexation or pleasure, that one who has learned to carry out the directions here given of turning suffering into prayer, and cheerfulness into praise, will have gone a long way towards realising the Apostolic command, "Pray without ceasing." As Calvin well observes, St. James "means that there is no time in which God does not invite us to Himself. For afflictions ought to stimulate us to pray; prosperity supplies us with an occasion to praise God. But such is the perverseness of men that they cannot rejoice without forgetting God, and when afflicted they are disheartened and driven to despair. We ought, then, to keep within due bounds, so that the joy which usually makes us forget God may induce us to set forth the goodness of God, and that our sorrow may teach us to pray."

The word used by St. James for "to sing praise" (*ψάλλειν*) is worthy of notice. It is the source of the word "psalm." Originally it meant simply to touch, especially to make to vibrate by touching; whence it came to be used of playing on stringed instruments. Next it came to mean to sing to the harp; and finally to sing, whether with or without a stringed accompaniment. This is its signification in the New Testament (Rom. xv. 9; 1 Cor. xiv. 15; Eph. v. 19);—to sing praise to God. St. James, therefore, regards music as a natural and reasonable mode of expressing joyous feelings; and few will care to dispute that it is so; and it is evident that he is thinking chiefly, if not exclusively, of the joyous Christian singing by himself, rather than of his joining in psalms and hymns in the public worship of the congregation. A portion of Hooker's noble vindication of music as a part of religious worship may here with advantage be quoted.

"Touching musical harmony, whether by instrument or by voice, it being but of high and low in sounds a due proportionable disposition, such, notwithstanding, is the force thereof, and so pleasing effects it hath in that very part of man which is most divine, that some have been thereby induced to think that the soul itself, by nature, is or hath in it harmony. A thing which delighteth all ages and beseemeth all states; a thing as seasonable in grief as in joy; as decent being added unto actions of greatest weight and solemnity, as being used when men most sequester themselves from action. The reason hereof is an admirable facility which music hath to express and represent to the mind, more inwardly than any other sensible mean, the very standing, rising, and falling, the very steps and inflections every way, the turns and varieties of all passions whereunto the mind is subject; yea, so to imitate them that whether it resemble unto us the same state wherein our minds already are, or a clean contrary, we are not more contentedly by the one confirmed, than changed and led away by the other. . . . So that although we lay altogether aside the consideration of ditty or matter, the very harmony of sounds being framed in due sort, and carried from the ear to the spiritual faculties of our souls, is by a native puissance and efficacy greatly available to bring to a perfect temper whatsoever is there troubled, apt as well to quicken the spirits as to allay that which is too eager, sovereign against melancholy and despair, forcible to draw forth tears of devotion if the mind be such as can yield them, able both to move and to moderate all affections.

"The Prophet David having therefore singular knowledge, not in poetry alone, but in music also, judged them both to be things most necessary for the house of God, left behind him to that purpose a number of Divinely indited poems, and was farther the author of adding unto poetry melody both vocal and instrumental, for the raising up of men's hearts, and the sweetening of their affections towards God. In which considerations the Church of Christ doth likewise at this present day retain it as an ornament to God's service, and an help to our own devotion. They which, under pretence of the Law ceremonial abrogated, require the abrogation of instrumental music, approving nevertheless the use of vocal melody to remain, must show some reason wherefore the one should be thought a legal ceremony, and not the other" ("Eccles. Pol.," V. xxxviii. 1, 2).

It hardly needs to be stated that it is not necessary to be able to sing in order to observe this precept of St. James. The "singing and making melody with our hearts to the Lord" of which St. Paul writes to the Ephesians (v. 19) is all that is necessary; "giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." The lifting up of the heart is enough, without the lifting up of the voice; and if the voice be lifted up also, it is of little account, either to the soul or to God, whether its tones be musical, always provided that he who thus offers praise is alone, and not in the congregation. Those who have no music in their voices, and yet persist in joining aloud in the singing of public service, are wanting in charity. In order to gratify themselves, they disturb the devotions of others. And that principle applies to many other things in public worship, especially to details of ritual other than those which are generally observed. There would be much less difficulty about such things if each member of the congregation were to ask, "By doing this, or by refusing to do it, am I likely to distract my neighbours in their worship?" Ought not the answer to that question to be conclusive as regards turning or not turning to the East at the creed, bowing or not bowing the head at the Gloria Patri, and the like? We come to church to be calmed, sobered, soothed, not to be fretted and vexed. Let us take care that our own behaviour is such as not to irritate others. By our self-will we may be creating or augmenting mental excitement, which, as St. James tells us, worship, whether public or private, ought to cure.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH—THE ANOINTING OF THE SICK AND EXTREME UNCTION.

JAMES v. 14-15.

Two subjects stand out prominently in this interesting passage—the elders of the Church, and the anointing of the sick. The connection of the passage with what immediately precedes is close and obvious. After charging his readers in general terms to resort to prayer when they are in trouble, St. James takes a particular and very common instance of trouble, viz., bodily sickness, and gives more detailed directions as to the way in which the man in trouble is to make use of the relief and remedy of prayer. He is not to be content with giving expression to his need in private prayer to God; he is to "call for the elders of the Church."

I. The first thing to be noted in connection with this sending for the elders of the congregation by the sick man is, that in this Epistle, which is one of the very earliest among the Christian writings which have come down to us, we already find a distinction made between clergy and laity. This distinction runs through the whole of the New Testament. We find it in the earliest writing of all, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which the Christians of Thessalonica are exhorted "to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake" (v. 12, 13). And here St. James assumes as a matter of course, that every congregation has elders, that is a constituted ecclesiastical government. Compare with these the precept in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account" (xiii. 17); and the frequent directions in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. iii. 1-13; iv. 6, 13, 14; v. 17, 19, 22; Tit. i. 5-9; ii. 15; 2 Tim. i. 6, 14; ii. 2; iv. 5). What the precise functions of the clergy were is not told us with much detail or precision; but it is quite clear, from the passage before us, and those which have been quoted above, that whatever the functions were, they were spiritual rather than secular, and were duties which a select minority had to exercise in reference to the rest; they were not such as any one might exercise towards any one. In the present case the sick person is not to send for any members of the congregation, but for certain who hold a definite, and apparently an official position. If *any* Christians could discharge the function in question, St. James would not have given the sick person the trouble of summoning the elders rather than those people who chanced to be near at hand. And it is quite clear that not all Christians are over all other Christians in the Lord; that not all are to rule, and all to obey and submit; therefore not all have the same authority to "admonish" others, or to "watch in behalf of their souls, as they that shall give account."

The reason why the elders are to be summoned is stated in different ways by different writers, but with a large amount of substantial agreement. "As being those in whom the power and grace of the Holy Spirit more particularly appeared," says Calvin. "Because when they pray it is not much less than if the whole Church prayed," says Bengel. St. James, says Neander, "regards the presbyters in the light of organs of the Church, acting in its name;" and, "As the presbyters acted in the name of the whole Church, and each one as a member of the body felt that he needed its sympathy and intercession, and might count upon it; individuals should therefore, in cases of sickness, send for the presbyters of the Church. These were to offer prayer on their behalf." The intercession which St. James recommends, says Stier, is "intercession for the sick on the part of the representatives of the Church, . . . not merely the intercession of friends or brethren as such, but in the name of the whole community, one of whose members is suffering." It is altogether beside the mark to suggest that the elders were summoned as people of the greatest experience, who perhaps also were specially skilled in medicine. Of that there is not only no hint, but the context excludes the idea. If that were in the writer's mind, why does he not say at once, "Let him call for the physicians"? If the healing art is to be thought of at all in connection with the passage, the case is one in which medicine has already done all that it can, or in which it can do nothing at all. St. James would doubtless approve the advice given by the son of Sirach: "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent; but pray unto the Lord, and He will make thee whole" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 9). This exactly agrees with the precept, "Is any among you suffering? let him pray." "Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success" (12, 13). To this there is no equivalent in St. James; but he says nothing that is inconsistent with it. Then, after the physician has done his part, and perhaps in vain, would come the summoning of the elders to offer prayer. But it is simpler to suppose that the physician's part is left out of the account altogether.

II. The second point of interest is the anointing of the sick person by the elders. That what is said here affords no Scriptural authority for the Roman rite of Extreme Unction, is one of the commonplaces of criticism. One single fact is quite conclusive. The object of the unction prescribed by St. James is the recovery of the sick person; whereas Extreme Unction, as its name implies, is never administered until the sick person's recovery is considered to be almost or quite hopeless, and death imminent; the possibility of bodily healing is not entirely excluded, but it is not the main purpose of the rite. The only other passage in the New Testament in which the unction of the sick is mentioned is equally at variance with the Roman rite. We are told by St. Mark that the Twelve, when sent out by Christ two and two, "anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (vi. 13). Here also recovery, and not preparation for death, was the purpose of the anointing, which the Apostles seem to have practised on their own responsibility, for it is not mentioned in the charge which Christ gave them when He sent them out (7-11).

But there is this amount of connection between these two passages of Scripture and the

Roman sacrament of Extreme Unction, viz., that the latter grew out of ecclesiastical practices which were based upon these passages. As in not a few other instances, development has brought about a state of things which is inconsistent with the original starting-point. But in order to understand the development we must understand the starting-point, and that requires us to find an answer to the question, What purpose was the oil intended to serve? Was it purely symbolical? and if so, of what? Was it merely for the refreshment of the sick person, giving relief to parched skin and stiffened limbs? Was it medicinal, with a view to a permanent cure by natural means? Was it the channel or instrument of a supernatural cure? Was it an aid to the sick person's faith? One or both of the last two suggestions may be accepted as the most probable solution. And the reason why oil was selected as a channel of Divine power and an aid to faith was, that it was believed to have healing properties. It is easier to believe when visible means are used than when nothing is visible, and it is still easier to believe when the visible means appear to be likely to contribute to the desired effect. Christ twice used spittle in curing blindness, probably because spittle was believed to be beneficial to the eyesight. And that oil was supposed to be efficacious as medicine is plain from numerous passages both in and outside of Holy Scripture. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and festering sores: they have not been closed, nor bound up, neither mollified with oil" (Isa. i. 6). The Good Samaritan poured wine and oil into the wounds of the man who fell among robbers (Luke x. 34). A mixture of oil and wine was used for the malady which attacked the army of Ælius Gallus, and was applied both externally and internally (Dion Cass., LIII. 29; Strabo, XVI. p. 780). His physicians caused Herod the Great to be bathed in a vessel full of oil when he was supposed to be at death's door (Josephus, "Ant.," XVII. vi. 5). Celsus recommends rubbing with oil in the case of fevers and some other ailments ("De Med.," II. 14, 17; III. 6, 9, 19, 22; IV. 2). But it is obvious that St. James does not recommend the oil merely as medicine, for he does not say that the oil shall cure the sick person, nor yet that the oil with prayer shall do so; but that "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick," without mentioning the oil at all. On the other hand, he says that the anointing is to be done by the elders "in the name of the Lord." If the anointing were merely medicinal, it might have been performed by any one, without waiting for the elders. And it can hardly be supposed that oil was believed to be a remedy for all diseases.

On the other hand, it seems to be too much to say that the anointing had nothing to do with bodily healing at all, and was simply a means of grace for the sick. Thus Döllinger says, "This is no gift of healing, for that was not confined to the presbyters; and for that Christ prescribed not unction, but laying on of hands. Had he meant that, St. James would have bidden or advised the sick to send for one who possessed this gift, whether presbyter or layman. . . . What was to be conveyed by this medium was, therefore, only sometimes recovery or relief, always consolation, revival of confidence and forgiveness of sins, on condition, of course, of faith and repentance" ("First Age of the Church," p. 235, Oxenham's translation, 2d ed.: Allen, 1867).

But although the gift of healing was not confined to the elders, yet in certain cases they may have exercised it; and although Christ prescribed the laying on of hands (Mark xvi. 18), yet the Apostles sometimes healed by anointing with oil (Mark vi. 13). And that "shall save him that is sick" (*σώσει τὸν κάμνοντα*) means "shall cure him," is clear from the context, and also from the use of the same word elsewhere. "Daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith hath saved thee," to the woman with the issue of blood (Matt. ix. 22). Jairus prays, "Come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be saved" (Mark v. 23). The disciples say of Lazarus, "Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will be saved" (John xi. 12). And "the Lord shall raise him up" makes this interpretation still more certain. The same expression is used of Simon's wife's mother (Mark i. 31). "The Lord" is Christ, not the Father, both here and "in the Name of the Lord." Thus St. Peter says to Æneas, "Jesus Christ healeth thee" (Acts ix. 34. Comp. iii. 6, 16; v. 10).

That St. James makes the promise of recovery without any restriction may at first sight appear to be surprising; but in this he is only following the example of our Lord, who makes similar promises, and leaves it to the thought and experience of Christians to find out the limitations to them. St. James is only applying to a particular case what Christ promised in general terms. "All things, whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them" (Mark xi. 24. Comp. Matt. xvii. 20). "If ye shall ask [Me] anything in My Name, I will do it" (John xiv. 14). "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My Name" (John xvi. 23). The words "in My Name" point to the limitation; they do not, of course, refer to the use of the formula "through Jesus Christ our Lord," but to the exercise of the spirit of Christ: "Not My will, but Thine be done." The union of our will with the will of God is the very first condition of successful prayer. The Apostles themselves had no indiscriminate power of healing. St. Paul did not heal Epaphroditus, much as he yearned for his recovery (Phil. ii. 27). He left Trophimus at Miletus sick (2 Tim. iv. 20). He did not cure his own thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. xii. 7-9). How, then, can we suppose that St. James credited the elders of every congregation with an unrestricted power of healing? He leaves it to the common sense and Christian submission of his readers to understand that the elders have no power to cancel the sentence of death pronounced on the whole human race. To pray that any one should be exempt from this sentence would be not faith, but presumption.

Of the employment of the rite here prescribed by St. James we have very little evidence in the early ages of the Church. Tertullian mentions a cure by anointing, but it is not quite a case in point. The Emperor Septimius Severus believed that he had been cured from an illness through oil administered by a Christian named Proculus Torpacion, steward of Evodias, and in gratitude for it he maintained him in the palace for the rest of his life ("Ad. Scap.," iv.). Origen, in the second Homily on Leviticus (iv.),

quotes the passage from St. James, and seems to understand the sickness to be that of sin. He interpolates thus: "Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them lay their hands on him, anointing him with oil," etc. This perhaps tells us how the rite was administered in Alexandria in his time; or it may mean that Origen understood the "pray over him" ἐπ' αὐτόν of St. James to signify imposition of hands. With him, then, the forgiveness of sins is the healing. A century and a half later Chrysostom takes a further step, and employs the passage to show that priests have the power of absolution. "For not only at the time when they regenerate us, but afterwards also, they have authority to forgive sins." And then he quotes James v. 14, 15 ("De Sacerd.," III. 6). It is evident that this is quite alien to the passage. The sickness and the sins are plainly distinguished by St. James, and nothing is said about absolution by the elders, who pray for his recovery, and (no doubt) for his forgiveness.

When we reach the sixth century the evidence for the custom of anointing the sick with holy oil becomes abundant. At first any one with a reputation for sanctity might bless the oil—not only laymen, but women. But in the West the rule gradually spread from Rome that the sacred oil for the sick must be "made" by the bishop. In the East this has never been observed. Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, says that according to the Greeks it is lawful for presbyters to make the chrism for the sick. And this rule continues to this day. One priest suffices; but it is desirable to get seven, if possible.

But the chief step in the development is taken when not only the blessing of the oil, but the administering of it to the sick, is reserved to the clergy. In Bede's time this restriction was not yet made, as is clear from his comments on the passage, although even then it was customary for priests to administer the unction. But by the tenth century this restriction had probably become general. It became connected with the communion of the sick, which of course required a priest, and then with the *Viaticum*, or communion of the dying; but even then the unction seems to have preceded the last communion. The name "Extreme Unction" (*unctio extrema*), as a technical ecclesiastical term, is not older than the twelfth century. Other terms are "Last Oil" (*ultimum oleum*) and "Sacrament of the Departing" (*sacramentum exeuntium*). But when we have reached these phrases we are very far indeed from the ordinance prescribed by St. James, and from that which was practised by the Apostles. Jeremy Taylor, in the dedication of the "Holy Dying," says fairly enough, "The fathers of the Council of Trent first disputed, and after their manner at last agreed, that Extreme Unction was instituted by Christ; but afterwards being admonished by one of their theologues that the Apostles ministered unction to infirm people before they were priests, for fear that it should be thought that this unction might be administered by him that was no priest, they blotted out the word 'instituted,' and put in its stead 'insinuated' this sacrament, and that it was published by St. James. So it is in their doctrine; and yet in their anathematisms they curse all them that shall deny it to have been instituted by Christ. I shall lay no prejudice against it, but add this only, that there being but two places of Scripture pretended for this ceremony, some chief men of their own side have proclaimed these two invalid as to the institution of it;" and he mentions in particular Suarez and Cajetan. But he states more than he can know when he declares of Extreme Unction that "since it is used when the man is above half dead, when he can exercise no act of understanding, it must needs be nothing." Those who receive the rite are not always unconscious; and is it certain that an unconscious person "can exercise no act of the understanding," or that prayer for one who can exercise no act of the understanding "must needs be nothing"? With similar want of caution Stier speaks of the superstition which sends for the minister to 'pray over the sick,' when these have scarce any consciousness left." Whether or no Extreme Unction is an edifying ceremony is a question worthy of argument, and nothing is here urged on either side; but we are going beyond our knowledge if we assert that it can have no effect on the dying man; and we are unduly limiting the power of prayer if we affirm that to pray for one who has lost consciousness is a useless superstition. All that is contended for here is that the Roman rite is something very different from that which is ordered by St. James.

"And if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." We ought perhaps rather to translate, "Even if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." (The Greek is not καί ἐάν or ἐὰν δέ, but κἄν, for which comp. John viii. 14; x. 38; xi. 25). The meaning would seem to be, "even if his sickness has been produced by his sins, his sin shall be forgiven, and his sickness cured." It is possible, but unnatural, to join the first clause of this sentence with the preceding one: "the Lord shall raise him up, even if he have committed sins." In that case "It shall be forgiven him" forms a very awkward independent sentence, without conjunction. The ordinary arrangement of the clauses is much better: even if the malady is the effect of the man's own wrong-doing, the prayer offered by faith—his faith, and that of the elders—shall still prevail. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that their misconduct respecting the Lord's Supper had caused much sickness among them, and not a few deaths (1 Cor. xi. 30); and such direct punishments of sin were not confined to the Corinthian Church nor to the Apostolic age. They still occur in abundance, and those who experience them have the assurance of Scripture that if they repent and pray in faith their sins will certainly be forgiven, and their punishment possibly removed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONFESSION OF SINS—LAWFULNESS OF PRAYERS FOR RAIN.

JAMES v. 16-18.

THE connection of this passage with the preceding one is very close. This is evident even in the Authorised Version; but it is made still more manifest by the Revisers, who have restored the

connecting "therefore" to the text upon overwhelming authority. St. James is passing from the particular case of the sick person to something more general, viz., mutual confession of sins. If we draw out his thought in full it will be something of this kind: "Even if the sick person be suffering the consequences of his sins, nevertheless the faith and prayers of the elders, combined with his own, shall prevail for his forgiveness and healing. Of course he must confess and bewail his sins; if he does not admit them and repent of them, he can hope for nothing. Therefore you ought all of you habitually to confess your sins to one another, and to intercede for one another, in order that when sickness comes upon you, you may the more readily be healed." It is not quite certain that the word rendered "ye may be healed" (*ἰαθῆτε*) ought to be limited to bodily healing; but the context seems to imply that the cure of bodily disorders is still in the mind of St. James. If, however, with various commentators, we take it to mean "that your souls may be healed," then there is no need to supply any such thought as "when sickness comes upon you."

It might surprise us to find that the practice of auricular confession to a priest is deduced from the precept, "Confess your sins one to another," if we had not the previous experience of finding the rite of Extreme Unction deduced from the precept respecting the anointing of the sick. But here also Cajetan has the credit of admitting that no Scriptural authority for the Roman practice can be found in the words of St. James. The all-important "to one another" (*ἀλλήλοις*) is quite fatal to the interpretation of confession to a priest. If the confession of a layman to a priest is meant, then the confession of a priest to a layman is equally meant: the words, whether in the Greek or in the English, cannot be otherwise understood. But the injunction is evidently quite general, and the distinction between clergy and laity does not enter into it at all: each Christian, whether elder or layman, is to confess to other Christians, whether elders or laymen, either to one or to many, as the case may be. When the sick person just spoken of confessed his sins, he confessed them to the elders of the Church, because they were present; they did not come to receive his confession, but to pray for him and to anoint him. He sent for them, not because he wished to confess to them, but because he was sick. Even if he had had nothing to confess to them—a case evidently contemplated by St. James as not only possible, but common—he would still have sent for them. So far from its being among their functions as elders to hear the sick man's confession, St. James seems rather to imply that he ought to have made it previously to others. If Christians habitually confess their sins to one another, there will be no special confession required when any of them falls ill. But granting that this interpretation of his brief directions is not quite certain, it is quite certain that what he commends is the confession of any Christian to any Christian, and not the confession of laity to presbyters. About that he says nothing, either one way or the other, for it is not in his mind. He neither sanctions nor forbids it, but he gives a direction which shows that as regards the duty of confession to man, the normal condition of things is for any Christian to confess to any Christian. The important point is that the sinner should not keep his guilty secret locked up in his own bosom; to whom he should tell it is left to his own discretion. As Tertullian says, in his treatise "On Penance," "Confession of sins lightens as much as concealment (*dissimulatio*) aggravates them. For confession is prompted by the desire to make amends; concealment is prompted by contumacy" (viii.). Similarly Origen, on Psalm xxxvii.: "See, therefore, what the Divine Scripture teaches us, that we must not conceal sin within us. For just as, it may be, people who have undigested food detained inside them, or are otherwise grievously oppressed internally, if they vomit, obtain relief, so they also who have sinned, if they conceal and retain the sin, are oppressed inwardly. But if the sinner becomes his own accuser, accuses himself and confesses, he at the same time vomits out both the sin and the whole cause of his malady" ("Homil." II. 6). In much the same strain Chrysostom writes, "Sin, if it is confessed, becomes less; but if it is not confessed, worse; for if the sinner adds shamelessness and obstinacy to his sin, he will never stop. How, indeed, will such a one be at all able to guard himself from falling again into the same sins, if in the earlier case he was not conscious that he sinned. . . . Let us not merely call ourselves sinners, but let us make a reckoning of our sins, counting them according to their kind, one by one. . . . If thou art of the persuasion that thou art a sinner, this is not able so much to humble thy soul as the very catalogue of thy sins examined into according to their kind" ("Homil." xxx. in "Ep. ad Hebr.").

All these writers have this main point in common, that a sinner who does not confess what he has done amiss is likely to become careless and hardened. And the principle is at least as old as the Book of Proverbs: "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy" (xxviii. 13). But, as the context clearly shows in each case, they are each of them writing of a different kind of confession. The confession (*exomologesis*) which Tertullian so urgently recommends is public confession before the congregation; that which Origen advises is private confession to an individual, particularly with a view to deciding whether public confession is expedient.

What Chrysostom prefers, both here and elsewhere in his writings, is secret confession to God: "I say not to thee, Make a parade of thyself; nor yet, Accuse thyself in the presence of the others. . . . Before God confess these things; before the Judge ever confess thy sins, praying, if not with the tongue, at any rate with the heart, and in this way ask for mercy." All which is in accordance with the principle laid down by St. John, "If we confess our sins"—our sins in detail, not the mere fact that we have sinned—"He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). Bellarmine has the courage to claim not only St. James, but St. John, as teaching confession to a priest ("De Pænit.," III. iv.); but it is manifest that St. John is speaking of confession to God, without either approving or condemning confession to man, and that St. James is speaking of the latter, without saying anything about the former. But just as St. James leaves to the penitent's discretion the question to whom he shall confess, whether to clergy or laity, so also he leaves it to his discretion whether

he shall confess to one or to many, and whether in private or in public. In the second, third, and fourth centuries public confession was commonly part of public penance. And the object of it is well stated by Hooker: "Offenders in secret" were "persuaded that if the Church did direct them in the offices of their penitency, and assist them with public prayer, they should more easily obtain that they sought than by trusting wholly to their own endeavours." The primitive view, he holds, was this: "Public confession they thought necessary by way of discipline, not private confession as in the nature of a sacrament" ("Eccl. Pol.," VI. iv. 2, 6). But experience soon showed that indiscriminate public confession of grievous sin was very mischievous. Therefore, in the East, and (if Sozomen is correct) at Rome also, penitentiary presbyters were appointed to decide for penitents whether their sins must be confessed to the congregation or not. Thus, what Origen advises each penitent to do for himself, viz., seek a wise adviser respecting the expediency of public confession and penance, was formally done for every one. But in A. D. 391, Nectarius, the predecessor of Chrysostom in the see of Constantinople, was persuaded to abolish the office, apparently because a penitentiary presbyter had sanctioned public confession in a case which caused great scandal; but neither Socrates (V. xix.) nor Sozomen (VII. xvi.) makes this point very clear. The consequence of the abolition was that each person was left to his own discretion, and public penance fell into disuse.

But public confession had other disadvantages. Private enmity made use of these confessions to annoy, and even to prosecute the penitent. Moreover, the clergy sometimes proclaimed to the congregation what had been told them in confidence; that is, they made public confession on behalf of the sinner without his consent. Whereupon Leo the Great, in a letter to the Bishops of Apulia and Campania, March 6, A. D. 459, sanctioned the practice of private confession ("Ep." clxviii. [cxxxvi.]). Thus, in the West, as previously in the East, a severe blow was given to the practice of public confession and penance.

But it is probable that the origin, or at least the chief encouragement, of the practice of auricular confession is rather to be looked for in monasticism. Offences against the rule of the Order had to be confessed before the whole community; and it was assumed that the only other grave offences likely to happen in the monastic life would be those of thought. These had to be confessed in private to the abbot. The influences of monasticism were by no means bounded by the monastery walls; and it is probable that the rule of private confession by the brethren to the abbot had much to do with the custom of private confession by the laity to the priest. But it is carefully to be noted that for a considerable period the chief considerations are the penitent's admission of his sins and the fixing of the penance. Only gradually does the further idea of the absolution of the penitent by the body or the individual that hears the confession come in; and at last it becomes the main idea. Confession once a year to a priest was made compulsory by the Lateran Council in 1215; but various local synods had made similar regulations at earlier periods; *e. g.*, the Council of Toulouse in 1129, and of Liège in 710. But when we have reached these regulations we have once more advanced very far indeed beyond what is prescribed by St. James in this Epistle.

There cannot be much doubt what is the main idea with St. James: "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah . . . prayed fervently. . . . And he prayed again," etc. It is in order that we may induce others to pray for us that we are to confess our sins to them; and this is the great motive which underlies the public confession of the primitive Church. As Hooker well expresses it, "The greatest thing which made men forward and willing upon their knees to confess whatever they had committed against God . . . was their fervent desire to be helped and assisted with the prayers of God's saints." And the meaning of these prayers is strikingly expressed by Tertullian, who thus addresses the penitent in need of such intercession: "Where one and two meet, there is a Church; and a Church is Christ. Therefore, when thou dost stretch forth thy hands to the knees of thy brethren, it is Christ that thou touchest, Christ on whom thou prevailest. Just so, when they shed tears over thee, it is Christ who feels compassion, Christ who is entreating the Father. Readily doth He ever grant that which the Son requests" ("De Pœnit.," x.). To unburden his own heart was one benefit of the penitent's confession; to obtain the intercession of others for his forgiveness and recovery was another; and the latter was the chief reason for confessing to man; confession to God might effect the other. The primitive forms of absolution, when confession was made to a priest, were precatory rather than declaratory. "May the Lord absolve thee" (*Dominus absolvat*) was changed in the West to "I absolve thee," in the twelfth century. From the Sarum Office the latter formula passed into the First Prayer Book of Edward VI., in the Visitation of the Sick, and has remained there unchanged; but in 1552 the concluding words of the preceding rubric, "and the same forme of absolucion shalbe used in all pryvate confessions," were omitted. In the Greek Church the form of absolution after private confession is precatory:—

"O my spiritual child, who dost confess to my humility, I, a humble sinner, have no power on earth to remit sins. This God alone can do. Yet by reason of that Divine charge which was committed to the Apostles after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the words, Whose soever sins ye forgive, etc., and by that encouraged, we say, Whatsoever thou hast confessed to my most lowly humility, and whatsoever thou hast omitted to confess, either through ignorance or any forgetfulness, may God forgive thee, both in this world and in that which is to come." And this is followed by a prayer very similar to the absolution: "God . . . forgive thee, by the ministry of me a sinner, all thy sins, both in this world and in that which is to come, and present thee blameless at His dread tribunal. Go in peace, and think no more of the faults which thou hast confessed." The "we say" holds fast to the doctrine that it is to the Church as a whole, and not to Peter or any individual minister that the words, "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them" (John xx. 23), were spoken.

"The supplication of a righteous man availeth

much in its working." "The effectual earnest prayer" of the Authorised Version cannot be justified: either "effectual" or "earnest" must be struck out, as there is only one word (*ἐνεργουμένη*) in the original; moreover, the word for "prayer" is not the same as before (*δέησις*, not *εὐχή*). But it may be doubted whether "earnest" is not better than "in its working." Perhaps "in its earnestness" would be better than either: "Great is the strength of a righteous man's supplication, in its earnestness."

The example by which St. James proves the efficacy of a righteous man's prayer is interesting and important in two respects:—

1. It is the only evidence that we have that the great drought in the time of Ahab was prayed for by Elijah, and it is the only direct evidence that he prayed for the rain which put an end to it. We are told that Elijah prophesied the drought (1 Kings xvii. 1) and the rain (1 Kings xviii. 41); and that before the rain he put himself in an attitude of prayer, with his face between his knees (ver. 42); but that he prayed, and for the rain which he had foretold, is not stated. Whether the statement made by St. James is an inference from these statements, or based on independent tradition, must remain uncertain. We read in Ecclesiasticus of Elijah that by "the word of the Lord he shut up (held back) the heaven" (xlviii., 3); but that seems to refer to prophecy rather than to prayer. The difference, if there be any, between the duration of the drought as stated here and by St. Luke (iv. 25), and as stated in the Book of the Kings, will not be a stumbling-block to any who recognise that inspiration does not necessarily make a man infallible in chronology. Three and a half years (=42 months= 1,260 days) was the traditional duration of times of great calamity (Dan. vii. 25; xii. 7; Rev. xi. 2, 3; xii. 6, 14; xiii. 5).

2. This passage supplies us with Biblical authority for prayers for changes of weather, and the like; for the conduct of Elijah is evidently put before us for our imitation. St. James carefully guards against the objection that Elijah was a man gifted with miraculous powers, and therefore no guide for ordinary people, by asserting that he was a man of like nature (*ὁμοιοπαθής*) with ourselves. And let us concede, for the sake of argument, that St. James may have been mistaken in believing that Elijah prayed for the drought and for the rain; yet still the fact remains that an inspired New Testament writer puts before us, for our encouragement in prayer, a case in which prayers for changes of weather were made and answered. And he certainly exhorts us to pray for the recovery of the sick, which is an analogous case. This kind of prayer seems to require special consideration.

"Is it, then, according to the Divine will that when we are individually suffering from the regularity of the course of nature—suffering, for instance, from the want of rain, or the superabundance of it—we should ask God to interfere with that regularity? That in such circumstances we should pray for submission to the Divine will, and for such wisdom as shall lead to compliance with it in the future, is a matter of course, and results inevitably from the relation between the spiritual Father and the spiritual child. But ought we to go farther than this? Ought we to pray, expecting that our prayer will be effectual, that God may interfere with the fixed sequences of nature? Let us try to realise what would follow if we offered such prayer and prevailed. In a world-wide Church each believer would constitute himself a judge of what was best for himself and his neighbour, and thus the order of the world would be at the mercy everywhere of individual caprice and ignorance. Irregularity would accordingly take the place of invariableness. No man could possibly foretell what would be on the morrow. The scientist would find all his researches for rule and law baffled; the agriculturist would find all his calculations upset; nature, again, as in the days of ignorance, would become the master of man; like an eagle transfixed by an arrow winged by one of its own feathers, man would have shackled himself with the chains of his ancient servitude by the licentious employment of his own freedom, and would have reduced the cosmos of which God made him the master to a chaos which overwhelmed him by its unexpected blows." *

The picture which is here drawn sketches for us the consequences of allowing each individual to have control over the forces of nature. It is incredible that God could be induced to allow such control to individuals; but does it follow from this that he never listens to prayers respecting His direction of the forces of nature, and that consequently all such prayers are presumptuous? The conclusion does not seem to follow from the premises. The valid conclusion would rather be this: No one ought to pray to God to give him absolute control of the forces of nature. The prayer, "Lord, in Thy control of the forces of nature have mercy upon me and my fellow-men," is a prayer of a very different character.

The objection to prayers for rain or for the cessation of rain, and the like, is based on the supposition that we thereby "ask God to interfere with the regularity of the course of nature." Yet it is admitted that to "pray for submission to the Divine will, and for such wisdom as will lead to compliance with it in the future, is a matter of course and results inevitably from the relation between the spiritual Father and the spiritual child." But is there no regularity about the things thus admitted to be fit objects of prayer? Are human character and human intellect not subject to law? When we pray for a submissive spirit and for wisdom, are we not asking God to "interfere with that regularity" which governs the development of character and of intelligence? Either the prayer is to obtain more submission or more wisdom than we should otherwise get, or it is not. If it is to obtain it, then the regularity which would otherwise have prevailed is interrupted. If our prayer is not to obtain for us more submission and more wisdom than we should have obtained if we had not prayed, then the prayer is futile.

It will perhaps be urged that the two cases are not strictly parallel. They are not; but for the purposes of this argument they are sufficiently parallel. It is maintained that we have no right to pray for rain, because we thereby propose to interfere with the regularity of natural processes; yet it is allowed that we may pray for wisdom. To get wisdom by prayer is quite as much an interference with the regularity of natural processes as to get rain by prayer. Therefore, either we ought to pray for neither, or we have the

* The Bishop of Manchester, September 4, 1887, in Manchester Cathedral, during a meeting of the British Association.

right to pray for both. And so far as the two cases are not parallel, it seems to be more reasonable to pray for rain than to pray for submissiveness and wisdom. God has given our wills the awful power of being able to resist His will. Are we to suppose that He exercises less control over matter, which cannot resist Him, than over human wills, which He allows to do so; or that He will help us or not help us to become better and wiser, according as we ask Him or do not ask Him for such help, and yet will never make any change as to giving or withholding material blessings, however much, or however little, we may ask Him to do this?

The objection is sometimes stated in a slightly different form. God has arranged the material universe according to His infinite wisdom; it is presumptuous to pray that He will make any change in it. The answer to which is that, if that argument is valid against praying for rain, it is valid against all prayer whatever. If I impugn infinite wisdom when I pray for a change in the weather, do I not equally impugn it, when I pray for a change in the life or character of myself or of my friends? God knows without our asking what weather is best for us; and He knows equally without our asking what spiritual graces are best for us.

Does not the parallel difficulty point to a parallel solution? What right have we to assume that in either case effectual prayer interferes with the regularity which seems to characterise Divine action? May it not be God's will that the prayer of faith should be a force that can influence other forces, whether material or spiritual, and that its influence should be according to law (whether natural or supernatural) quite as much as the influence of other forces? A man who puts up a lightning-conductor brings down the electric current when it might otherwise have remained above, and brings it down in one place rather than another; yet no one would say that he interferes with the regularity of the course of nature. Is there anything in religion or science to forbid us from thinking of prayer as working in an analogous manner—according to a law too subtle for us to comprehend and analyse, but according to a law none the less? In the vast network of forces in which an all-wise God has constructed the universe a Christian will believe that one force which "availeth much," both in the material and in the spiritual world, is the earnest prayer of the righteous. It is better for us that we should be able to influence by our prayers God's direction of events than that we should be unable to do so; therefore a merciful Father has placed this power within our reach.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE WORK OF CONVERTING SINNERS; ITS CONDITIONS AND REWARDS.

JAMES v. 19, 20.

ST. JAMES has just been speaking of the case of a man who is sick, and needs the prayers of others for his healing, both in body and soul; for it may be that the sick man has sins to be repented of as well as ailments to be cured. This leads naturally enough to the common case of those who, whether sick in body or not, feel their consciences burdened by sin. They are to make known their trouble to one or more of the brethren, in order that efficacious prayers may be offered to God on their behalf. But these cases do not by any means cover the whole ground. Besides those who feel and make known their bodily sickness, and those who feel and make known their spiritual sickness, in order that their fellow-Christians may pray to God for their healing, there is the common case of those who either do not feel, or if they feel do not confess, that their souls are sick unto death. There are many who have left the path of life, and are going steadily, and perhaps rapidly, to destruction, who are ignorant of their piteous condition; and there are others who are aware of their peril, but are either too hardened to desire any serious change, or too proud to own their condition to others and ask their help towards recovery. Are such unhappy persons to be left to themselves, and allowed to go on their way to perdition, for want of the aid which they are too insensate or too haughty to ask?

Certainly not, says the writer of this Epistle. The reclaiming of such sinners is one of the noblest tasks which a Christian can undertake; and the successful accomplishment of it is fraught with incalculable blessings, the thought of which ought to move us to undertake such work. To save one immortal soul from eternal death is worth the labour of a lifetime. If to lead one soul astray is to share the devil's work and incur guilt to which a violent death would be preferable (Matt. xviii. 6; Mark ix. 42; Luke xvii. 2), to lead one soul back from death is to share Christ's work (2 Cor. vi. 1) by blotting out from God's sight the sins which cry for punishment.

We shall obtain a clearer view of the meaning of St. James in these concluding verses of his Epistle if we begin with the last words of the passage, and from them work back to what precedes.

"Shall cover a multitude of sins." Whose sins? Not the sins of him who converts the erring brother. This view, which is perhaps the one which most readily occurs to those who merely listen to the passage as it is read in Church, but have never studied it, may safely be rejected, although it has the sanction of Erasmus and to some extent also of the Venerable Bede. There are two reasons, each of which would suffice to condemn this explanation, and which taken together are almost unanswerable. (1) Nowhere else in Scripture do we find any such doctrine, that a man may cover his own sins by inducing another sinner to repent. On the contrary, it is one of the terrible possibilities which attend the work of the ministry that a man may preach successfully to others, and yet himself be a castaway (1 Cor. ix. 27), and may move many hearts, while his own remains as hard as the nether millstone. It is altogether misleading to quote Matt. vi. 14 in connection with this passage. There Christ says, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." What has that to do with converting sinners from their sins? Is "Forgive that ye may be forgiven," even parallel to "Convert, that ye may be forgiven"? It is very far indeed from being equivalent to it. The exact parallel would be, "Convert, that ye may be converted;" and where in either the Old or the New Testament do we find any such teaching as that? What we do find is the converse of it: "Be converted,

that ye may convert. Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. vii. 5). And this brings us to the other reason why this interpretation ought to be set aside. (2) We cannot suppose that St. James would contemplate, not merely as a possible case, but as the normal condition of things, that a Christian would undertake the task of converting others while his own conscience was burdened with a multitude of sins. He no doubt assumed, and meant his readers to assume, that before taking this very glorious, but also very difficult work upon themselves, Christians would at least have repented of their own sins, and thus have won the assurance that they were covered and forgiven. As we have seen, St. James shows an intimate personal knowledge of the teaching of Christ, and especially of that portion of it which is contained in the Sermon on the Mount. It is difficult to believe that any one who was acquainted with the fundamental principle involved in the saying just quoted, about the mote and the beam, would end his exhortations to the Church with a declaration which, according to the view of Erasmus and others, would mean that it is precisely those who have a beam in their own eye who should endeavour to convert sinners from the error of their ways, for in this way they may get the beam removed, or at least overlooked.

It is the sins of the converted sinner that are covered when a brother has had the happiness of converting him. The saying "cover sins" is a proverbial one, and seems to have been common among the Jews. St. Peter also makes use of it (1 Peter iv. 8); and this is one of the points which make some persons think that the writer of this Epistle had seen that of St. Peter, and others that St. Peter had seen this one (see above, p. 570). The source of the saying appears to be Prov. x. 12, "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all transgressions." It is, however, by no means certain that St. James is consciously quoting this saying, although his evident fondness for the sapiential books of Scripture would incline us to think that he is doing so. But the Septuagint of the passage in Proverbs has a different reading: "Friendship shall cover those who love not strife." A similar expression to the one before us occurs twice in the Psalms: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin" (lxxxv. 2): "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (xxxii. 1). The fact that the phrase occurs so frequently renders it impossible for us to determine the precise passage which suggested the use of the words in this place.

The statement that the converted sinner had "a multitude of sins" which are covered by his returning from "the error of his way" shows us plainly what is meant by "the error of his way" and by his "erring" or "being led astray from the truth." St. James is evidently not thinking of purely dogmatic error, about which his Epistle is almost, if not entirely, silent. It is conviction as expressed in conduct with which he deals throughout. As we have seen again and again, the evils which he denounces are those of a sinful life: with the evils of erratic speculation he does not deal at all. Quite in harmony, therefore, with the practical character of the Epistle, we find that with him to "err from the truth" means the apostasy that is involved in a life of sin. "Of His own will God brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (i. 18); and those who allow themselves to be seduced into sinful courses dishonour their Divine parentage and desert their Father's home. To recover such from the path of destruction is the blessed work to which St. James wishes to incite and encourage his readers.

It is important to recognise the fact that it is the lives of notorious sinners, and not the views of those who differ from us, that we are urged to correct. The latter interpretation is not an uncommon one. The expression "err from the truth" seems at first sight to countenance it; and to many of us the work of winning over others to accept our religious opinions is much more congenial employment than that of endeavouring to reclaim the profligate. But the duty to which St. James here exhorts us is one of universal obligation. It is one which every Christian must recognise, and according to his opportunities perform; and it is one which every one, however ignorant, simple, and insignificant he may be, is able in some measure to fulfil. But comparatively few of us are qualified to deal with the erroneous opinions of others. Not infrequently those which we think to be erroneous are nearer the truth than those which we hold ourselves. Even where this is not the case, the errors may be much less hurtful than we suppose, because, with happy inconsistency, men allow the goodness of their hearts to direct their conduct, rather than the erratic convictions of their heads. And again, our efforts to change the erroneous opinions of others may do more harm than good, for it is much more easy to unsettle than to establish. We may take away a plank without being able to supply an ark; and an inadequate or even faulty principle is better than no principle at all. The man who endeavours to act up to erroneous convictions is in a much healthier state than the man who has lost all convictions whatever. And this is the danger which always lies before us when we attempt to win others over from sincere and steadfast beliefs which seem to us to be untrue. We may succeed in shaking these beliefs; but it by no means follows that we shall be equally successful in giving them better beliefs in exchange for them. We may accomplish no more than the miserable result of having convinced them that in religion everything is uncertain.

Of course there are times when it is our duty to do what we can to bring others over to opinions which we are persuaded are much sounder and safer than those which they at present hold; but such times are very much less frequent than many of us are inclined to believe. It is obviously our duty to undertake this difficult task when other people consult us as to their religious convictions; but the mere fact that we know what their convictions are, and that we hold them to be perilously unsound, does not establish a right on our part to attempt to change them. And as regards the passage before us, it is quite clear, both from the context and from the tenour of the whole Epistle, that the rare occasions on which we are under the obligation of endeavouring to convert others to our own ways of thinking are not the occasions to which St. James refers in these concluding sentences of his letter.

The duty of reclaiming the lost grows out of

the condition of brotherhood which is assumed all through the Epistle as being the relation which exists between those who are addressed. This is manifestly the case here. "My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth." If it be right to clothe and feed the naked and hungry brother, to pray for the sick brother, and for those who confess their faults to us, much more must it be right to do all that is possible to bring back from the way of death those who are walking in it, to convert them, turn them right round, and induce them to go in the opposite direction. To believe in God, to believe that we are His children, and yet to act as if the bodies and souls of others, who are equally His children, are in no degree in our keeping, and that their condition is no concern of ours—this is indeed to have that faith which, being apart from works, is dead.

How is the conversion of the erring brother to be effected? St. James gives no explicit directions, but leaves all matters of detail to the discretion of the worker. Yet he does not leave us altogether without guidance as to what are the best methods. One of these is intimated by what immediately precedes, and the other by the general import of the letter. These two efficacious means for the conversion of sinners are, not rebuke or remonstrance, not exhortation or advice, not anger or contempt, but—prayer and good example. It is by prayer that the sick may be restored to health; it is by prayer that sinners who confess their sins may be healed; and it is by prayer that sinners, who as yet will not confess and repent, may be won over to do so. And here the appropriateness of the example of Elijah becomes evident. Elijah was a prophet, and he knew that when he prayed for drought and for rain he was praying for what was in accordance with the will of God; and it is such prayers that are sure of fulfilment. We are not prophets, and when we pray for changes of weather we cannot be sure that what we ask is in accordance with God's will. All that we can do is to submit humbly to His will, and to beg that, so far as they are in harmony with it, our desires may be granted. But when we pray for the conversion of sinners we are in the same position as Elijah. We know from the outset that we are praying for something which it is His will to grant, if only the rebellious wills of impenitent sinners do not prove insuperable: for He forces no one to be converted; He will have voluntary service, or none at all. When, therefore, we ask him for the assistance of His Holy Spirit in bringing back sinners from the error of their ways, we may have the greatest confidence that we are desiring that which He would have us desire, and are uniting our wills to His. This, then, is one great instrument for the conversion of our erring brethren—the prayer of faith, which can remove mountains of sin out of God's sight, by bringing the sinner, who has piled them up during years of sinning, to confess, and repent, and be forgiven.

The case of St. Monica, praying for the conversion of her sinful and heretical son Augustine, will occur to many as a beautiful illustration of the principle here indicated. He himself tells us of it in his immortal "Confessions" (III. xi., xii. 20, 21); how that for years, especially from his nineteenth to his twenty-eighth year, he went on seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving, in various lusts; and how his mother continued to pray for him. "And her prayers entered into Thy presence; and yet Thou didst leave me to wallow deeper and deeper in that darkness." Then she went to a certain bishop and entreated him to reason with her son; but he declined, saying that the time for that had not yet come. "Leave him alone for a time; only pray to God for him." But she was not satisfied, and continued to implore him with tears that he would go and see Augustine, and try to move him. At which he somewhat lost patience, and sent her away, saying, "Go, leave me, and a blessing go with thee: it is impossible that the son of such tears should perish." Which answer, as she often told her son afterwards, she accepted as if it were a voice from heaven; and all Christendom knows how her prayer was heard. He himself attributed all that was good in him to his mother's tears and prayers.

The other great instrument in accomplishing this blessed work is a good example. A holy life is the best sermon, the most effectual remonstrance, the strongest incentive, the most powerful plea. Without it words are of little avail; with it words are scarcely necessary. This is the instrument which St. James throughout this Epistle commends. Not words, but works; not professions, but deeds, not fair speeches, but kind acts (i. 19, 22, 27; ii. 1, 15, 16, 26; iii. 13; iv. 17). Nothing that we can say will ever make such impression upon others as what we do and what we are. Eloquence, reasoning, incisiveness, pathos, persuasiveness, all have their uses, and may be of real service in the work of winning back sinners from the error of their ways, but they are as nothing compared with holiness. It is when deep calls to deep, when life calls to life, when the life of manifest devotion at once shames and attracts the life of flagrant sin, that spirits are moved, that the loathing for vice and the longing for virtue are excited. The man whose own habitual conduct most often makes other men ashamed of themselves is the man who not only has the best of all qualifications for winning souls to God, but is actually accomplishing this work, even when he is not consciously attempting it. And such a one, when he does attempt it, will have a large measure of the requisite wisdom. The earnestness of his own life will have given him a knowledge of his own heart, and that is the best of all keys to a knowledge of the hearts of others.

There is something fatally wrong about us if we have no strong desire to bring back sinners to God. We cannot be Christ's disciples without having it. The man who would go to heaven alone is already off the road thither. The man whose one consuming thought is to save his own soul has not yet found out the best means of saving it. The surest road to personal happiness is to devote oneself to promoting the happiness of others, and the best way to secure one's own salvation is to devote oneself to the Divine work of helping forward the salvation of others. Let the fear of giving scandal to others keep us from sin; let the hope of being a help to others encourage us in well-doing; and let our prayers be more for others than for ourselves. As Calvin says, on this passage, "We must take heed lest souls perish through our sloth whose salvation God puts in a manner in our hands. Not that we can bestow salvation on them, but that God by our ministry delivers and saves those who seem otherwise to be nigh destruction."

What is the reward which St. James holds out to us to induce us to undertake the work of converting a sinner? He offers nothing; he promises nothing. The work itself is its own reward. To win back an erring brother is a thing so blessed, so glorious, so rich in incalculable results, that to have been enabled to accomplish it is reward enough—it is a prize sufficient to induce any true-hearted Christian to work for it. It is no less than the "saving of a soul from death;" and who can estimate what that means? It is "the covering of a multitude of sins."

There is no need to make this last phrase include the sins which the man would otherwise have committed had he not been converted. Sins not committed cannot be covered. It is quite true that by conversion a man is saved from sins into which he would certainly have fallen; and this is a very happy result, but it is not the result pointed out by St. James. The sins which have been committed during the daily walk towards destruction are what he has in his mind; and they are not one or two here and there, but a multitude. To aid a brother to get rid of these by confession and repentance is an end that amply repays all the trouble that we can take in attaining to it.

"But the number of renegades is so enormous; the multitude of impenitent sinners is so overwhelming: how is it possible to convert them?". St. James says nothing about converting multitudes; he speaks only of converting one. "If any (ἐάν τις) among you do err from the truth, and one convert him." To bring over one soul from eternal death to eternal life may be within the power of any one earnest Christian. Is each one of us making the attempt? Are we making our lives as beneficent, as sympathetic, as unselfish as our opportunities admit of? Do we give a generous, or even a moderate share of encouragement to the numerous agencies which are at work to lessen the temptations and increase the means of grace for those who are living in sin, and to help and encourage those who, in however feeble a way, are making a fight against it?

"Know ye, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." With these words St. James abruptly takes leave of those whom he addresses. The letter has no formal conclusion; not because it is unfinished, or because the conclusion has been lost, but because St. James wishes by means of a sudden close to leave his last words ringing in the hearts of his readers. In this respect the Epistle reminds us of the First Epistle of St. John. "Guard yourselves from the idols" is the only farewell which the last of the Apostles has for his "little children;" and a very summary statement of what the conversion of one sinner means is the farewell of St. James to his "brethren." In both cases it is the abruptness of emphasis, as if the writer said, "If all else that I have written be forgotten, at least remember this."

How beautiful to find one noble soul, and enter into frequent communion with it! how happy to be the means of preserving it from defilement! but most blessed of all to be instrumental in rescuing it from degradation and destruction! "I say unto you, That there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance."

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.

Jude 1, 2.

Precisely as in the case of the Epistle of St. James, the question as to the authenticity of this letter resolves itself into two parts: Is the Epistle the veritable product of a writer of the Apostolic age? If it is, which of the persons of that age who bore the name of Judas is the author of it? Both of these questions can be answered with a very considerable amount of certainty.

Let us remember the right way of putting the first of these two questions. Not, Why should we believe that this Epistle was written by an Apostle or a contemporary of the Apostles? but, Why should we refuse to believe this? What reason have we for rejecting the verdict of ecclesiastics and theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries, who were well aware of the doubts which had been raised respecting the authority of the Epistle, and after full and prolonged consideration decided that it possessed full canonical authority. Not only were they in possession of evidence which is no longer available, and which rendered it probable that their decision would be correct; but the universal acceptance of their decision in all the Churches proves that their decision was admitted to be correct by those who had ample means of testing its soundness.

The Epistle of St. Jude, like that of St. James, is reckoned by Eusebius as one of the six or seven "disputed" (ἀντιλεγόμενα) books of the New Testament, which fact, while it proves that misgivings had existed in some quarters respecting the authority of the letter, at the same time proves that it was not admitted into the canon by an oversight. The difficulties respecting it were well known, and were considered to be by no means fatal to its otherwise strong claim to be accepted (see above, p. 560). And the difficulties respecting the two Epistles were similar in kind. 1. Many Churches remained for a considerable time without any knowledge of one or other of the two Epistles; but whereas it was in the West that the Epistle of St. James was least known, it was Eastern Churches that remained longest without knowledge of that of St. Jude. 2. Even when the Epistle did become known it remained doubtful whether the writer was a person of authority. He was possibly not an Apostle, and if he was not such, what were his claims to be heard? To these two difficulties, which were common to both Epistles, must be added another which was peculiar to that of St. Jude. It may be stated in Jerome's words. 3. "Because in it Jude derives a testimony from the Book of Enoch, which is apocryphal, it is rejected by some" ("Catal. Scr. Eccl.," iv.). As we shall see hereafter, it probably makes use of yet another apocryphal book; and it was not unreasonably doubted whether an Apostolic writer would compromise himself by the use of such literature. If he were inspired, he would know it to be apocryphal, and would abstain from quoting it; and if he did not know its

apocryphal character, how could he be inspired, or his words be of any authority?

That so brief a letter should remain for a considerable time quite unknown to some Churches, is not at all surprising. Its evident Jewish tone would render it less attractive to Gentile Christians. Its making no claim to Apostolic authority raised a doubt whether it had any authority whatever, and this doubt was increased by the fact that it quotes apocryphal writings. Consequently those Christians who knew the Epistle would not always be ready to promote its circulation. Even if we were compelled to infer that silence respecting it implies ignorance of its existence, such ignorance would in most cases be very intelligible: but this perilous inference from silence in some cases can be shown to be incorrect. Hippolytus may possibly have remained ignorant of it; but if, as Bishop Lightfoot suggests, he is the author of the supposed Greek original of the Muratorian Canon, he testifies strongly (note the *sane*) to the general reception of the Epistle. This holds good, however we may deal with the ambiguous *in catholica*, which may possibly mean "in the Catholic Church," or be a mistake for *in catholicis*, "among the Catholic Epistles." Cyprian, who never quotes the Epistle of St. Jude, must have known of it from the celebrated passage in "the master" Tertullian, whose works he was always reading. And it is quite incredible that Chrysostom, who in all his voluminous writings does not chance to quote it even once, was not familiar with its contents. The brevity of the Epistle is sufficient to explain a great deal of the silence respecting it.

The most serious item in the external evidence against the Epistle is its absence from the Peshitto, or ancient Syriac Version. The considerations already mentioned go a long way towards explaining this absence, and it is a great deal more than counterbalanced by the strong external evidence in its favour. This is surprisingly strong, especially when compared with that in favour of the Epistle of St. James. In both cases the troubles which overwhelmed the Church of Jerusalem and Jewish Christianity in the reign of Hadrian interfered with the circulation of the letters; but it is the shorter letter and the letter of the less-known writer which (so far as extant testimony goes) seems in the first instance to have obtained the wider circulation and recognition. The Muratorian Canon, as we have seen, contains it; so also does the old Latin Version. Tertullian ("De Cult. Fem.," I. iii.) vehemently contends that the Book of Enoch ought to be accepted as canonical, and he clenches his argument with the fact that it is quoted by "the Apostle Jude." This appeal would have seemed dangerous rather than conclusive, if in North Africa there had been any serious misgivings about the authority of Jude's Epistle. Tertullian evidently entertained nothing of the kind. In a similar spirit Augustine asks, "What of Enoch, the seventh from Adam? Does not the canonical Epistle of the Apostle Jude declare that he prophesied?" ("De Civ. Dei," xviii. 38). Clement of Alexandria quotes it as Scripture ("Pæd." III. viii., and "Strom.," III. ii.), and commented upon it in his "Hypotyposeis" (Eus. "H. E.," VI. xiv. 1), of which we probably still possess some translations into Latin made under the direction of Cassiodorus. Origen, although he was aware that it was not universally received, for in one place he uses the cautious expression, "If any receive the Epistle of Jude," yet accepted it thoroughly himself, as the frequent citations of it in his works show. In one passage he speaks of it as "an Epistle of but few lines, yet full of the strong words of heavenly grace" ("Comm.," on Matt. xiii. 55). Athanasius places it in his list of the canonical Scriptures without any mark of doubt. And Didymus, head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria, and instructor of Jerome and Rufinus, condemns the opposition which some offered to the Epistle on account of the statement respecting the body of Moses (ver. 9), just as Jerome virtually condemns those who opposed it because of the quotation from the Book of Enoch.

This evidence, it will be observed, is mostly Western. The blank as regards the East is to some extent filled by the letter of the Synod of Antioch against Paul of Samosata, A. D. 269. Portions of this letter have been preserved by Eusebius, and Malchion, the presbyter who chiefly composed it, seems to have had the Epistle of Jude in his mind when he wrote. This is chiefly evident in the tone of the letter, but here and there the wording approaches that of St. Jude; *e. g.*, "denying his God [and Lord]" reminds us of "denying our only Master and Lord" (Jude 4); and "not guarding the faith which he once held" may be suggested by "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The quotations from Jude in Ephraem Syrus (*cir* A. D. 308-73) are somewhat discredited, for they occur only in the Greek translations of his works, some of which, however, were made in his lifetime; but the quotations may be insertions made by translators.

That so short a letter should have so much testimony in its favour is remarkable; and although it may be a slight exaggeration to say with Zahn that about A. D. 200 it was accepted "in the Church of all lands round the Mediterranean Sea" ("Gesch. d. Neutest. Kanons," I. p. 321), yet even Harnack admits that this is not much in excess of the truth. The only abatement which he suggests is that the misgivings to which Origen on one single occasion bears witness show that the Epistle was not everywhere in the East part of the New Testament Scriptures ("Das N. T. um d. Jahr 200," p. 79). We may take it, therefore, as sufficiently proved that this letter was written by one who belonged to the Apostolic age. Had it been a forgery of the second century, it would not have found this general acceptance. Moreover, a forger would have chosen some person of greater fame and greater authority as the supposed writer of the Epistle, or would at least have made Jude an Apostle; and above all, he would have betrayed some motive for the forgery. There is nothing in the letter to indicate any such motive. Renan accepts the Epistle as a genuine relic of the Apostolic age, and indeed places it as early as A. D. 54; yet his view of it would lead other people to regard it as a forgery, for it supplies a strong motive. Renan considers it to be an attack on St. Paul. The Clementine literature shows us how a heretic of the second century can make a covert attack on the Apostle of the Gentiles; and if we could believe that the writer of this Epistle had St. Paul in his mind when he denounced those who "in their dreamings defile the flesh, and set at nought dominion, and rail

at dignities," we should be ready enough to believe that he was not really "Judas, brother of James," but one who did not dare to say openly in the Church the accusations which he tried to insinuate. But no critic has accepted this strange theory of Renan's, and it is hardly worth while asking, Why was not St. Peter or St. John taken as the authority wherewith to counteract the influence of St. Paul? Of what weight would the words of the unknown Jude be in comparison with his? Renan's literary acuteness recognises in this Epistle a veritable product of the first century; his prejudices respecting anti-Pauline tendencies among the Apostolic writers led him amazingly astray as to the meaning of its contents.

It remains to consider the second part of the question respecting the authenticity of this Epistle. We are justified in believing that it is a writing of the Apostolic age, by a person bearing the name of Judas or Jude. But to which of the persons who bore that name in the first age of the Church is the letter to be assigned? Only two persons have to be considered—(1) "Judas not Iscariot," who seems also to have been called Lebbæus or Thaddæus, for in the lists of the Apostles Thaddæus or Lebbæus (the readings are confused) stands in Matthew x. and Mark iii. as the equivalent of "Judas [the son] of James" in Luke vi. and Acts i.; and (2) Judas one of the four brethren of the Lord; the names of the other three being James, Joseph or Joses, and Simon (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3). These two are sometimes identified, but the identification is highly questionable, although the Authorised Version encourages us to make it by giving to "Judas of James" the improbable meaning, "Judas the brother of James," instead of the usual meaning, "Judas the son of James." In other words the Authorised Version assumes that the writer of this Epistle is the Apostle "Judas not Iscariot;" the writer calls himself "brother of James," and the Authorised Version makes this Apostle to be "the brother of James."

We have seen already that both Tertullian and Augustine speak of the writer of this Epistle as an Apostle. So also does Origen, but only in two passages, of which the Greek original is wanting ("De Principiis," III. ii. 1; "Comm. on Romans" v. 13, vol. iv. 549). In no passage of the Greek works, and in no other passage of the Latin translations, does he call Jude an Apostle; so that the addition of Apostle in these two places may be an insertion of his not very accurate translator Rufinus. But even if the authority of Origen is to be added to that of Tertullian and Augustine, the opinion that the author of this letter was an Apostle is not probable. Had he been such, it would have been natural to mention the fact as a claim on the attention of his readers, instead of merely contenting himself with naming his relationship to his much more distinguished brother James. It is not to the point to urge that St. Paul does not always call himself an Apostle in his Epistles. He was a well-known person, especially after his four great Epistles had been published, in all of which he styles himself an Apostle. In the two to the Thessalonians he does not, probably because he there associates Silvanus and Timothy with himself (but see 1 Thess. ii. 6). St. Jude was comparatively unknown, having written nothing else, and having probably travelled little. The charge, "Remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 17), although it does not necessarily imply that the writer himself is not one of these Apostles, yet would be more suitable to one who did not possess Apostolic rank. And when we ask what James is meant, when he styles himself "brother of James," the answer cannot be doubtful; it is James the brother of the Lord, one of the three "Pillars" of the Jewish Christian Church, first overseer of the Church of Jerusalem, and author of the Epistle which bears his name. The Epistle of Jude is evidently by a Jewish Christian, who, while writing to all that have been called to the faith, evidently has Jewish Christians chiefly in his mind. To such a writer it was well worth while to mention that he was a brother of that James who was so revered by all his fellow-countrymen. Reasons have been given already for believing that this James was not an Apostle (pp. 562-63), and these will confirm us in the opinion that his brother Jude was not such. The question of their relationship to Jesus Christ has also been discussed (p. 563), and need not be reopened here. If it be argued that, had St. Jude been the brother of the Lord, he would have mentioned the fact, we may securely answer that he would not have done so. "As the author of the 'Adumbrationes' centuries ago remarked, religious feeling would deter him, as it did his brother James, in his Epistle, from mentioning this. The Ascension had altered all Christ's human relationships, and His brethren would shrink from claiming kinship after the flesh with His glorified body. This conjecture is supported by facts. Nowhere in primitive Christian literature is any authority claimed on the basis of nearness of kin to the Redeemer. He Himself had taught Christians that the lowliest among them might rise above the closest of such earthly ties (Luke xi. 27, 28); to be spiritually the 'servant of Jesus Christ' was much more than being His actual brother."

We may suppose that Jude, like the rest of his brethren (John vii. 5), did not at first believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, but was converted by the convincing event of the Resurrection (Acts i. 14). We know that he was married, not merely from the general statement made by St. Paul respecting the brethren of the Lord (1 Cor. ix. 5), but from the interesting story told by Hegesippus, and preserved by Eusebius ("H. E.," III. xx. 1-8), that two grandsons of Jude were taken before Domitian as being of the royal family of David, and therefore dangerous to his rule. "For," says Hegesippus, "he was afraid of the appearance of the Christ, as Herod was." In answer to his questions, they stated that they were indeed of the family of David, but they were poor and humble persons, who supported themselves by their own labour; in proof of which they showed their horny hands. When further questioned respecting the Christ and His kingdom, they said that it was not earthly, but heavenly, and would arise at the end of the world, when He came to judge the living and the dead. Whereupon Domitian contemptuously dismissed them as too simple to be dangerous, and ordered that the persecution of the descendants of David should cease. These two men were afterwards honoured in the Churches, both as confessors and as being near of kin to the Lord. A fragment of Philip of Side (*cir.* A. D. 425) lately discovered, says that Hegesippus gave the names of

these two men as Zocer and James ("Texte und Untersuchungen," V. 2, p. 169).

This narrative implies that both St. Jude and the father of these grandsons were already dead, and this gives us a terminus respecting the date of the Epistle. St. Jude was almost certainly dead when Domitian came to the throne in A. D. 81, and therefore this letter was written before that date. Whether, as Hilgenfeld and others would have us believe, the Epistle is aimed at Gnostic errors which did not arise until the second century, will be considered hereafter, when the nature of the evils denounced by St. Jude is discussed; but the evidence which has been examined thus far entirely agrees with the supposition that the letter was written during the Apostolic age.

It is not impossible that in calling himself "brother of James" St. Jude is thinking of his brother's Epistle, and wishes his readers to consider that the present letter is to be taken in conjunction with that of St. James. Both letters are Palestinian in origin and Jewish in tone; and they are almost entirely practical in their aim, dealing with grave errors in conduct. Those which are denounced by St. Jude are of a grosser kind than those denounced by St. James, but they resemble the latter in being errors of behaviour rather than of creed. They are to a large extent the outcome of pernicious principles; but it is the vicious lives of these "ungodly men" that are condemned more than their erroneous beliefs. St. Jude, therefore, may be appealing not only to his brother's position and authority as a recommendation for himself, but also to his brother's Epistle, which many of his readers would know and respect.

The attempts which have been made to find a locality for St. Jude's readers altogether fail. Palestine, Asia Minor, Alexandria have all been suggested; but the letter does not offer sufficient material for the formation of a reasonable opinion. "To them that are called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ," is a formula which embraces all Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, and whether inside or outside Palestine. The topics introduced are such as would chiefly interest Jewish Christians, and it is probable that the writer has the Jewish Christians of Palestine and the adjoining countries chiefly in his mind; but we have no right to limit the natural meaning of the formal address which he himself has adopted. All Christians, without limitation, are the objects of St. Jude's solicitude.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE—THE FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

Jude 3.

The Greek of the opening sentence of this passage, in which St. Jude explains his reason for writing this Epistle, is ambiguous. The words "of our common salvation" (*περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας*) may go either with what precedes or with what follows. But there is little doubt that both the Authorised and the Revised Versions are right in taking them with what precedes. The true connection is, not, "While I was giving all diligence to write unto you, I was constrained to write unto you of our common salvation," but, "While I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith." This Epistle can scarcely be called a letter "about our common salvation." The meaning is that St. Jude had intended to write such a letter, but the crisis created by the entrance of these ungodly men into the Church constrained him to write a letter of a different kind, viz., the one which lies before us. That he had already begun to write a letter "respecting our common salvation," and that we have here to lament the loss of another Epistle besides the lost Epistles of St. Paul and St. John (1 Cor. v. 9; 3 John 9), is neither stated nor implied. St. Jude had been thinking very earnestly about writing a more general and comprehensive Epistle, when he realised that the presence of a very serious evil required immediate action, and accordingly he writes at once to point out the existing peril, and to denounce those who are the authors of it. It is the duty of all Christians to be on their guard, and to be unflinching in their defence of the truth which has been committed to them to preserve and cherish.

"The faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." This does not mean, which was delivered by God to the Apostles, but which was delivered by the Apostles to the Church. "The saints" here, as so often in the New Testament (Acts ix. 13, 32, 41; xxvi. 10; Rom. viii. 27; xiii. 13; xv. 25, 26, 31; etc., etc.), means all Christians. If the whole nation of the Jews was a "holy people" (*λαὸς ἅγιος*), "a peculiar treasure unto Jehovah from among all peoples" (Exod. xix. 5), by reason of their special election by Him (Deut. vii. 6; xiv. 2, 21); if they were "saints of the Most High" (Dan. vii. 18, 22, 25), much more might this be said of Christians, who had inherited all the spiritual privileges of the Jews, and had received others in abundance, far exceeding any that the Jews had ever possessed. Christians also, in a still higher sense, were "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter ii. 9). The Christians of Corinth, Ephesus, and Colossæ, in spite of the enormous evils which they practised or sanctioned, or at least tolerated, are still called "saints." They are holy, not as being persons of holy life, but as being devoted to God. Of course such persons ought to be holy in conduct, but to call them "saints" does not assert that they are so. The name asserts the fact of being set apart by God for Himself, and implies what ought to be the result of such separation. "Thus the main idea of the term is consecration. But though it does not assert moral qualifications as a fact in the persons so designated, it implies them as a duty." To each individual Christian, therefore, the name is at once an honour, an exhortation, and a reproach. It tells of his high calling, it exhorts him to live up to it, and it reminds him of his grievous shortcomings.

"The faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (*τῇ ἅπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πίστει*) both the adverb, "once for all," and the aorist participle, "delivered," are worthy of special notice. "The faith" does not mean any set formula of articles of belief, nor the internal reception of

Christian doctrine, but the substance of it; it is equivalent to what St. Paul and the Evangelists call "the Gospel," viz., that body of truth which brings salvation to the soul that receives it. This Faith, or this Gospel, has been once for all delivered to Christians. No other will be given, for there is no other. Whatever may be delivered by any one in future cannot be a Gospel at all. The one true Gospel is complete and final, and admits of no successors and no supplements (Gal. i. 6-9).

"The faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints." Does this exclude all possibility of a "development of Christian doctrine"? That depends upon what one means by "development." The expression has been interpreted to mean "that the increase and expansion of the Christian creed and ritual, and the variations which have attended the process in the case of individual writers and Churches, are the necessary attendants on any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart, and has had any wide or extended dominion; that from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as received and transmitted by minds not inspired and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation." If the ambiguous expression "and perfection" be omitted, one may readily allow that development of Christian doctrine in this sense has taken place. To say that time is needed for the full comprehension of the great truths which were communicated to the Church once for all by the Apostles is one thing; to say that time is needed for the perfection of those truths may or may not be quite another. And the manner in which the subject is treated in the famous Essay from which the passage just quoted is taken shows that what is meant by the "perfecting" of the truths is a very different thing from the full comprehension of their original contents; it means making additions to the original contents in order to remedy supposed deficiencies. In this sense it may be confidently asserted, and as loyal Christians we are bound to assert, that there is no such thing as development of Christian doctrine. If there be such a thing, then we cannot stop short with those developments which can in some measure be called Christian. The author himself reminds us that "no one has power over the issues of his principles; we cannot manage our argument, and have as much of it as we please and no more" (p. 29). If the faith once for all delivered to the saints was defective, and needed to be supplemented by subsequent additions, why may not Christianity itself be, as some have maintained, only a phase in the development of religion, which in process of time is to be superseded by something wholly unchristian? The transition is easily made from the position of the "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" to that of Channing, that "it makes me smile to hear immortality claimed for Catholicism or Protestantism, or for any past interpretations of Christianity: as if the human soul had exhausted itself in its infant efforts; as if the men of one or a few generations could bind the energy of human thought and affection forever;" and thence to the position of Strauss, who, in his latest and most dreary work, on "The Old and the New Faith," asks the question, "Are we still Christians?" and answers it emphatically in the negative. The chief doctrines of Christianity are to him childish or repulsive beliefs, which thoughtful men have long since left behind. We may still in some sense be religious; but Christianity has done its work, and is rightly being dismissed from the stage. This is the advanced thinking of which St. John writes in his Second Epistle: "Every one that goeth onward (*πᾶς ὁ προάγων*), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (ver. 9). There is an advance which involves desertion of first principles; and such an advance is not progress, but apostasy.

But does the development of doctrine, in the sense contended for by the author of the celebrated Essay, mean making actual additions to the faith once for all delivered, as distinct from arriving at a better comprehension of the contents and logical consequences of the original deposit? This question must be answered in the affirmative, for various reasons. The whole purpose of the Essay, and the actual expressions used in it, require this meaning; and that this is the obvious meaning has been assumed by Roman Catholic as well as Protestant critics, and (so far as the present writer is aware) this interpretation has never been resented as illegitimate by the author. The whole argument is admittedly "an hypothesis to account for a difficulty," "an expedient to enable us to solve what has now become a necessary and an anxious problem" (pp. 27, 28), viz., the enormous difference between the sum total of Roman Catholic doctrines and those which can be found in the Christian documents of the first two or three centuries. The Essay is believed by its author to furnish "a solution of such a number of the reputed corruptions of Rome as might form a fair ground for trusting her where the investigation had not been pursued" (p. 29). And that the faith once for all delivered is regarded as in need of supplements and additions seems to be implied in such language as the following: "In whatever sense the need and its supply are a proof of design in the visible creation, in the same do the gaps, if the word may be used, which occur in the structure of the original creed of the Church, make it probable that those developments, which grow out of the truths which lie around them, were intended to complete it" (pp. 101, 102). It is the business of succeeding ages of the Church to "keep what was exact, and supply what was deficient" (p. 354).

The author of the "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" states in another of his works that when he was admitted to the Church of Rome he embraced volumes containing the writings of the Christian Fathers, crying out that now they were really his own. The action and exclamation were thoroughly inconsistent with the position maintained throughout the Essay, and since then adopted by numbers of Roman controversialists. He ought rather to have cleared his shelves of the works of the Fathers, and to have consigned them to the lumber-room with the remark, "Now I need never look at you any more." As Bishop Cornelius Mussus (Musso) said long ago, "For my part, to speak quite frankly, I would give more credence to a single Pope than to a thousand Augustines, Jeromes, and

Gregorys" (In "Epist. ad Rom. xiv.," p. 606, Venet., 1588, quoted in Hardwick's edition of Archer Butler's "Letters on Romanism," p. 394). It is the latest and most modern works on Roman theology, especially those which expound the utterances of the most recent Popes, that deserve to be studied, if the theory of the development be correct. According to that theory, the teaching of the primitive Church was certainly immature and defective, and possibly even erroneous. In order to find out what primitive writers meant, or ought to have meant, we must look to the latest developments. They are the criteria by which to test the teaching of the early Church; it is beginning at the wrong end to test the developments by Christian antiquity. In former times Romanists were at great pains to show that traces of their peculiar tenets could be found in the writers of the first few centuries; and not in a few cases the works of these primitive writers were interpolated, in order to make out a fair case. Criticism has exposed these forgeries, and it has been demonstrated that the early Christian teachers were ignorant of whole tracts of Roman doctrine and practice. Roman controversy has therefore entirely shifted its ground. It now freely admits that these things were unknown to Irenæus, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Athanasius, and Augustine; but for the simple reason that, when they wrote, these things had not yet been revealed. The Church was still ignorant that the Blessed Virgin was conceived without sin, was taken bodily to heaven after her death, and ought to be invoked in prayer; it was still ignorant of the doctrine of purgatory, of indulgences, and of the necessity of being in communion with the Church of Rome. It will not do to say that Christ and His Apostles planted the germs of these things, and that for centuries the germs did not expand and fructify, and therefore remained unnoticed. For, first, how can there be a germ of an historical fact, such as the supposed removal of the Virgin's body to heaven, which is most happily named an "assumption"? Secondly, now that the fruit has appeared, we ought to be able to trace it back to the germ which for so long was ignored. And, thirdly, if the germs were really deposited by Christ and His Apostles, they would have developed in a somewhat similar manner in all parts of Christendom. Different surroundings will account for some variety of development, but not for absolute difference in kind. The germ respecting communion with the Church of Rome, if there was one, developed in the East, where all germs were in the first instance planted, into the doctrine that no such communion was necessary. Therefore, from the Roman point of view, it is necessary to maintain that the development of Christian doctrine involves, not merely the better comprehension of the contents of doctrines, and the expansion of seeds and germs of truth, but the admission of actual supplements and additions, derived from new revelations of fresh items of truth. As the Jesuit Father Harper said, in his reply to Dr. Pusey's "Eirenicon," "Christ grew in wisdom daily. So does the Church, not in mere appearance, but of truth. Her creed, therefore, can never shrink back to the dimensions of the past, but must ever enlarge with the onward future."

Hence the necessity for the doctrine of Infallibility. For Roman developments are not the only ones. The Eastern Churches have theirs; Protestant Churches have theirs; and outside these there are other developments, both non-Christian, and anti-Christian. Unless there is some authority which can say, "Our developments are Divinely inspired and necessary, while all others are superfluous or wrong," the doctrine of Development may be used with as much force against Rome as for her. Consequently we find the author of the Essay using the theory of Development as an argument for that of the Infallibility. "If the Christian doctrine, as originally taught, admits of true and important developments, . . . this is a strong antecedent argument in favour of a provision in the Dispensation for putting a seal of authority upon those developments. . . . If certain large developments of it are true, they must surely be accredited as true," (pp. 117-19).

This is further proof that what is contemplated in this theory is not mere logical deductions from revealed truth; for logical deductions vindicate themselves by an appeal to the reason, and need no sanction from an infallible authority. Developments are indeed said to follow by way of "logical sequence," but this term is made to receive an enlarged meaning. "It will include any progress of the mind from one judgment to another, as, for instance, by way of moral fitness, which may not admit of analysis into premise and conclusion" (p. 397). Thus the "deification of St. Mary" is a "logical sequence" of our Lord's Divinity. "The votaries of Mary do not exceed the true faith, unless the blasphemers of her Son came up to it. The Church of Rome is not idolatrous, unless Arianism is orthodoxy" (p. 406). The following criticism, therefore, does not seem to be unjust: "However the theory may be modified by the subsequent additional supposition of infallible guidance, it is quite evident that, considered in itself, its internal spirit and scope (especially as illustrated by its alleged Roman instances) are nothing short of this, that everything which certain good men in the Church, or men assumed to be such, can by reasoning or feeling collect from a revealed truth is, by the mere fact of its recognition [*i. e.*, by the supposed infallible guide], admissible and authoritative." This is indeed a wide door to open for the reception of additions to the faith!

That St. Jude lays much stress on the fact that the sum total of the Gospel, and not merely the elementary portions of it, have been once for all committed to the Church, is shown, not only by the prominence which he gives to the thought here, but by his repetition of it a few lines later, when he begins the main portion of his Epistle: "I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all" (ver. 5). Any teaching of new doctrines is not only unnecessary, it is also utterly inadmissible. And every Christian has his responsibilities in this matter. He is to "contend earnestly" (ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι), with all the energy and watchfulness of an athlete in the arena, for the preservation of this sacred deposit, lest it be lost or corrupted. And the manner in which this earnest contest is to be maintained is not left doubtful; not with the sword, as Beza rightly remarks, nor with intemperate denunciation or indiscriminate severity, but with the mighty influence of a holy life, built upon the foundation of our "most holy faith" (vv. 20-23). It is in this way that lawful development of Christian doctrine is se-

cured; not by additions to what was once for all delivered, but by a deeper and wider comprehension of its inexhaustible contents. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PERSONS DENOUNCED IN THE EPISTLE—ITS RELATION TO 2 PETER.

JUDE 4.

WE have here the occasion of the letter stated very plainly. St. Jude was meditating a letter on a more general subject, when the grave peril created by the anti-Christian behaviour of the persons condemned in the text constrained him to write at once on this more urgent topic. An insidious invasion of the Christian Church has taken place by those who have no right to a place within it, and who endanger its peace and purity; and he dare not keep silence. The strong must be exhorted to withstand the evil; the weak must be rescued from it.

These invaders are in one respect like those who are condemned in the Epistle to the Galatians, in another respect very unlike them. They are "false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily" (ii. 4); but they have come in, not "to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage," but to "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness." The troublers of the Galatian Church were endeavouring to contract Christian liberty, whereas these ungodly men were straining it to the uttermost. Both ended in destroying it. The one turned the "freedom with which Christ set us free" into an intolerable yoke of Jewish bondage; the other turned it into the polluting anarchy of heathen, or worse than heathen, license. How utterly alien these latter are from Christianity, or even from Judaism, is indicated by St. Jude's pointed introduction of the pronoun "our" in two clauses in this verse: "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." Jehovah is "our God," not theirs; they are "without God in the world." And Christ is "our only Master and Lord," but not theirs; they have denied and rejected Him, choosing to "walk after their own lusts" (ver. 16), rather than to "walk even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6). They have repudiated His easy yoke, that they may follow their own bestial desires.

Who are these "ungodly men"? Clement of Alexandria ("Strom.," III. ii. *sub fin.*) thinks that St. Jude is speaking prophetically of the abominable doctrines of the Gnostic teacher Carpocrates. Some modern writers adopt this view, with the omission of the word "prophetically," and thus obtain an argument against the genuineness of the Epistle. If the writer knew the teaching of Carpocrates, he cannot have been Jude the brother of James and the brother of the Lord. The date of Carpocrates is too uncertain to make this a perfectly conclusive argument, even if we admit the assumption that the writer of this Epistle is alluding to his teaching; for he is sometimes placed before Cerinthus, who was contemporary with St. John. But it may be allowed as probably correct that St. Jude was dead before Carpocrates was known as an ancient teacher of Antinomian Gnosticism. There is, or is [illegible] nothing whatever to show that it is to Carpocrates teaching that St. Jude is alluding. He says [illegible] Greek thing whatever about the teaching of these ungodly men," who perhaps were not teachers [illegible] and is on still less does he indicate that they belonged to this wise Gnostics who, from the Oriental doctrine likely to the absolutely evil character of matter and evil [illegible] ing material, drew the practical conclusion that man's material body may be made to undergo every kind of experience, no matter how shameless, in order that the soul may gain knowledge; that the soul is by enlightenment too pure, and the body by nature too impure, to be capable of pollution; that filth cannot be defiled, and that pure gold remains pure, however often it may be plunged in filthiness. No such doctrine is hinted at by St. Jude. Dorner, therefore, goes beyond what is written when he says that "the persons whom Jude opposes are not merely such as have practically swerved from the right way; they are also teachers of error" ("Doctrine of the Person of Christ," Intr., p. 72, Eng. Tr.: T. & T. Clark, 1861). It is more reasonable, with De Wette, Brückner, Meyer, Kühl, Reuss, Farrar, Salmon, and others to regard these "ungodly men" as just what St. Jude describes them, and no more; libertines who ought never to have been admitted into the Church at all; who maintained that Christians were free to live lives of gross sensuality; and who, when rebuked by the elders or other officers of the Church for their misconduct, not only refused to submit, but reviled those who were set over them. They were "teachers of error," but by their bad example, not by systematic preaching. They "screened their immoral conduct by blasphemous assumptions," because they assumed that "having been called for freedom," they might "use their freedom for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. v. 13), not because they assumed that they ought to disobey the commandments of the Creator of the material universe. And for the same reason they may be called "libertines" on principle. When St. Jude says that they "denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," he means that they denied Him by their lives. It is altogether unreasonable to read into this simple phrase, which is sufficiently explained by the context, a dogmatic denial of the Incarnation. That the germs of Antinomian Gnosticism are here indicated may be true enough; but they have not yet developed into a body of doctrine. Still less have those who are tainted by these germs developed into an heretical sect.

It is with the verse before us that the marked resemblance between the Epistle of St. Jude and the central portion of the Second Epistle of St. Peter begins; and it continues down to ver. 18. In this short letter of twenty-five verses, only the first three and last seven verses, *i. e.*, about a third of the whole, have no intimate relations with 2 Peter. The last word has not yet been spoken upon this perplexing subject. The present writer confesses that he remains still uncertain as to the true relation between the two, and that he has inclined sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other of the two rival hypotheses. Thus much of what he wrote on the subject more than ten years ago may be repeated now:—

"The similarity, both in substance and wording, is so great that only two alternatives are

possible, that neither one has borrowed from the other. But both may have borrowed from a common source. The last or second alternative is rarely, if ever, advocated, for it does not explain the facts very satisfactorily, and critics are agreed in rejecting it. But here the agreement ends. On the further question to which writer is prior, there is very great diversity of opinion. One thing, therefore, is certain, that whichever writer has borrowed, he is no ordinary borrower. He knows how to assimilate foreign material so as to make it thoroughly his own. He remains original, even while he appropriates the words and thoughts of another. He controls them, not they him. Were this not so there would be little doubt about the matter. In any ordinary case of appropriation, if both the original and copy are forthcoming, critics do not doubt long as to which is the original. It is when the copy itself is a masterpiece, as in the case of Holbein's Madonna, that criticism is baffled. Such would seem to be the case here; and the present writer is free to confess his own uncertainty."

Other persons are able to write with much more confidence. Dean Mansel says, "Some eminent modern critics have attempted, on the very precarious evidence of style, to assign the priority in time of writing to St. Jude; but there are two circumstances which appear to me to prove most conclusively that St. Jude's Epistle was written after that of St. Peter, and with express reference to it. The first is, that the evils which St. Peter speaks of as partly future St. Jude describes as now present. The one says, 'There shall be false teachers among you' (2 Peter ii. 1; the future tense being continued through the two following verses); the other says, 'There are certain men crept in unawares.' The other circumstance is still more to the point. St. Peter in his Second Epistle has the remarkable words, 'Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers (ἐμπαῖκται) shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts' (iii. 3). St. Jude has the same passage, repeated almost word for word, but expressly introduced as a citation of Apostolic language: 'But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers (ἐμπαῖκται), walking after their own ungodly lusts' (vv. 17, 18). The use of the plural number (τῶν ἀποστόλων) may be explained by supposing that the writer may also have intended to allude to passages similar in import, though differently expressed, in the writings of St. Paul (such as 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2; 2 Tim. iii. 1), but the verbal coincidence can hardly be satisfactorily explained, unless we suppose that St. Jude had principally in his thoughts, and was actually citing, the language of St. Peter" ("The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries," Murray, 1875, pp. 69, 70). Hengstenberg puts forward the same arguments, and considers the second to be decisive as to the priority of 2 Peter.

Not less confident is Archdeacon Farrar that exactly the opposite hypothesis is the right one. "After careful consideration and comparison of the two documents it seems to my own mind *impossible to doubt* [the italics are Dr. Farrar's] that Jude was the earlier of the two writers. . . . I must confess my inability to see how any one who approaches the inquiry with no ready-made theories can fail to come to the conclusion that the priority in this instance belongs to St. Jude. It would have been impossible for such a burning and withering blast of defiance and invective as his brief letter to have been composed on principles of modification and addition. All the marks which indicate the reflective treatment of an existing document are to be seen in the Second Epistle of St. Peter. In every instance of variation we see the reasons which influenced the later writer. . . . The notion that St. Jude endeavoured to 'improve upon' St. Peter is, I say, a literary impossibility; and if in some instances the phrases of St. Jude seem more antithetical and striking, and his description clearer, I have sufficiently accounted for the inferiority—if it be inferiority—of St. Peter by the supposition that he was a man of more restrained temperament; that he wrote under the influence of reminiscences and impressions; and that he was warning against forms of evil with which he had not come into so personal a contact" ("The Early Days of Christianity," Cassell & Co., 1882, i. pp. 196-203).

The main arguments in favour of the view that the Second Epistle of St. Peter was used by St. Jude, besides those stated by Dean Mansel, are the following:—

(1) If 2 Peter is genuine, it is more probable that St. Jude should borrow from St. Peter than that the chief of the Apostles should borrow from one who was not an Apostle at all.

If 2 Peter is not genuine, it is improbable that the forger would borrow from a writing which from the first was regarded with suspicion, because it quoted apocryphal literature.

(2) St. Jude tells us (ver. 3) that he wrote under pressure to meet a grave emergency, and therefore he would be more likely to make large use of suitable material ready to his hand, than one who was under no such necessity.

The main arguments on the other side are these:—

(1) It is more probable that the chief portion of a short letter should be used again with a great deal of additional matter, than that one section only of a much longer letter should be used again with very little additional matter.

(2) It is more probable that the writer of 2 Peter should omit what seemed to be difficult or likely to give offence, than that St. Jude should insert such things; *e. g.*, "clouds without water" (Jude 12) is a contradiction in terms, and therefore is naturally corrected to "wells without water" (2 Pet. ii. 17); the particular way in which the angels fell (Jude 6), the allusion to certain Levitical pollutions (ver. 23), and the citations from apocryphal books (vv. 9, 14, 15) are either entirely omitted by the writer of 2 Peter, or put in a way much less likely to seem offensive (ii. 4, 11). And Jude 9 has been so toned down by the writer of 2 Peter that without St. Jude's statement respecting Michael and the devil we should scarcely understand 2 Peter ii. 11.

Besides these points there are two arguments which are used on both sides of the question:—

(i) There are certain elements in St. Jude's Epistle of which the writer of 2 Peter would probably have made use, had he seen them, *e. g.*, the ironical play upon the word "kept" in "the angels which kept not (μὴ τηρήσαντας) their own principality. . . . He hath kept (τετήρηκεν) in everlasting bonds;" the telling antithesis in ver. 10, that what these sinners do not know, and cannot know, they abuse by gross irreverence; and

what they know, and cannot help knowing, they abuse by gross licentiousness; and the metaphor of "wandering stars" (ver. 13), which would fit the false teachers, who lead others astray, in 2 Peter, much better than the ungodly men, who are not leaders at all, in Jude. As the writer of 2 Peter makes no use of these points, the inference is that he had never seen them.

But, on the other hand, there are certain elements in 2 Peter of which St. Jude would probably have made use, had he seen them; *e. g.*, the destruction of "the world of the ungodly" by the Flood; the "eyes full of an adulteress;" and the explanation of the "great swelling words" as "promising them liberty," which would exactly have suited St. Jude's purpose in condemning those who turned liberty into license. As St. Jude makes no use of these points, the inference is that he had not seen them.

(ii) St. Jude, as will be shown presently, groups nearly everything in threes. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that wherever he can make a threefold arrangement he does so. Is this artificial grouping a mark of originality or not? Some would urge that it is the writer who is using up another's material who would be likely to add this fanciful arrangement, and that, therefore, St. Jude is the borrower. Others would urge that such triplets would be just the things to be overlooked or disregarded by the borrower, and that, therefore, St. Jude is the original.

About the existence of the triplets in Jude, and their absence in 2 Peter, there can be no question, whatever view we may hold as to their significance. They begin in the very first verse of our Epistle, and continue to the last verse, although those at the close of the letter are lost in the Authorised Version, owing to the fact that the translators used a faulty Greek text. It will be worth while to run through them. (1) Judas, a servant . . . and brother. (2) To them that are called, beloved, . . . and kept. (3) Mercy unto you and peace and love. (4) Ungodly men, turning, . . . and denying. (5) Israelites, angels, cities of the plain. (6) Defile, . . . set at naught, . . . and rail. (7) Cain, Balaam, Korah. (8) These are. . . . These are. . . . These are. . . . (9) They who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit. (10) Building up yourselves, . . . praying, . . . looking for the mercy. (11) On some have mercy; . . . and some save; . . . and on some have mercy with fear. (12) Before all time, and now, and for evermore.

Before parting with this verse it will be well to put readers on their guard against a misinterpretation of the phrase, "They who were of old set forth unto this condemnation;" a misinterpretation all the more likely to be made by those who use the Authorised Version, which has, "Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." The text is a favourite one with Calvinists; but when rightly translated and understood, it gives no support to extreme predestinarian theories. When literally rendered it runs, "Who have been of old written down beforehand for this sentence;" or possibly, "Who have been written up beforehand;" for the metaphor may be borrowed from the custom of posting up the names of those who had to appear before the court for trial. Be this as it may, "of old" (*πάλαι*) cannot refer to the eternal counsel and decree of Almighty God, but to something in human history, something remote from St. Jude's own day, but in time, and not in eternity. Perhaps some of the warnings and denunciations in the prophets of the Old Testament or in the Book of Enoch are in his mind. "Condemnation" is a justifiable rendering of the Greek word (*κρίμα*) because it is manifest from the context that the sentence or judgment intended is one of condemnation, and not of acquittal; but this word when coupled with "ordained" is likely to be grievously misunderstood. "Ordained to condemnation" suggests with fatal facility "predestined to damnation"—a doctrine which has perhaps been a more fruitful cause of the rejection of Christianity than all the doctrines included in the creeds.

Probably in all ages of the Church there have been men such as St. Jude here describes—nominal members of the Church who are nothing but a scandal to it, and professing Christians whose life is one flagrant denial of Christ. Such persons certainly trouble Christendom now. By their luxury and licentiousness they set an evil example and create a pestilential moral atmosphere. They practise no self-control, and sneer at self-denial in others. They reject all Christian discipline, and mock at those who endeavour to maintain it. And sometimes they are not at once recognised in their true character. They are plausible and amusing, obviously not strict, but not obviously scandalous in their manner of life. It is then that such men become specially dangerous. Such may have been the case in the Churches which St. Jude has in mind. Therefore he strips off all this specious disguise, and describes these profligate scoffers according to their true characters. Moreover, we must remember that there were some, and perhaps many, who, like Simon Magus (Acts viii. 13), accepted baptism without any real appreciation of the meaning of Christianity, and who remained either Jews or heathen at heart, long after they had enrolled themselves as Christians. Where dangerous material of this kind abounded, it was necessary to put the faithful on their guard about the danger; and hence the strength and vehemence of St. Jude's language. A sharp, clear statement of the evil was necessary to put the weak and the unwary on their guard against a peril to which they might easily succumb, before they were fully aware of its existence. We all of us need such warnings still, not merely to form a truer estimate of the nature and tendency of certain forms of evil, and thus keep on our guard against courting needless temptation, but also to preserve us from becoming in our own persons, through manifest self-indulgence and a carelessness of life, a snare and a stumbling-block to our brethren.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DOUBTFUL READINGS AND THE THEORY OF VERBAL INSPIRATION—THREE PALMARY INSTANCES OF DIVINE VENGEANCE UPON GRIEVOUS SIN.

JUDE 5-7.

WITH these three verses the main portion of the Epistle begins, the first three verses being introductory. These put before us three instances of Divine vengeance upon those who were guilty of grievous sin—the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, the impure angels, and the inhabitants

of the cities of the plain; and in the three verses which follow (8-10) St. Jude points out the similarity between the offences of these wicked persons and the offences of the libertines who were provoking God to execute similar vengeance upon them. It is quite possible that we have here the explanation of the words, "Who were of old set forth unto this condemnation" (ver. 4). The doom of these impious profligates has long since been written in the doom of those who sinned in a similar manner.

The Greek text of the opening verse exhibits a great variety of readings, and one may suspect with Westcott and Hort that there has been some primitive error, and that none of the existing readings are correct. Of the points in which they differ from one another three require notice:—

(1) In the words, "The Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt," the authorities vary between "the Lord" (with or without the article), "God," and "Jesus." This last is far the best attested (AB, the best cursives, the Vulgate, both Egyptian Versions, both Ethiopic, the margin of the Armenian, and several Fathers); but the internal evidence against it is immense. Nowhere else in Scripture is Jesus said to be the author of anything which took place before the Incarnation. Had St. Jude written "Christ," we might have compared "the rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). But the general adoption of the reading "Jesus" shows how completely in Christian thought and language the Man Jesus had become identified with the Eternal Son. If "Lord" be correct (*κύριος*, without the article), it should be understood as meaning Jehovah; and therefore "God," though not likely to be right as the reading, is right as an interpretation. In the Latin translation of the "Hypotyposeis" of Clement of Alexandria we have these two readings combined, *Dominus Deus*, and the Greek of Didymus has "Lord Jesus" combined. Possibly all three readings are insertions, and should be omitted, the true text being simply, "He who saved a people out of the land of Egypt."

(2) In the words, "though ye know all things once for all," some authorities, which were followed by the translators of 1611, have "this" for "all things," while one authority makes "all" to be masculine instead of neuter (*πάντας* for *πάντα*). This last may be correct, for the final letter of the masculine might easily be lost (especially in front of *ὅτι*); and in that case the meaning would be, "though ye all know it," *i. e.*, "know what I am going to point out." There is a similar confusion of reading in 1 John ii. 20, where for "Ye know all things" (*οἴδατε πάντα*) we should perhaps read "Ye all know" (*οἰδατε πάντες*). But here the masculine has too little support to be adopted.

(3) The Sinaitic MS. transposes the "once" or "once for all" (*ἅπαξ*) from "know" to "saved," and makes it answer to the "afterwards," or "the second time" (*τὸ δεύτερον*) which follows. In this it is supported by the Armenian Version and a single cursive of the fourteenth century. If it were adopted the sentence would run thus: "Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things, how that the Lord, having once saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not." The correspondence between "once" and "afterwards"—"having a single time saved, . . . the second time He destroyed"—is at first sight attractive; but it is precisely this superficial attractiveness which has caused the corruption of the text. A recent writer pleads for its adoption, but his reasons are not convincing. The external evidence against the proposed transposition is enormous; and there is no strong internal evidence against the best-attested text (as there is against the reading "Jesus") to turn the scale. "Though ye know all this once for all" makes excellent sense; and so also does "He who saved a people out of Egypt, the second time (viz., in the wilderness) destroyed them that believed not."

This collection of various readings out of which it is impossible to select the true text with anything like certainty, is worth remembering in considering the theory of verbal inspiration. If every word that St. Jude wrote was supernaturally dictated, why has not every word been supernaturally preserved? It is manifest that God has not, either miraculously or in any other way, secured that the exact words written by St. Jude should come down to us without alteration. The alterations are so ancient, so widely diffused, and so numerous, that we are unable to decide what St. Jude's exact words were. We are not even certain that among the numerous variations we have got his exact words. This is not a common case. The usual problem, when various readings occur, is to select the right reading out of several that have been handed down to us, there being no reason to doubt that one of them is the original reading of the autograph. But there are a few passages, and this is one of them, where one may reasonably doubt whether the original reading has not been altogether lost (Acts vii. 46; xiii. 32 [comp. Heb. xi. 4]; xix. 40; xxvi. 28; Rom. xv. 32; 1 Cor. xii. 2; Col. ii. 18, 23; Heb. iv. 2; x. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 7; 2 Tim. i. 13; 2 Peter iii. 10, 12; Jude 22, 23). This result might easily be produced through an error in the earliest copies made from the original document, or through a slip made by the amanuensis who wrote the original document. There are minds to which this supposition is very repugnant; and there are writers who assure us that in Biblical criticism "conjectural emendation must never be resorted to, even in passages of acknowledged difficulty," or that "conjectural criticism is entirely banished from the field." But if the whole of an Apostolic Epistle may have been lost (1 Cor. v. 9; 3 John 9), why may not a word or two of an extant Epistle have been lost? And is it quite natural that there should sometimes be a doubt as to which of the several existing readings is the original, and yet quite inconceivable that there should ever be a doubt as to whether any of them is original? In either case we are left in uncertainty as to the precise words which are inspired; and we are thus confronted with the perplexing result that the Almighty has specially guided a writer to use certain words and phrases to the exclusion of all others, and yet from very early times has, in not a few cases, allowed Christians to be in doubt as to what these exact words and phrases are. Have we any right to assume that there was this special Divine care to produce a particular wording, when it is quite manifest that there has not been special Divine care to preserve a particular wording?

The theory of verbal inspiration imports unnecessary and insuperable difficulties into the al-

ready sufficiently difficult problem as to the properties of inspired writings. It maintains that "the line can never rationally be drawn between the thoughts and words of Scripture;" which means that the only inspired Word of God is the original Hebrew and Greek wording which was used by the authors of the different books in the Bible. Consequently, all who cannot read these are cut off from the inspired Word; for the inspired thoughts are, according to this theory, inseparably bound up with the original form of words. But if it is the thought, and not the wording, that is inspired, then the inspired thought may be as adequately expressed in English or German as in Hebrew or Greek. It is the inspired thought, no matter in what language expressed, which comes home to the hearts and consciences of men, and convinces them that what is thus brought to them by a human instrument is indeed in its origin and in its power Divine. "Never man thus spake" was said, not of the choice language that was used, but of the meaning which the language conveyed.

In the passage before us there are several points which call for attention, most of which are independent of the differences of reading.

It may be doubted whether the participle (*εἰδότας*) is rightly rendered "though ye know all things once for all." It makes good, and perhaps better sense to understand it in the equally possible signification of "because ye know all things once for all." Their being already in full possession of a knowledge of Old Testament history is the reason why St. Jude need do no more than remind them of one or two particulars which throw a terrible light upon the position of those whose conduct is being discussed. That "once" here does not mean "formerly," as the Authorised Version takes it, "though ye once knew this," is manifest to every one who knows the meaning of the participle and adverb here used (*εἰδότας ἅπαξ*). Nor is there much doubt that both here and in ver. 3 it does mean "once for all." This Greek adverb, like its Latin equivalent *semel*, is sometimes "used of what is so done as to be of perpetual validity and never need repetition." It is twice so used in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift" (vi. 4); *i. e.*, once for all enlightened, so that no second enlightenment is possible. And again, "Because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins" (x. 2). So also in 1 Peter: "Because Christ also died for sins once" (iii. 18). The meaning is similar in both the passages here (vv. 3 and 5). The Gospel was once for all delivered by the Apostles to the Church; for there can be no second Gospel. And this Gospel Christians receive and know once for all.

Doubt has been raised as to the event or events to which St. Jude refers in the words "afterward destroyed them that believed not." Hofman, Schott, and others, adopting the best-attested reading, "Jesus, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not," interpret the latter clause of the destruction of Jerusalem or of the overthrow of the Jewish nation. It is felt that this makes a very unnatural contrast with the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh by the hand of Moses, and therefore, "saved a people out of the land of Egypt" has to be interpreted to mean "the redemption from the bondage-house of the Law and of sin wrought in Israel and for Israel by Christ's act of salvation" (Schott, Erlangen, 1863, p. 225). This is very forced and improbable. Let us hold by Hooker's "most infallible rule in expositions of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst" ("Eccl. Pol.," V. lix. 2). The literal construction of "saved a people out of the land of Egypt" will certainly stand here, and the words must be understood of the passage of the Red Sea and all that accompanied that event. This is the clause of which the meaning is plain, and it must be the interpreter of the clause of which the meaning is less plain: to work backwards from the latter is singularly unreasonable. The "saving" being understood of the deliverance of the Israelites from the tyranny of Pharaoh, the "destroying" is most naturally understood of the overthrow of these same Israelites in the wilderness; not of any catastrophe, such as followed the matter of Korah (Num. xvi. 49) or of Baal-peor (xxv.), but of the gradual destruction, during the forty years of wandering, of the rebellious and unbelieving, "whose carcases fell in the wilderness. And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. iii. 17-19). It is quite unnecessary to add to this, with Fronmüller, the Babylonish captivity, as if "afterward" or "the second time" (*τὸ δεύτερον*) referred to two destructions. It refers to two Divine acts—one of mercy, and a second of judgment.

"And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds." This is St. Jude's second instance of God's vengeance upon gross sin, and this and the next are common to both Epistles. For the destruction of the unbelieving Israelites 2 Peter has the Deluge. The Revised Version has several improvements here. It substitutes "principality" for "first estate," in harmony with other passages, where the same word occurs (Rom. viii. 38; Eph. iii. 10; vi. 12; Col. i. 16; ii. 10, 15), and inserts "own"—"their own principality"; thereby marking the difference between "own" and "proper"—"their proper habitation." Above all, it preserves St. Jude's irony in the double use of the word "kept": "angels which kept not their own principality . . . He hath kept in everlasting bonds;" which is destroyed in the Authorised Version by the substitution of "reserved" for the second "kept." The alteration of "chains" into "bonds" is of less moment; but it is worth while marking the difference between two Greek words, both of which are frequent in the New Testament, and of which the former is always used in a literal sense (Mark v. 3, 4; Luke viii. 29; Acts xii. 6, 7; etc.), and the other sometimes literally (Luke viii. 29; Acts xvi. 26; xxiii. 29; etc.), and sometimes metaphorically (Mark vii. 35; Luke xiii. 16; Philem. 13). It is the latter which is used here.

It may be regarded as certain that this passage does not refer to the original rebellion of the angels, and their fall from being heavenly powers to being spirits of evil and of darkness. Nor is it a direct reference to the Rabbinic interpretation of "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them

wives of all that they chose" (Gen. vi. 2, where the best texts of the Septuagint have "angels of God" for "sons of God"). Much more probably it is a reference to a topic which is very prominent in the Book of Enoch, which, however, in this particular is based upon the common interpretation of the passage in Genesis. A discussion of this most interesting and perplexing writing is reserved for a later chapter. At present it suffices to say that the work is a composite one, written at different times and by different authors, and that the allusions to it here, and the quotation from it in vv. 14 and 15, are from the first portion of the Book of Enoch (chapters i.-xxxvi.), which, together with the last portion (chapters lxxii.-cv.), may safely be considered as the original writing, and undoubtedly pre-Christian. Whether any of the book was composed in the Christian era is doubtful, and that any of it was written by a Christian is very doubtful indeed. Hofmann, Philippi, and Weisse have not succeeded in persuading many people that the whole work is of Christian origin. The portion of which St. Jude makes use may, with a good deal of probability, be assigned to the latter part of the second century before Christ. A sketch of the section respecting the sin of the angels will throw much light on the passage before us. A portion of it had long been known through two considerable extracts, which the Byzantine writer Georgius Syncellus (*cir.* A. D. 800) makes from it in his "Chronographia" (pp. 20-23 and 40-42, Dindorf's ed., Bonn, 1829). The quotation in our Epistle and those made by Syncellus constituted all that was known of the Book of Enoch in Europe until 1773, when the English traveller Bruce brought home three MSS. of an Ethiopic version of the whole which was still extant in the Abyssinian Church.

The section about the sin of the angels and their punishment (vii.-xxxvi.) begins very abruptly after a short introduction (i.-vi.), in which Enoch blesses the righteous, and states that he received a revelation from the angels in heaven. "And it came to pass, when the sons of men had multiplied, that daughters were born to them, very beautiful. And the angels, the sons of heaven, desired them, and were led astray after them, and said to one another, Let us choose for ourselves wives of the daughters of the men of the earth." Two hundred of them then made a conspiracy, and went down to the earth, and begat an offspring of giants. They imparted a knowledge of sorcery and many baneful arts; and the corruption thus diffused, and the voracity and violence of their offspring, produced the evils which preceded the Deluge. Then the sinful angels are sentenced by the Almighty, and Enoch is commissioned to make the sentence known to them. "Then the Lord said to me, Enoch, scribe of righteousness, go tell the watchers of heaven, who have deserted the lofty sky, and their holy everlasting station, who have been polluted with women, . . . that on earth they shall never obtain peace and remission of sin." The fallen angels persuade Enoch to intercede for them; but his intercession is not heard, and he is told to repeat the sentence which has been pronounced upon them. The following particulars of their punishment are of interest. Azâzêl (comp. Lev. xvi. 26, R. V.), one of the ringleaders, is to be bound hand and foot, thrown into a pit in the wilderness, and covered with darkness; there he is to remain, with his face covered, till the great day of judgment, when he is to be cast into the fire. The others, after they have seen their offspring kill one another in mutual slaughter, are to be bound for seventy generations underneath the earth, till the day of their judgment, when they shall be thrown into the lowest depths of the fire, and be shut up for ever (x. 6-9, 15, 16). "Judgment has been passed upon you: your prayer shall not be granted you. From henceforth never shall you ascend to heaven. He hath said that on the earth He will bind you, as long as the world endures" (xiv. 2). And Enoch is afterward shown their punishment in a vision. "These are those of the stars which have transgressed the commandment of the most high God, and are here bound, until the infinite number of the days of their crimes be completed. . . . Why art thou alarmed and amazed at this terrific place, at the sight of this place of suffering? This is the prison of the angels; and here are they kept for ever" (xxi. 3, 6).

It is specially worthy of remark that it is in these older portions of the Book of Enoch that we meet for the first time in Jewish literature with the distinct conception of a general judgment. The idea is very frequent, and is expressed in a great variety of ways. Thus, what St. Jude calls "the Judgment of the Great Day" (*κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας*), a phrase which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, is called in the Book of Enoch "the Great Day of Judgment" (x. 9), "the Day of the Great Judgment" (xciii. 8; xcvii. 15; civ. 3), "the Day of the Great Trouble" (xcix. 5), "the Great Day" (xvi. 2); "the Great Judgment" (xxii. 5), "the General Judgment" (xxii. 9). St. Jude of course need not have derived this idea from the Book of Enoch; but the fact that it is so very frequent there, especially in connection with the sin of the impure angels, may have influenced him in writing the passage before us. At any rate all these numerous details will not leave us in much doubt as to the origin of St. Jude's statement, "angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." It comes either directly from the Book of Enoch, or from a source of which both the writer of the book and St. Jude make use.

It was "in like manner with these" angels that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah sinned, going astray after unlawful and unnatural indulgences; and "in like manner with these" angels, they also "are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire." The meaning is not quite clear, but apparently it is this, that the sinful angels are in prison awaiting the day of judgment, when they will be cast into the lake of fire; and that the destruction of the cities of the plain by fire, and their perpetual submersion, are an example of the eternal fire in which the angels will be submerged. Perhaps there is also the idea that under the Dead Sea volcanic fires are burning. It is quite possible to take "of eternal fire" after "example" instead of after "punishment;" and this rendering makes the statement more in accordance with the actual facts: "are set forth as an example of eternal fire, suffering punishment." But the two last words come in rather awkwardly at the end of the sentence, and most commentators decide against this construction (comp. 3 Macc. ii. 5).

The three cases exhibit, not a climax, but great

diversity, as regards persons, sin, and punishment. We have both Jews and Gentiles, and between them beings superior to both. The Israelites by unbelief rejected their promised home, and perished slowly in the wilderness. The angels left their proper home, sinned grossly, and are in banishment and in prison, awaiting still worse punishment. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah sinned grossly in their home, and both they and it were suddenly, horribly, and irrevocably destroyed. This great diversity gives point to the moral. No matter who may be the sinners, or what the circumstances of the sin, outrageous offences, such as impurity and rebellion, are certain of Divine chastisement.

If fallen angels are evil spirits actively compassing the ruin of souls, how can fallen angels be "kept in everlasting bonds until the judgment of the great day"? More than one answer might be given to this question, but the reserve of Scripture on the subject seems to warn us from unprofitable speculation. Even without Scripture the reality of spiritual powers of evil may be inferred from their effects. Scripture seems to tell us that some of these powers are personal, and some not, that some are more free than others, and that all shall be defeated at last. That is enough for our comfort, warning, and assurance. It consoles us to know that much of the evil within us is no part of ourselves, but comes from without. It makes us wary to know that such powers are contending against us. It gives us confidence to know that even Satan and his hosts can be overcome by those who resist steadfast in the faith.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RAILING AT DIGNITIES—"THE ASSUMPTION OF MOSES"—ST. JUDE'S USE OF APOCRYPHAL LITERATURE.

Jude 8-12.

St. Jude having given three terrible examples of the punishment of gross sin in Jews, Gentiles, and angels, proceeds to apply these instances to the libertines who in his own day, by their scandalous conduct as Christians, were provoking God to punish them in like manner; and the threefold description of their conduct here given seems to refer to the three instances just given, which are now taken in reverse order. Like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, these ungodly libertines "defile the flesh;" like the "angels which kept not their own principality," they "set at naught dominion;" and like the unbelieving and rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, they "rail at dignities." In all three particulars they show themselves as "dreamers" (*ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι*). They are like men who say and do monstrous things in their sleep. They are deadened to all sense of decency and duty, "dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. lvi. 10, where the same word that we have here is used in the LXX.). They are sunk in the torpor of sin (Rom. xiii. 11). The Revisers have done rightly in omitting the epithet "filthy" in adding the word "also," and in substituting "in their dreamings" for "dreamers." The participle represented by "in their dreamings" does not belong to "defile the flesh" exclusively, but to the other two clauses as well; so that "filthy" is not even correct as an interpretation: it is quite unjustifiable as a rendering. There is no reason for suspecting that certain Levitical pollutions are indicated. Seeing that "in their dreamings" they "set at naught dominion, and rail at dignities," dreaming must not be understood of actual sleep. Moreover, St. Jude does not say "defile their flesh," but "defile the flesh" (*σάρκα μιαίνουσι*), which includes more than their own bodies. He perhaps means that they pollute human nature, or even the whole animal world.

Like the men of Sodom, these profligates "defile the flesh." Like the angels who sold their birthright for base indulgences, they "set at naught dominion." But it is by no means easy to determine what this "dominion" or "lordship" (*κυριότητα*) signifies. Calvin and others interpret this and "dignities" or "glories" (*δόξας*) of the civil power: "There is a contrast to be noticed, when he says that they defiled or polluted the flesh, that is, that they degraded what was less excellent, and that yet they despised as disgraceful what is deemed especially excellent among mankind. It appears from the second clause that they were seditious men, who sought anarchy, that, being loosed from the fear of the laws, they might sin more freely. But these two things are nearly always connected, that they who abandon themselves to iniquity do also wish to abolish all order. Though, indeed, their chief object is to be free from every yoke, it yet appears from the words of Jude that they were wont to speak insolently and reproachfully of magistrates, like the fanatics of the present day, who not only grumble because they are restrained by the authority of magistrates, but furiously declaim against all government, and say that the power of the sword is profane and opposed to godliness; in short, they superciliously reject from the Church of God all kings and all magistrates. 'Dignities,' or 'glories,' are orders or ranks eminent in power or honour" (Calvin's "Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles," Eng. Tr., Edinburgh, 1855, p. 438). But if earthly rulers of any kind are meant by "dominion" and "dignities," it is more probable that St. Jude is thinking of ecclesiastical officers; in which case the meaning would be that these libertines set Church discipline at defiance, and reviled the presbyters or bishops who rebuked them for their evil conduct.

It is, however, more probable that at least "dominion," if not "dignities," refers to unseen and supernatural powers. We must look backwards to ver. 4, and forwards to ver. 10, for a key to the interpretation. These profligates "turn the grace of God into lasciviousness," and thus "defile the flesh;" and they "deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," and thus "set at naught lordship." Again, "what they understand naturally, like the creatures without reason, in these things are they destroyed," *i. e.*, they ruin themselves, body and soul, by their carnal indulgences; while "they rail at whatsoever things they know not," *i. e.*, they speak with flippant irreverence respecting the invisible world, reviling angels, and perhaps mocking at Satan. We may, therefore, with some hesitation, but with a fair amount of reason, interpret "dominion," or "lordship," of Christ or of God, and "dignities," or "glories," of angels, remembering that either or both of these may in-

clude Christ's ministers and messengers on earth. One of the ways in which these ungodly men denied Christ in their lives was by their contemptuous disregard of the teaching of His Apostles.

It is quite possible that in this particular also St. Jude is under the influence of the "Book of Enoch." In it we read, "Ye fulfil not the commandments of the Lord; but ye transgress and calumniate greatness" (vi. 4); and again, "All who utter with their mouths unbecoming language against God, and speak harsh things of His glory, here they shall be collected" (xxvi. 2); and again, "My eyes beheld all the sinners, who denied the Lord of glory" (xli. 1). And with this last expression should be compared, "The splendour of the Godhead shall illuminate them" (i. 8). But of course it does not follow that because St. Jude partly reproduces the language of this writer, therefore he uses it with precisely the same meaning.

"But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." The meaning of this illustration is obvious. The profane libertines allow themselves to speak of "dignities" in a way which even an archangel did not venture to adopt in rebuking Satan. It is a very strong argument *a fortiori*. Consequently, the fact that it was an evil angel against whom Michael did not dare to rail by no means proves that it was evil angels against which the libertines did dare to rail. Rather the contrary may be inferred. They use language of good angels which Michael would not use of a bad one. That "dignities," or "glories," may include the fallen angels or evil spirits is perhaps possible; that it refers to them exclusively is very improbable. The word itself is against this; for "glories" is certainly a strange name to give to devils.

But a more interesting question lies before us as to the source from which St. Jude derived the story about Michael the archangel contending with the devil about the body of Moses. It is as unreasonable to suppose that he received a special revelation on the subject as to suppose that St. Paul received a special revelation respecting the names of the Egyptian magicians (see on 2 Tim. iii. 8 in this volume, pp. 478-79). St. Jude refers to the incident as something quite familiar to his readers; and this could hardly have been the case if it had been specially revealed to himself. Lardner supposes that the reference is to Zech. ii. 1, 2. But, excepting that the words, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan," occur there, the difference between the two incidents is immense. Neither Michael nor the body of Moses is mentioned in Zechariah. The cause of Satan's hostility is the consecration of Joshua the high priest. And it is the Lord, and not the angel, who rebukes the Evil One. These differences are conclusive; they leave just the features which need explanation still unexplained. We may safely decide that St. Jude is not alluding to anything contained in the Bible. More probably he is referring to some well-known Jewish story respecting the death and burial of Moses—in other words, to apocryphal literature.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6). These words excited the curiosity of the Jews; and as history told them nothing beyond the statement in Deuteronomy, they fell back upon imagination as a substitute, and the mysterious words of Scripture became a centre round which a series of legends in process of time clustered. The "Targum of Jonathan" on the passage says that the grave of Moses was entrusted to the care of Michael the archangel. The "Midrash" on the same states that Sammael, chief of the evil spirits, was impatient for the death of Moses. "And he said, When will the longed-for moment come when Michael shall weep and I shall laugh? And at last the time came when Michael came to Sammael and said: Ah! cursed one! shall I weep while thou laughest? and he made answer in the words of Micah (vii. 8), Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." The "Midrash" also contains another legend, in which the sin of the impure angels is mentioned in connection with the death of Moses. The soul of Moses prays that it may not be taken from the body: "Lord of the world, the angels Asa and Asael lusted after daughters of men; but Moses, from the day that Thou appearedst unto him in the bush, led a life of perpetual continence;" the plea being that from so pure a body the soul need not depart. Both Gabriel and Michael shrink from bringing the soul, and Sammael failed to obtain it. "And Moses prayed, Lord of the world, give not my soul over to the angel of death. And there came a voice from heaven, Fear not, Moses; I will provide for thy burial. And Moses stood up and sanctified himself as do the Seraphim, and the Most High came down from heaven, and the three chief angels with Him. Michael prepared the bier, and Gabriel spread out the winding-sheet. . . . And the Most High kissed him, and through that kiss took his soul to Himself" (Plumptre *in loco*).

These legends bring us a little nearer to the illustration used by St. Jude, for they bring Michael and the evil spirit into connection with what is related respecting the death and burial of Moses. But the contest between Michael and Satan respecting the body is not there. Origen tells us that this comes from an apocryphal book called "The Assumption" or "The Ascension (ἀνάληψις or ἀνάβασις) of Moses": "In Genesis the serpent is described as having seduced Eve, regarding whom, in 'The Assumption of Moses' (a little treatise of which the Apostle Jude makes mention in his Epistle), the archangel Michael, when disputing with the devil regarding the body of Moses, says that the serpent, being inspired by the devil, was the cause of the transgression of Adam and Eve" ("De Princip.," III. ii. *sub init.*). The book was fairly well known in the early Church. Clement of Alexandria quotes it ("Strom.," vi. xv. *sub fin.*); and in the Latin translation of the "Hypotyposeis" his note on Jude 9 is "Hic confirmat Assumptionem Moysis." Didymus of Alexandria says the same as Origen about St. Jude's use of it, and censures those who made this an objection to the Epistle of Jude ("In Epist. Judæ enarratio in Gallandi Biblioth. Patr.," VI. 307). Evodius, Bishop of Uzala, one of Augustine's early friends ("Confess.," IX. vii. 17; xii.

31), in writing to him, speaks of it as the "Mysteries (Secreta) of Moses," and calls it a writing devoid of authority (Aug. "Ep.," clviii. 6). It was known in the second half of the fifth century to Gelasius of Cyzicus, and in the second half of the eighth to Nicephorus of Constantinople, who, in his "Stichometria Sacrorum Librorum," tells us that it was about as long as the Apocalypse of St. John. But from that time we hear no more of it until 1861, when Ceriani published about a third of it from a palimpsest in the Ambrosian Library at Milan ("Monumenta Sacra et Prof.," I. i. p. 55). This fragment contains the passage quoted by Gelasius, but most tantalisingly comes to an end before the death of Moses, so that we are still without the passage about the contest between Michael and the devil respecting his body. Nevertheless, we have no reason for doubting the statements of Origen and of Didymus that the book contained this incident, and that this is the source of the illustration used by St. Jude. Such evidence as we have confirms the statements, and there is no evidence on the other side. We know that there were legends connecting Michael and the Evil One with the death of Moses. We know that "The Assumption of Moses" contained similar material. Above all, we know that the incident mentioned by St. Jude is not in the canonical Scriptures, and therefore must have come from some apocryphal source, and that elsewhere in his Epistle St. Jude makes use of apocryphal literature. We are not, therefore, creating a difficulty by adopting the all but certain conclusion that this apocryphal work is the source from which St. Jude draws. Even if we reject this highly probable conclusion, the difficulty, such as it is, will still remain.

That "The Assumption of Moses" was written before our Epistle is almost universally admitted. Philippi is almost alone in thinking that its author was a Christian, and that he borrowed from St. Jude. Ewald, Dillmann, Drummond, Schürer, and Wiesler place it between B. C. 4 (the year of the war of Quintilius Varus, to which it almost certainly refers) and A. D. 6. Hilgenfeld, Merx, Fritzsche, and Lucius place it at different points between A. D. 44 and 70. But the earlier date is the more probable. The large fragment in Latin which we now possess was evidently made from a Greek document, and Hilgenfeld has attempted to restore the Greek from the Latin. But this Greek document may itself have been a translation from the Aramaic. In either case St. Jude would be able to read it.

That any true tradition on the subject should have been handed down orally through fifteen centuries, "without leaving the slightest trace in a single passage in the Old Testament," is utterly improbable. This hypothesis, and the still more violent supposition of a special revelation made to St. Jude, are devices prompted by a reverent spirit, but thoroughly uncritical and untenable, to avoid the unwelcome conclusion that an inspired writer has quoted legendary material. Have we any right to assume that inspiration raises a writer to the intellectual position of a critical historian, with power to discriminate between legend and fact? St. Jude probably believed the story about the dispute between Michael and Satan to be true; but even if he knew it to be a myth, he might nevertheless readily use it as an illustrative argument, seeing that it was so familiar to his readers. If an inspired writer were living now, would it be quite incredible that he should make use of Dante's "Purgatory," or Shakespeare's "King Lear"? Inspiration certainly does not preserve those who possess it from imperfect grammar, and we cannot be certain that it preserves them from other imperfections which have nothing to do with the truth that saves souls. Besides which, it may be merely our prejudices which lead us to regard the use of legendary material as an imperfection. Let us reverently examine the features which inspired writings actually present to us, not hastily determine beforehand what properties they ought to possess. We not unnaturally fancy that when the Holy Spirit inspires a person to write for the spiritual instruction of men throughout all ages, He also preserves him from making mistakes as to the authenticity of writings of which he makes use, or at least would preserve him from misleading others on such points; but it does not follow that this natural expectation of ours corresponds with the actual manner of the Spirit's working. "We follow a very unsafe method if we begin by deciding in what way it seems to us most fitting that God should guide His Church, and then try to wrest facts into conformity with our preconceptions."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DESCRIPTION CORRESPONDING TO CAIN: THE LIBERTINES AT THE LOVE-FEASTS—THE BOOK OF ENOCH.

Jude 12-15.

St. Jude leaves off comparing the libertines with other sinners—Cain and the Sodomites, Balaam and the impure angels, Korah and the unbelieving Israelites—and begins an independent description of them. Nevertheless, there is reason for believing that he has Cain, Balaam, and Korah in his mind in framing this new account of them. The description falls into three parts, of which this is the first. Each of the three parts begins in the same way: "These are" (*οὗτοί εἰσιν*). And each is balanced by something said on the other side, which is introduced with a "But" (*δέ*). In the case before us the "But" introduces a warning given prophetically to these libertines by Enoch (vv. 14, 15). In the second case St. Jude quotes a warning given prophetically to his readers by the Apostles (vv. 17, 18). In the third he exhorts his readers himself (vv. 20-23). This threefold division has been rather generally ignored. It is quite obliterated in the Revised Version by the division of the paragraphs, and also by the substitution of an "And" for the first "But:" "And to these also Enoch prophesied." The Vulgate is right with *autem* in all three places, followed by Wiclif with "Forsothe" in all three places. Luther is not only right in his rendering of the conjunction with *aber* in all three places, but also in his division of the paragraphs. But since Wiclif all English versions have obscured this threefold description of the ungodly with the three corresponding warnings or exhortations.

"These are they who are hidden rocks in your

love-feasts when they feast with you." The difference between this and the parallel passage in 2 Peter is of special interest here; for it looks as if whichever writer used the work of the other remembered the sound rather than the sense. We have here *ἐν ταῖς ἀγάπαις . . . σπιλάδες*; but in 2 Peter ii. 13 *σπίλοι . . ἐν ταῖς ἀπάταις* (with *ἀγάπαις* as a various reading, probably taken from this passage). It is possible that there may be no difference of meaning between *σπιλάδες* and *σπίλοι*. The former, which is St. Jude's word, almost invariably means "rocks," but in an Orphic poem of the fourth century means "spots." The latter, which is used in 2 Peter ii. 13 and Eph. v. 27, generally means "spots," but sometimes means "rocks." So that "spots" may be the right rendering in both Epistles, and "rocks" may be right in both. More probably, however, we should understand "spots" in 2 Peter, and "rocks" here. The Revised Version inserts "hidden" as an epithet —"hidden rocks in your love-feasts"—which is hardly justifiable, because the word seems to mean reefs over which the sea dashes, as distinct from rocks which are wholly covered (so in the "Anthologia Palatina," ii. 390; and in a fragment of Sophocles the word has the epithet "lofty," *ἐφ' ὑψηλαῖς σπιλάδεσσι*, and "lofty hidden rocks" would be almost a contradiction in terms). Moreover, "hidden" does not seem to be right even as an interpretation; for these profligates were not at all hidden; they were utterly notorious and scandalous. They made no secret of their misconduct, but gloried in it and defended it. Yet this fact does not make the name "rocks," or "reefs," inappropriate. A reef may be a very dangerous thing, although it is always visible. It may be impossible to avoid going near it; and proximity to such things is always perilous. So also with these ungodly men: St. Jude's readers could not wholly avoid them, either in society or in the public services of the Church, but their presence disturbed and polluted both. The whole purpose of the love-feasts was wrecked by these men. Like Cain, they turned the ordinances of religion into selfishness and sin.

We cannot doubt that when St. Jude wrote the eucharist was still part of the agape or love-feast, as when St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (A. D. 57, 58). It was still "the Lord's Supper," not merely in name, but in fact (1 Cor. xi. 17-34; Acts xx. 7-11). It is almost certain that when Ignatius wrote his Epistles (*cir.* A. D. 112) the eucharist was still united with the love-feast. He writes to the Church of Smyrna, "It is not lawful without the bishop either to baptise or to hold a love-feast" (viii.). This must refer to the two sacraments, the administration of which are the chief functions of the priestly office. Ignatius cannot have meant that a love-feast apart from the eucharist might not be held without the bishop. When Justin Martyr wrote his First Apology (*cir.* A. D. 140) it is evident that the two had been separated; his description of the eucharist (lxv.-lxvii., implies that no love-feast accompanied it (see Lightfoot, "St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp," I. pp. 52, 387; II. p. 312; Macmillan, 1885). We may regard it, therefore, as certain that even if this Epistle be placed late in the first century, St. Jude is here referring to a state of things very similar to that which St. Paul rebukes in the Church of Corinth; the love-feast accompanied by the eucharist was profaned by the shameless indulgence of these libertines.

The love-feast symbolised the brotherhood of Christians. It was a simple meal, in which all met as equals, and the rich supplied the necessities of the poor. Anything like excess was peculiarly out of place, and it was the duty of the rich to see that the poorer members of the congregation were satisfied. But it would seem as if these profligates (1) brought with them luxurious food, thus destroying the Christian simplicity of the meal; and (2) brought this, not for the benefit of all, but for their own private enjoyment, thus destroying the idea of Christian brotherhood and equality. There is nothing in the word used for "feasting with you" (*συνευωχούμενοι*) which necessarily implies revelry or excess, but in this connection it implies censure. To turn the love-feast into a banquet was wrong, however innocent a banquet might be in itself. We might translate the word "when they feast together," instead of "when they feast with you;" and this would imply that at the love-feast they kept to themselves, and did not mix with their poorer brethren. This makes good sense; but if this translation is adopted, we must beware of interpreting it to mean that these libertines had become schismatics, and had set up a love-feast of their own. They could not be "rocks in your love-feasts" if they did not attend the love-feasts.

There are two other uncertainties in these opening clauses—one of construction, and one of translation. (1) Ought we to take "without fear" with what precedes, or with what follows —"when they feast with you without fear," or "that feed themselves without fear"? As in ver. 7, with regard to "of eternal fire," we are unable to decide with certainty. Both constructions make excellent sense, and nothing can be urged as being strongly in favour of either. English versions are divided. The Rhemish has "feasting together without fear." Purvey, the Authorised, and the Revised take "without fear" with "feeding themselves." Tyndale, Cranmer, and the Genevan aim at being as ambiguous as the Greek; they place "with out feare" between the two clauses with a comma on each side of it. (2) Does "feeding themselves" mean that they fed themselves instead of feeding the flock? (Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 8; Isa. lvi. 11). If so, the Revisers give the right interpretation with "shepherds that without fear feed themselves;" but this is interpretation rather than translation. Or does it mean that they fed themselves, instead of waiting to be fed by the shepherds? If so, it is quite misleading to call them shepherds. As we have seen already (p. 649), there is no reason for thinking that these profligates set up as teachers or pastors. We shall be safer if we render the Greek participle (*ἑαυτοὺς ποιμαίνοντες*) by a participle: "pasturing themselves," or "shepherding themselves." Luther, as Dr. Salmon points out, renders it *semetipsos regentes*, which shows that he understood it in the latter sense. Yet this second view does not imply anything schismatical in their conduct, but merely that they were selfish and disorderly. They kept their own good food, and consumed it among themselves at the love-feast, instead of throwing it into the common store, and allowing it to be distributed to all by the elders. With full recognition of the fact that there is much to be said

for other views, the following rendering may be accepted as on the whole preferable: "These are they who are rocks in your love-feasts, feasting together without fear, pasturing their own selves."

In what follows St. Jude piles metaphor on metaphor and epithet on epithet, in the effort to express his indignation and abhorrence. But we cannot say that "no doubt also in the comparisons which he employs he has an eye to the original intention of the love-feast." It is somewhat forced to say that the love-feast "was to have the blessing of the rain from heaven; it was meant to be a cause of much fruit in the whole Christian community." But assuming that "waterless clouds" and "fruitless trees" may be made to refer to the love-feasts, what are we to make of "wild waves" and "wandering stars" in that connection? It is better to regard the subject of the love-feasts as ended, and to take the similes which follow as quite independent. These men are ostentatious, but they do no good. It was perhaps expected that their admission to the Church would be a great gain to Christendom; but they are as disappointing as clouds that are carried past (*παραφερόμεναι*) by winds without giving any rain; and in the East that is one of the most grievous among common disappointments.

How the framers of the Authorised Version came to perpetrate such a contradiction in terms as "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit," it is not easy to see. No earlier English version is guilty of it; nor the Vulgate (*arbores autumnales, infructuosæ*); nor Beza, with whom Calvin agrees (*arbores emarcidæ infrugiferæ*); nor Luther (*kahle unfruchtbare Bäume*). The Greek (*δένδρα φθινοπωρινά*) means literally "autumn-withering trees;" *i. e.*, just at the time when fruit is expected they wither and are without fruit. The parable of the barren fig-tree (Luke xiii. 6-9) is perhaps in St. Jude's mind. The epithets form a natural climax—withering in autumn, fruitless, twice dead, rooted up. These profligates were twice dead, because they had returned after baptism to the death of sin: the end of such men is that they shall be rooted out at the last (Ps. xxx. 28; lii. 5; Prov. ii. 22). When he calls them "'wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shames," St. Jude is perhaps thinking of the words of Isaiah: "The wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt" (lvii. 20). But the wording of the Septuagint is utterly different from that which we have here; it is the thought that is similar.

What are we to understand by "wandering stars"? Not planets, nor comets, neither of which either seem to wander while one looks at them, or do wander, in St. Jude's sense, as a matter of fact. Both have their orbits, to which they keep with such regularity that their movements can be accurately predicted; so that they are symbols rather of Christian lives than of the course of the ungodly. Much more probably St. Jude means "falling stars," or "shooting stars," which seem to leave their place in the heavens, where they are beautiful and useful, and to wander away into the darkness, to the confusion and dismay of those who observe them. Thus understood, the simile forms a natural transition to the prophecy of Enoch which follows. St. Jude's thoughts have once more gone back to the fallen angels in the "Book of Enoch." Angels, like stars, have a path to keep, and those who keep it not are punished. "I saw the winds which cause the orb of the sun and of all the stars to set. . . . I saw the path of the angels. . . . I perceived a place which had neither the firmament of heaven above it, nor the solid ground underneath it; neither was there water above it, nor anything on wing; but the spot was desolate. And there I saw seven stars, like great blazing mountains, and like spirits entreating me. Then the angel [Enoch's guide] said, This place, until the consummation of heaven and earth, will be the prison of the stars and the host of heaven. The stars which roll over fire are those which transgressed the commandment of God" (xviii. 6, 7, 13-16). In another terrible place he sees stars bound together, and is told that these are "the stars which have transgressed," and that "this is the prison of the angels," in which "they are kept for ever" (xxi. 2, 3, 5, 6). These extracts make it highly probable that when St. Jude compares the ungodly to "wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever," he is thinking once more of the "angels which left their proper habitation," who are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (ver. 6). After this return to the ideas contained in the "Book of Enoch," the quotation of the prophecy comes quite naturally; and all the more so because, as Irenæus indicates, Enoch forms a splendid contrast to the fallen angels: they lost their heavenly habitation by displeasing God, whereas he was taken up to heaven for pleasing Him. His words show that he was acquainted with the "Book of Enoch," and accepted it as trustworthy: "But Enoch also without circumcision, by pleasing God, although he was a man, discharged the office of ambassador to angels, and was translated, and is preserved even until now as a witness of the just judgment of God: while angels by transgression fell to earth for judgment; but a man by pleasing Him was translated for salvation" ("Hær.," IV. xvi. 2). Having compared the profligates to the stars, or angels, who fell from heaven to earth, St. Jude passes on readily to quote the warning of one who was taken up from earth to heaven.

And the way in which the prophecy is introduced makes us still more clear as to the source from which St. Jude derived it: "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied." Nowhere in the Old Testament, and nowhere else in the New, is Enoch said to be "the seventh from Adam." But he is called "the seventh" in the "Book of Enoch," where he is made to say, "I have been born the seventh in the first week" (xcii. 4), although in order to make seven both Adam and Enoch have to be counted (xxxvii. 1). The number seven is possibly symbolical, indicating perfecting. Thus Dr. Westcott takes Enoch to be "a type of perfected humanity" ("Dict. of the Bible"). Yet it is also possible that he is called "the seventh" in the "Book of Enoch," and consequently by St. Jude, in order to mark the extreme antiquity of the prophecy, or to distinguish him from other persons of the same name (Gen. xxv. 4; xlvi. 9).

But a careful comparison of the passage in question, as quoted by St. Jude, and as it stands in the translation of the "Book of Enoch," is the chief means of determining the source of the

quotation. This, however, cannot be made satisfactorily until we can place the Greek, of which the Ethiopic version of the "Book of Enoch" is a translation, side by side with St. Jude's Greek.

ENOCH.	ST. JUDE.
Behold, He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon them, and to destroy the ungodly and reprove all the carnal [or, and will destroy and convict the ungodly with all flesh], for everything which the sinners and the ungodly have done and committed against Him (chap. ii.).	Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, *and of all the hard things which* ungodly sinners *have spoken against Him* (vv. 14, 15).

It will be observed that there is nothing in the "Book of Enoch" to correspond with the saying about "the hard things which sinners have spoken against God." This in itself is almost conclusive against the hypothesis, which on other grounds is not very probable, that some later writer copied the prophecy as given by St. Jude, and inserted it into the "Book of Enoch." If so, why did he not copy it exactly? Why did he not only slightly vary the wording, but omit a rather important clause? The passage is very short, and a writer who was anxious to make St. Jude agree with the reputed prophecy would be likely to make the agreement exact. On the other hand, if St. Jude is quoting loosely from memory, or from a Greek or Aramaic original, of which the text varied somewhat from the Ethiopic translation which has come down to us, everything is explained. He would be tenacious of the clause about "hard things spoken against God," as a warning to those who "set at naught dominion and rail at dignities." It is of course possible that both the author of this book and St. Jude independently make use of a traditional saying attributed to Enoch. But seeing that the work was in existence when St. Jude wrote, was probably well known to his readers, and contains most of the passage which he quotes; and seeing that elsewhere in his Epistle he seems to refer to other parts of the book, far the more reasonable view is that he quotes directly from it. The case therefore is parallel to that of the reference to "The Assumption of Moses" in ver. 9. St. Jude probably believed the prophecy to be a genuine prophecy of Enoch, and the writing in which it occurs to be a genuine revelation respecting the visible and invisible world; but even if he knew its apocryphal character, its appositeness to the subject of which he is so full might easily lead him to quote it to persons who would be familiar with it. We have no right to prejudge the question of fitness, and say that inspiration would certainly preserve its instruments from wittingly or unwittingly making use of a fictitious apocalypse. Our business, as reverent and therefore honest students, is to ascertain whether this writer does derive some of his material from the document which, after the lapse of so many centuries, was given back to us about a hundred and twenty years ago. If on critical grounds we find ourselves compelled to believe that this document is the source from which St. Jude draws, then let us beware of setting our own preconceptions above the wisdom of God, who in this case, as in many more, has been pleased to employ an unexpected instrument, and has made a human fiction the means of proclaiming a Divine truth.

It remains to give some further account of the intensely interesting writing which St. Jude appears to have used. The Books of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah gave to the Jews a love of visions, revelations, and prophecies which at times was almost insatiable; and, when the gift of prophecy came to an end, the three centuries between Malachi and the Baptist, during which it seemed as if Jehovah had departed from His people, and "answered no more, neither by dreams nor by prophets," appeared dreary and intolerable. What had been written by Moses and the Prophets did not satisfy. Fresh revelations were desired; and the reality being absent, fiction attempted to stop the gap. Such writings as the "Book of Enoch," "Assumption of Moses," "Testament of Moses," "Eldad and Medad," "Apocalypse of Elijah," etc., etc., were the result. This desire for prophecies and revelations passed over from Judaism into the Christian Church, and was quickened rather than satisfied by the Revelation of St. John. During the first two centuries of the Christian era such literature continued to be produced by Jews and Christians alike; and specimens of it still survive in the "Apocalypse of Baruch" and the "Fourth Book of Ezra" on the Jewish side, and the "Shepherd of Hermas" on the Christian; the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" being apparently a Jewish original with Christian interpolations. But in most cases only the titles survive, and where the revelation or prophecy is attributed to an Old Testament character we are unable to decide whether the fiction was of Jewish or of Christian origin.

It is strange that such a writing as the "Book of Enoch" should have been allowed to disappear entirely from the West after the fourth century, and from the East after the eighth. The quotations in the "Chronographia" of Georgius Syncellus, some portions of which are not found in the recovered Ethiopic Version, are the last traces that we have of it until early in the seventeenth century, when it was rumoured that it was extant in Abyssinia, and late in the eighteenth, when it was found there. The revelations which it professes to make respecting judgment, heaven, and hell might have been expected to make it a special favourite with Christians from the fourth to the tenth century, during which period one of the commonest topics of speculation was the end of the world. Moreover, there was the passage in Jude, with the notices in Barnabas, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, and others, to keep the book from being forgotten. But it was generally believed that the end of the world would be heralded by two great signs—the downfall of Rome, and the coming of Antichrist. About these the "Book of Enoch" contains no hint, and the absence of such material may have caused it to pass out of knowledge. Englishmen have the honour of giving it back to Europe. James Bruce brought the Ethiopic translation from Abyssinia in 1773, and Archbishop Laurence published an English translation of it in 1821, and an Ethiopic text in 1838. Since then the scholars who have edited it or commented on it have been almost exclusively Germans.

It is generally acknowledged that the book is a composite one. Probably the original writer

incorporated older materials, and his work has probably been interpolated by later hands. Whether any of these supposed interpolations are Christian is still debated; and the question scarcely admits of a decided answer. On the one hand, there are expressions which would come much more naturally from a Christian than from a Jew; on the other, it is difficult to see why a Christian should insert anything at all, if he did not insert what might teach others Christian truth. Messianic passages abound; and in them the Messiah is called, again and again, "the Son of man" and "the Elect One;" twice He is called "the Anointed" (xlvii. 11; li. 4), twice "the Righteous One" (xxxviii. 2; lii. 6; where Laurence translates otherwise); once He is "the Son of the offspring of the mother of the living," *i. e.*, Son of the son of Eve (lxi. 10); and once the Lord speaks of Him as "My Son" (civ. 2). This Messiah is the Judge of men and angels, by the appointment of Jehovah. "In those days will the earth give back that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol will give back that which has been entrusted to it, which it has received, and destruction (Abaddon) will give back what it owes. . . . And in those days will the Elect One sit upon His throne, and all secrets of wisdom will come forth from the thoughts of His mouth; for the Lord of spirits hath given it to Him, and hath glorified Him" (l. 1, 3). "Then the Lord of spirits made to sit upon the throne of His glory the Elect One, who will judge all the works of the holy" (lx. 10, 11; lxviii. 39). But this Messiah is not much more than a highly exalted angel. He is not the Word; he is not God. That this Son of man has already lived upon the earth is not indicated. Of the name Jesus, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, or the Ascension, there is not a trace. There is no hint of baptism, or of the eucharist, or of the doctrine of the Trinity. In a word, everything distinctly Christian is absent, even from that section (xxxvii.-lxxi.) which makes the nearest approaches to Christian language, and which is probably a later insertion. It is difficult to see what object a Christian could have in writing just this and no more. The fact that so many of the angels have Hebrew names favours the view that the original was in Hebrew or Aramaic, of which the Greek, from which the Ethiopic version is taken, was only a translation. If so, this also is in favour of Jewish, rather than of Christian origin.

Those who can should read the whole book in Laurence's translation, or still better in Dillmann's. But the more accurately translated portions given in Westcott and in Stanton will give some idea of the whole. The latter have been used in this chapter. The book is manifestly the work of a man of the most earnest convictions, one who believes in God, and fears Him, and is appalled at the practical infidelity and utter godlessness which he finds around him. On two things he is ever insisting: (1) that God's rule extends everywhere, over angels and men, no less than over winds and stars; (2) that this rule is a moral one, for He abundantly rewards righteousness, and fearfully punishes sin. Nothing, therefore, could well be more in harmony with the spirit and purpose of St. Jude, and it ought not to perplex us that he makes use of such a book.

But in any case it may reassure us to remember that, in spite of its being quoted in Scripture, the Church has never been allowed to admit it as Scripture. The mind of Christendom has never wavered as to the real character of the "Book of Enoch." It is one of the many eccentricities of Tertullian that he upholds its authority; but his special pleading has misled no one else ("De Cultu Fem.," I. iii.). Justin Martyr apparently knew it ("Apol.," II. v.), but there is nothing to show that he accepted it as a genuine revelation. Origen ("Contra Cels.," V. liv.: comp. "In Numer. Homil.," xxviii. 2; "In Joannem," tom. vi., cap. xxv.: De la Rue, ii. 384; iv. 142) distinctly marks it as uncanonical and of doubtful value; Augustine ("De Civ. Dei," XV. xxiii. 4) and Jerome ("De Vir. Illustr.," iv.) reject it as apocryphal; and soon after their time it seems to have disappeared from Western Christendom. As already stated, it is uncertain whether St. Jude was mistaken as to the true nature of the book: it is quite certain that the Church has been preserved from being so.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE DESCRIPTION CORRESPONDING TO BALAAM: IMPIOUS DISCONTENT AND GREED OF THE LIBERTINES—THE APOSTOLIC WARNING RESPECTING THEM.

JUDE 16-18.

THESE words form the second part of the threefold description of the libertines; and just as the first part was balanced by a prophetic warning quoted from the "Book of Enoch," so this part is balanced by a quotation of the prophetic warning given by the Apostles, to the effect that persons like these ungodly men would certainly arise. This second division more clearly corresponds to the case of Balaam mentioned in ver. 11 than the first division of the description corresponds to the case of Cain. This will appear when we come to examine the details.

"These are murmurers." For the second time St. Jude points to the intruders who are disturbing the Church, and shows his readers another group of characteristics by which these dangerous persons, who disgrace the name of Christian, may be known. This second group hangs on closely to what immediately precedes. It seems to have been suggested by the last words of the prophecy quoted from Enoch, "the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." The way in which the libertines spoke hard things against God was by murmuring against His decrees and complaining of the dispensations of His Providence. This is the exact meaning of the word which is rendered "complainers" (*μεμψίμοιροι*) and which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; "finding fault with their lot," *i. e.*, discontented with the condition of life which God had assigned to them, and not only blaming Him for this, but for the moral restrictions which He had imposed upon them and upon all mankind. Men who "walk after their lusts," and shape their course in accordance with these (*κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι*), cannot be contented, for the means of gratifying the lusts are not always present, and the lusts themselves are in-

satiable: even when gratification is possible, it is only temporary; the unruly desires are certain to revive and clamour once more for satisfaction. This was notably the case with Balaam, whose grasping cupidity chafed against the restraints which prevented it from being gratified. As Bishop Butler says of him, "He wanted to do what he knew to be very wicked, and contrary to the express command of God; he had inward checks and restraints, which he could not entirely get over; he therefore casts about for ways to reconcile this wickedness with his duty" ("Sermon," vii.). From a somewhat different point of view J. H. Newman says much the same thing of him: Balaam "would have given the world to have got rid of his duties; and the question was, how to do so without violence" ("Plain Sermons," Rivingtons, 1868, vol. iv. p. 28). Isaac Williams, who has a sermon on the same subject, puts the matter in yet another way. Balaam "knew what was holy and good, and it may be that he loved it also, but he loved riches more: his knowledge was with God; his will was with Satan. . . . He wished to proceed together with God and Mammon—God on his lips, and Mammon in his heart" ("The Characters of the Old Testament," Rivingtons, 1869, pp. 128, 130). The way in which the libertines seem to have set about the impossible task of getting rid of their duties and reconciling the service of God with the service of Satan appears to have been that of roundly declaring that Christian liberty included freedom to gratify one's desires: if it did not do so, it was an empty delusion. In this way they "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness" (ver. 4), and "their mouth spoke great swelling words." In the parallel passage in 2 Peter an explanation of this kind is given of the "great swelling words." By means of them these evil men "enticed others in the lusts of the flesh by lasciviousness, . . . promising them liberty" (2 Peter ii. 18, 19). According to them, it was the magnificent privilege of Christians to be freed from righteousness and become the slaves of sin. Irenæus attributes doctrine of this kind to Simon Magus and his followers, who, "as being free, live as they please; for men are saved through His grace, and not through their own righteous acts. For righteous actions are not such in the nature of things, but accidentally" ("Hær.," I. xxiii. 3).

"Showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage." This, again, is exactly what Balaam did. He had regard to Balak and the princes whom he sent as ambassadors; and he did this because he hoped to gain the large reward which they were told to promise him if he would but exercise his prophetic power in solemnly cursing Israel. In like manner these blatant profligates, who were loud in their complaints against the treatment which they received from Providence, and equally loud in protesting that the Gospel allowed them and others the license which they desired, nevertheless became mean flatterers and parasites when there was any chance of getting anything from persons of wealth and distinction. This apparently incongruous combination of arrogant self-assertion with grovelling sycophancy is common enough in men without principle, as Calvin remarks. "When there is no one to check their insolence, or when there is nothing which stands in their way, their pride is intolerable, so that they imperiously arrogate everything to themselves; but they meanly flatter those whom they fear, and from whom they expect some advantage." While they refuse submission where it is due, they give it where it is not due. They rebelliously reject the plain commands of God, and yet servilely cringe to the humours and caprices of their fellow-men.

"But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Revisers have done well to restore the "ye"—"But ye, beloved"—which was in all English versions previous to that of 1611, just as in ver. 20. In both cases the pronoun is emphatic, and places the persons addressed in marked contrast to the ungodly men against whom they are being warned. "Whatever they may do, do not you be deceived by their arrogant language and time-serving conduct, for these are the scoffing sensualists against whom you have already been warned beforehand by the Apostles. Their behaviour is amazing, but it ought not to take you by surprise." St. Jude evidently takes for granted that the Apostolic warning which he quotes is well known to his readers. Such an appeal to the authority of the Apostles would certainly be more natural in one who was himself not an Apostle, but it must not be regarded as quite decisive, as if St. Jude had written "how that they said to us." Other reasons, however, support the impression which this passage conveys, that the writer is not an Apostle (see p. 645). On the other hand, there is nothing in these words to warrant the conclusion that the writer regards the Apostles as persons who lived long ago, or who gave this warning long ago. All that is implied is that before these ungodly men "crept in privily" into the Church, Apostles had foretold that such persons would arise. "In the last time" is not St. Jude's expression, but theirs; and by it the Apostles certainly did not mean an age remote from their own: the "last time" had already begun when they wrote (see on 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, in "The Pastoral Epistles," in this volume, pp. 471-78, and comp. 1 John ii. 18; Heb. i. 2; 1 Peter i. 20).

"How that they said to you" may mean "how that they used to say to you" (ἔλεγον ὑμῖν) and may refer to oral teaching; but we cannot be at all certain of this. Still less can we be certain that, if written warnings are included or specially meant, the reference is to 2 Peter iii. 3: "knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts." Both passages may have a common source, or that in 2 Peter may be modelled upon this one. The word for "mockers" is the same in both (ἐμπαῖκται), and it is a very unusual word, not used by profane writers, nor anywhere else in the New Testament; in the Septuagint it occurs only once (Isa. iii. 4), and there apparently in the sense of "childish persons." The Authorised Version unfortunately obscures this close connection between the wording of 2 Peter iii. 3, and that of this passage, by having "scoffers" in the one, and "mockers" in the other. The particular in which the two passages really differ must not pass without notice. St. Jude writes, "walking after their own ungodly lusts," or more literally, "their own lusts of ungodlinesses" (τῶν ἀσεβειῶν). Most probably the genitive here is descriptive, as in James i. 24 and ii. 4; and therefore the

substitution of the adjective "ungodly" for it in the English versions is justifiable. But it is possible that "lusts of ungodlinesses" means that they lusted after impieties, and therefore the rendering given in the margin of the Revised Version should not be left unheeded. Wiclif, Purvey, and the Rhemish here differ from other English versions, being made from later texts of the Vulgate, which read, "secundum desideria sua ambulantes in impietatibus" or "in impietate," whereas the better text has "impietatum." However we translate the genitive case, we may regard the word as an echo of the prophecy quoted from the "Book of Enoch," in which "ungodly" or "ungodliness" occurs with persistent iteration (ver. 15).

The fact that this expression (*τῶν ἀσεβειῶν*) occurs here, but not in the parallel verse in 2 Peter, is an indication of a much more important difference between the two passages. In spite of the great similarity of wording, the meaning is very different. The mockers in each case mock at totally different things. In 2 Peter we are expressly told that they scoffed at the belief that Christ was coming to judge the world. "What has become of the promise of His coming? Everything goes on just as it has done for generations." There is not a hint of any such notion here; on the contrary, it is implied that these libertines mocked at God's dealings with themselves, and at the belief that the Gospel did not give them full liberty to gratify their sensual desires. They were among those of whom it is written that "fools make a mock at sin" (Prov. xiv. 9). By scoffing at things sacred, and ridiculing the notion that there is any harm in licentiousness, or anything estimable in holiness, they created a moral atmosphere in which men sinned with a light heart, because sin was made to look as if it were a matter of no moment, a thing to be indulged in without anxiety or remorse. It would be more reasonable and less reprehensible to make a mock at carnage or pestilence, and teach men to go with a light heart into a desolating war or plague-stricken neighbourhood. In such cases experience of the manifest horrors would soon cure the light-heartedness. But the horrible nature of sin is not so manifest, and with regard to that experience teaches its lesson more slowly. It is like a poisoning of the blood rather than a wound in the flesh, and may have done incalculable mischief before any serious pain is felt, or any grave alarm excited. Hence it is quite easy for many to "walk after their own ungodly lusts," and at the same time "mock at sin" and its consequences. And then the converse of the proverb becomes true, and "sin mocks at the fools" that mocked at it—a meaning which the Hebrew may very well have. In the margin of the Revised Version we read, "Guilt mocketh at the foolish." As Delilah mocked at Samson, so does sin mock at those who have been taken captive by it. There is no folly equal to the foolhardiness of those who make light, either to themselves or to others, of the deadly character of any form of sin. They thereby save the tempter all trouble, and do his work themselves. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray" (Prov. v. 22, 23).

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DESCRIPTION CORRESPONDING TO KORAH: MAKING SEPARATIONS—EXHORTATION TO THE FAITHFUL TO BUILD UP THEMSELVES, AND THEN RESCUE OTHERS.

JUDE 19-23.

FOR the third and last time St. Jude points his finger at the ungodly intruders who are working such mischief in the Church, and gives another triplet of characteristics by which they may be recognised.

"These are they who make separations." This is the first point; like Korah and his company, these men are separatists (*οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες*). They do not actually make a schism from the Church, for they frequent the love-feasts and profess membership; but they create a faction within it. Even in the public services of the Church they keep aloof from the poorer members of the congregation. At the love-feasts they feed themselves on the good things which they bring with them, instead of handing them over to the ministers to be distributed among all. And in society they care only for persons of rank and wealth, out of whom they hope to gain something. Worst of all, they claim to be specially enlightened members of the Church, having a more comprehensive knowledge of the nature of Christian liberty, while they are turning the fundamental principles of Christian life upside down. Hence, although they are not actual schismatics, who have gone out of the Church and set up a communion of their own, their tendencies are in that direction. They are, in short, much the same kind of people as those against whom St. Paul warns his readers in the Epistle to the Romans: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (xvi. 17, 18). And again in the Epistle to the Philippians: "For many walk of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (iii. 18, 19). A parallel to nearly every clause in these two descriptions might be found in the account of the libertines given by St. Jude. Indeed, the words in which Bishop Lightfoot sums up St. Paul's description might be adopted verbatim as a summary of the description in our Epistle: "They are described as creating divisions and offenses, as holding plausible language, as professing to be wise beyond others, and yet not innocent in their wisdom." They are "Antinomians, who refuse to conform to the Cross, and live a life of self-indulgence." "The unfettered liberty of which they boast, thus perverted, becomes their deepest degradation" ("Philippians," Notes on iii. 18, 19).

Hooker, in his sermons on this passage, although he adopts the translation of Tyndale,

continued by Cranmer and the Genevan Version, "These are makers of sects," yet in his exposition follows the corrupt reading which misled the translators of 1611, "These be they who separate themselves" (*οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες ἑαυτούς*), "themselves" being absent from almost all the ancient MSS. and versions. He says, "St. Jude, to express the manner of their departure which by apostasy fell away from the faith of Christ, saith, 'They separated themselves'; noting thereby that it was not constraint of others which forced them to depart; it was not infirmity and weakness in themselves, it was not fear of persecution to come upon them, whereat their hearts did fail; it was not grief of torments, whereof they had tasted, and were not able any longer to endure them. No, they voluntarily did separate themselves, with a fully settled and altogether determined purpose never to name the Lord Jesus any more, nor to have any fellowship with His saints, but to bend all their counsel and all their strength to raze out their memorial from amongst them" ("Serm.," v. 11). Here there is a double error in the quotation from St. Jude, and therefore considerable error in the exposition of his meaning. St. Jude does not say that these libertines "separat*ed*," but that they are "those who *are* separat*ing*," *i. e.*, are habitually making separations or differences. He uses the present participle, not the aorist or perfect. And, as already noticed, he says nothing about separating themselves. So far from implying that they had "a settled and determined purpose never to name the Lord Jesus any more, nor to have any fellowship with His saints," he shows that these men had crept into the Church, and evidently intended to remain there, attending the love-feasts and polluting them while they put forward the "freedom wherewith Christ had made them free" as a plea for their own licentiousness; thus "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," and by their conduct denying the Christ in whom they professed to believe. Thus, though they did not formally leave the Church as heretics, schismatics, or apostates, yet they had the heretical and schismatical temper, and were apostates in their manner of life. As Hooker says elsewhere, "Many things exclude from the kingdom of God, although from the Church they separate not" ("Eccl. Pol.," V. lxviii. 6). These men had left the way of salvation to "walk after their own lusts," but they had not separated from the Church, into which they had surreptitiously obtained admission.

"Sensual" (*ψυχικός*). This word has been already discussed in a previous chapter, in the exposition of the passage where it occurs in the Epistle of St. James (iii. 15: see pp. 603-604). "Sensual" persons are those who live in the world of sense, and are ruled by human feeling and human reason. They stand not very much above the carnal, and with them are opposed to the spiritual. In the triplet, *carnalis, animalis, spiritalis*, the second term is far more closely allied with the first than the third. It is possible that the libertines, in their travesty of the freedom conferred by the Gospel, made a special claim to be "spiritual" persons, who were above the restraints of the moral law. They may have held that to their exalted natures the things of sense were morally indifferent, and might be indulged in without fear of loss or contamination; while they scoffed at those Christians who were on their guard against such things, and called such Christians psychical or sensuous, because they were careful about the things of sense. St. Jude tells them that it is they who are sensuous, and not spiritual at all.

"Not having the Spirit." The Revisers maintain this rendering, which does not appear in English versions until the influence of Beza and the Genevan Version made itself felt. Calvin seems to adopt it; but Luther certainly does not ("*die da keinen Geist haben*"). It must be supposed that the arguments in favour of it are very strong, seeing that the alternative translation is not allowed a place in the margin of either Authorised or Revised Version, nor is recommended by the American Committee. Nevertheless, the points in its favour are well worth considering. This alternative translation is, "Having no spirit" (Tyndale, Cranmer), *i. e.*, no spiritual nature. "Not having spirit" is Wiclif's rendering. This agrees very well with the context. St. Jude has just stigmatised the libertines as "sensuous," or "psychical." Of the three elements in man's nature, body, soul, and spirit, they are ruled by the two lower, while the third, which ought to be supreme, is persistently ignored. They had allowed the spiritual part of their being to become so bemired with self-indulgence and self-sufficiency, to be so much under the dominion of human emotion and reason, that it was utterly inoperative and practically non-existent. Their power of spiritual insight into things heavenly, of laying hold of the invisible world, and of entering into communion with God, was gone. The Holy Spirit was not only absent, but His seat was overturned and destroyed. The facts that "spirit" has neither article nor epithet in the Greek, and that the negative is subjective, and not objective (*πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες*), are in favour of man's spirit being meant, and this clause being an explanation of what precedes. These men are sensuous because they have lost all spiritual power. It must not, however, be understood that the absence of article and epithet is any barrier to the rendering, "Having not the Spirit." Phil. ii. 1 is proof of that (comp. Eph. ii. 22; vi. 18; Col. i. 8). Nevertheless, such cases are comparatively rare. The usual expression for the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is either "the Spirit," or "Holy Spirit," or "the Holy Spirit," or "the Spirit of God," or "of the Lord," or "of Jesus Christ," or "of truth," or "of life," etc. Therefore, when we find "spirit" without either article, epithet, or distinguishing genitive, the probabilities are that the spirit of man, and not the Spirit of God, is intended.

It will be observed that the three independent descriptions of the libertines, beginning with the words, "These are," become shorter as they go on. The first is two long verses (12, 13); the second is one long verse (16); the third is one very short verse. It is as if the writer were disgusted with the unpalatable subject which necessity had compelled him to take in hand (ver. 3), and were hurrying through it to the more pleasing duty of exhorting those faithful Christians for whose sake he has undertaken this painful task.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." As in ver. 17, the "But ye, beloved" (*ὑμεῖς δὲ, ἀγαπητοί*) makes an emphatic contrast between those whom St. Jude addresses and the sensuous and unspiritual men of whom he has been speaking. He exhorts his readers to endeavour to keep themselves in favour with God by cultivating faith, prayer, and hope; and in this exhortation the main purpose of the letter, as set forth in ver. 3, is fulfilled. The triplet of participles (*ἐποικοδομοῦντες — προσευχόμενοι — προσδεχόμενοι*) must not be lost sight of although the fact that the main verb (*τηρήσατε*) comes in the middle of them, instead of at the end, somewhat obscures the triple construction.

The expression "building up" (*ἐποικοδομεῖν*) is in the New Testament never used of actual building, but always in the metaphorical sense of believers being united together so as to form a temple. In this temple Christ is sometimes regarded as the foundation (1 Cor. iii. 11), sometimes as that which binds the structure together (Eph. ii. 20; Col. ii. 7). The notion of building up comes from the preposition (*ἐπί*) one stone being placed upon another, so that upward progress is made. "The faith" here is probably the foundation on which the structure is to rest; but it would be possible to translate "with your most holy faith," instead of "on your most holy faith;" and in that case the dative would, as in Col. ii. 7, express the cement rather than the foundation. In any case "the faith" is not the internal grace or virtue of faith, but, as both the participle and the adjective show, "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (ver. 3). It is "your faith," because it has been thus delivered to you; and it is "most holy," in marked contrast to the vile and shifty doctrines which the libertines profess and uphold.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost." This is the best arrangement of the words, although the Greek allows us to take "in the Holy Ghost" with the previous clause, a rather clumsy division of the words, which is sanctioned by Luther, Beza, and the Rhemish Version: "building yourselves upon our (*sic*) most holy faith, in the Holy Ghost, praying." The expression "praying in the Holy Ghost" occurs nowhere else; but that is no reason why St. Jude should not have used it here. It means that we are to pray in the power and wisdom of the Spirit. In order that we may pray, and pray aright, He must move our hearts and direct our petitions.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God." Not our love of God is meant, but His love of us. This is rendered probable both by what immediately follows—for "the love of God" should have a meaning similar to that of "the mercy of Jesus Christ"—and also by the opening address, "beloved in God" (ver. 1), which St. Jude perhaps has in his mind; for the whole of the verse before us is closely connected with the first verse of the Epistle. God's love is the region in which all Christians should strive to abide, and it is by faith and prayer that this abode is secured. To be conscious of being beloved by God is one of the greatest protections that the believer can possess.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." That mercy which He will show to all faithful Christians when He returns as Judge at the last day. We may compare "looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God" (2 Peter iii. 12). Both in this life and in eternity it is mercy that we need and crave. The Psalms are full of this thought, as a reference to the numerous passages in which the word mercy occurs will reveal: see especially Ps. cxxx. And in connection with this the concise statement respecting the relations of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity to believers must not be overlooked. By prayer in the power of the Holy Spirit we are kept in the love of the Father through the mercy of the Son. "Unto eternal life." It is not a matter of much moment whether we take these words with "keep yourselves," or with "looking," or with "mercy." The first seems to be the best arrangement, "keep yourselves . . . unto eternal life;" but in any case the eternal life is reached through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. With a similar thought the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (ix. 28) writes of Christ's Second Advent as an advent "unto salvation" (*εἰς σωτηρίαν*). The Divine purpose of both Advents is mercy, and not judgment; but seeing that both Advents are met by some who refuse to believe and repent, judgment is inevitable.

"And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear." In hardly any other passage, perhaps, does the Revised Version differ in so many particulars from the Authorised. The main changes are the result of changes in the Greek text, which here is in so corrupt a state that the original cannot be restored with certainty. The readings adopted by the Revisers have the advantage of giving us another triple division, which St. Jude is very likely to have made. This triple division is preserved in the Vulgate, and therefore in Wiclif and the Rhemish Version. Our other translators, with Luther and Beza, not finding it in the inferior Greek MSS. which they used, of course do not give it. With one possible exception, the text adopted by the Revisers seems to be the best that can be framed with our present evidence. It is doubtful whether we ought not to substitute "convict" (*ἐλέγχετε*) for the first "have mercy" (*ἐλεᾶτε*). This reading has very powerful support (AC, the best cursives, Vulgate, Memphitic, Armenian, and Ethiopic), and is adopted by many critics. But it may possibly be an early correction of a still earlier corruption, and not a restoration of the original reading. This is one of those passages about which we must be content to remain in doubt as to what the author actually wrote (see above on ver. 5, p. 652).

In any case the writer is giving directions as to how to deal with two or three different classes of persons, who are in danger of being seduced by the libertines; and possibly the libertines themselves are included. We will assume that three classes are named. In the first we are confronted with an uncertainty of translation. The participle rendered "who are in doubt" (*διακρινομένους*) may also mean "while they contend" with you. Which meaning we prefer will depend partly upon the reading which we adopt for the imperative which governs the accusative. "On some have mercy, when they are in doubt," makes very harmonious sense; for earnest doubters, who are unable

to make up their minds for or against the truth are to be treated with great tenderness. Again, "And some convict, when they contend with you," makes very harmonious sense; for it is those who are disposed to be contentious that need to be refuted and convinced of their error. It is in favour of the latter version of the command that the verbs rendered "convict" and "contend" occur, and in the same sense, in the earlier part of the Epistle (vv. 9, 15). In either case that which is doubted or contended about is "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints," on which believers are to "build themselves up."

The second class are such as can still be rescued, but by strong measures. No hint, however, is given as to their characteristics; we are merely told that there are some who require to be taken with decision, and perhaps even with violence, out of their perilous surroundings, in order that they may be saved from destruction. We may perhaps think of those who, without being in doubt or inclined to dispute about the faith, are being carried away into licentiousness by intercourse with the libertines. The fire out of which they are to be snatched is not the penal fire of the judgment to come, but the state of perdition in which they are now living. We seem to have here, as in ver. 9, a reminiscence of Zechariah iii. 1, where we read, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" In Amos iv. 11 we have the same figure, and the context there agrees with the suggestion just made as to the kind of person indicated by St. Jude: "I have overthrown some among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning." There are some who need to be rescued in the way that the angels rescued Lot, with urgency and constraint (Gen. xix. 16, 17); and it is specially in reference to temptations such as Lot had gone into that such urgency is needed.

The third class is one which must be treated with great circumspection: "and on some have mercy with fear; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." This does not mean, as Luther supposes, that we must "let them severely alone, and have nothing to do with them," but that in dealing with evil so insidious and so infectious, we must take care that we are not contaminated ourselves. It is quite possible to approach evil with good intentions, and then, through want of proper humility and caution, end in finding it fatally attractive. We must carefully preserve abhorrence for all that is associated with pollution. In the defiled garment (comp. James iii. 6, where the same word is used) St. Jude appears once more to have Zechariah iii. 1-3 in his mind; but the Greek of the LXX. is there quite different (*ἱμάτια ῥυπαρά*, instead of *ἐσπιλωμένον χιτῶνα*). The garment here mentioned is the chiton, or shirt, which came in contact with the body, and would itself be rendered unclean if the body were unclean. It therefore serves well as a symbol for that which has become perilous through being closely connected with evil. But while the evil and that which had been contaminated by it are to be hated, compassion is to be shown to those who have fallen victims to it. To be shown, not merely felt, as is manifest from the word which St. Jude uses (*ἐλεᾶν*, not *οἰκτείρειν*). The passages in which this verb (or its more common form (*ἐλεεῖν*) elsewhere occurs in the New Testament prove that it means "to have mercy on, to succour and bring help to," and not merely "to feel pity for" without doing anything to relieve the person pitied (Matt. ix. 27; xv. 22; xvii. 15; xviii. 33; xx. 30; Mark x. 47; Luke xvi. 24; xvii. 13; xviii. 38; Phil. ii. 27). It is specially used of God's showing mercy to those who do not deserve it (Rom. ix. 15, 16, 18; xi. 32; 1 Cor. vii. 25; 2 Cor. iv. 1; 1 Tim. i. 13, 16; 1 Peter ii. 10), and therefore fitly expresses the sympathy which ought to be manifested by the faithful towards the fallen. But in some cases this sympathy must be manifested in fear. It is by acting in the spirit of godly fear that love of the sinner can be combined with hatred of the sin. Without it sympathy with the sinner is too likely to turn into sympathy with the sin. To put it otherwise: All our efforts for the reformation of others must be begun and continued with self-reformation; and therefore St. Jude insists on the necessity for spiritual progress and prayer, before advising as to the treatment of the fallen. It is while we are earnestly detesting and contending against a particular sin in ourselves that we can most safely and effectually deal with that sin in others.

Finally it must be noted as specially remarkable that St. Jude, after all the strong language which he has used in describing the wickedness of those who are corrupting the Christian community, does not, in this advice as to the different methods which are to be used in dealing with those who are going or have gone astray, recommend denunciation. Not that denunciation is always wrong; in some cases it may be necessary. But denunciation by itself commonly does more harm than good; while other methods, which must be added in order to make denunciation effectual, are quite as efficacious when no denunciation has been employed. It is quite possible to manifest one's abhorrence of "the garment spotted with the flesh," without public or private abuse of those who are the authors of the defilement.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FINAL DOXOLOGY: PRAISE TO GOD, THE PROTECTOR OF HIS SERVANTS.

JUDE 24, 25.

FROM his severe and sombre warnings and exhortations St. Jude turns in joyous and exulting confidence to Him who alone can make them effectual. He has spoken with sternness and horror of great wickedness which has been manifested both in the past and in the present, and of God's terrible judgments upon it. He has exhorted his readers to beware of it, and not to let their abhorrence of it grow less when they are engaged in the merciful work of rescuing others from it. Now, in conclusion, he offers a fervent tribute of praise to Him who is a God of love as well as of justice, and who is as able and ready to protect those who cling to Him and serve Him as to punish those who murmur and rebel against Him.

The doxologies at the end of the Epistle to the Romans and at the beginning of the First Epistle to Timothy should be compared with

this one. The former is nearest to it in form; and it is from the doxology in Romans that the epithet "wise," which the Authorised Version wrongly inserts both here and in 1 Tim. i. 17, probably comes. Doxologies, modelled on those in the New Testament, became elastic in some respects, and stereotyped in others. The formula "to the only wise God" was a common one, and hence scribes inserted the epithet perhaps almost mechanically, in places where it was not found in the original. It is quite possible that St. Jude knew the Epistle to the Romans, and his doxology, especially in its opening words, may be a conscious or unconscious imitation of it; for the Epistle to the Romans was written some years before the earliest date that can with any probability be assigned to this Epistle.

"To guard you from stumbling;" which in two respects is more than "to keep you from falling." Firstly, "guard" preserves the idea of protection against perils, both manifest and secret, more decidedly than "keep;" and secondly, one may have many stumbles without any falls, and therefore to be preserved from even stumbling implies a larger measure of care on the part of the protector. But even "to guard you from stumbling" does not quite do justice to the Greek (*φυλάξαι ὑμᾶς ἀπταίστους*), nor is it easy to do so. "Guard you so that you are exempt from stumbling and never trip or make a false step" is the full meaning of the expression. The verb which is here negatived is used by St. James (ii. 10): "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble (*πταίσῃ*) in one point, he is become guilty of all. The Vulgate lets go the metaphor of stumbling, and translates simply "to preserve you without sin" (*conservare sine peccato*). That which is impossible with men is possible with God, and the Divine grace can protect Christians against their own frailty. Christ says of His sheep that they shall assuredly never perish, and that no one, whether powers of evil or human seducers, can snatch them out of His hand (John x. 28). Their wills are free, and they may will to leave Him; but if they determine to abide with Him they will be safe.

"And to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish." This is the blessed result of His protecting them from stumbling. The revised translation, "without blemish" (*ἀμώμους*), at first sight looks like a needless and vexatious change from the "faultless" of the Authorised Version, and a clumsy one, because it gives two English words for one Greek word. But the change is a real improvement, for the Greek word is a sacrificial term, which "faultless" is not. It is frequently used of victims, which must be "without blemish," in order to be suitable for offerings. It is not common in Classical Greek, but frequent in the LXX. (Exod. xxix. 1; Lev. i. 3, 10; xxii. 21-24; Num. vi. 14; xix. 2). In 1 Macc. iv. 42 it is used of the priests, and so also in Philo ("De Merc. Mer." i.; "De Agric.," xxix.: see Lightfoot on *μωμοσκοπηθέν*: Clem. Rom. xli.). In the New Testament it is used sometimes of the sinlessness of Christ (Heb. ix. 14; 1 Peter i. 19), sometimes of the ideal perfection of Christians (Eph. i. 4; v. 27; Phil. ii. 15). In the Epistle to the Colossians St. Paul has almost the same idea as St. Jude—"to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him" (i. 22); and again in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians—"to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His Saints" (iii. 13). "Before the presence of His glory" refers to the glory of God which shall be revealed at the last day.

"In exceeding joy" is a further consequence from the second point, as the second from the first. To be protected against stumbling leads to being presented without blemish before the judgment-seat, and this is an occasion of intense delight. As St. Peter puts it, "Inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy" (1 Peter iv. 13).

"To the only God our Saviour." St. Paul, like St. Jude, speaks of God the Father as our Saviour. He is "an Apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (1 Tim. i. 1), and he says that intercession and thanksgiving for others "is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour" (ii. 3). Still more fully he says that "God our Saviour . . . saved us . . . through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus iii. 4-6: comp. i. 3; ii. 10). The work of the Son is the work of the Father; and so in the Old Testament we have Jehovah spoken of as the Saviour and Redeemer of His people (Ps. cvi. 21; Isa. xli. 15, 21; xlix. 26; lx. 16). And this is the meaning of the clause which textual criticism has restored to us in this passage. God is our Saviour "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Some take these words with what follows. "To the only God be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" which makes excellent sense, and is in harmony with the doxology in 1 Peter iv. 11, "that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." It is no strong objection to this to urge that in that case St. Jude would have reversed the order of the clauses (*δόξα, μεγαλωσύνη, κράτος καὶ ἐξουσία διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν*). In the doxology at the end of the Epistle to the Romans (which St. Jude may have in his mind) "through Jesus Christ" precedes "be the glory," and yet cannot easily be taken with anything else (omitting *ᾧ* as a probable corruption). The combination "glory and dominion" occurs in other doxologies (1 Peter iv. 11; Rev. i. 6; v. 13); "majesty" and "power" do not occur in any. "Majesty" in the New Testament is found in Hebrews i. 3 and viii. 1 only; but it occurs in the LXX. and in Clement of Rome (xvi. 1). The doxology in 1 Chron. xxix. 11 is specially worthy of notice. The word seems to have been used almost exclusively of the majesty of God, and the four words together sum up the Divine glory and omnipotence. It is a little remarkable that in this case St. Jude abandons his favourite triplets, and gives four attributes rather than three. But he returns in a still more remarkable way to his favourite arrangement in the concluding words.

"Before all time, and now, and for evermore." Thus, in a very comprehensive phrase, eternity is described. Throughout all time, and throughout the ages which precede and follow it, these attributes belong to God. Evil men in their dreamings may "set at naught dominion and rail at glories," and their mouth may "speak great swelling words" about their own superior knowledge and greater liberty, and

may mock and scoff at those who will not follow them in "walking after their own ungodly lusts." Nevertheless, ages before they were born, and ages after they shall have vanished from the world which they are troubling by their presence, glory, majesty, dominion, and power belong to Him who saves us, and would save even them, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

They belong to Him. This seems to be the meaning rather than that they are ascribed to Him. No verb is given in the Greek; neither "is," as in 1 Peter iv. 11 (*ᾧ ἐστὶν ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος*), nor "be" (*ἐστω*), which in most doxologies may be understood. "To Him be glory before all time" is scarcely sense, for our wishes cannot influence the past. "To Him belongs glory before all time" is the statement of a simple fact.

It is those who know their own frailty and liability to sin; who know the manifold temptations which surround them, and the terrible attractiveness which many of them can present; who know from past experience what frequent and grievous falls are possible; that can best understand the statement of fact which this doxology contains, and the significance of it. He who can guard such creatures as we are from stumbling, in such a world as this, must be the only God; must be He who was, and is, and is to come; must possess throughout all time and all eternity the highest powers and glories which the heart of man can conceive. The wonders of the material universe impress us in our more solemn moments with feelings of awe, and reverence, and love for Him who is the Author of them all. How much more should the wonders of the kingdom of heaven do so. Out of sinful man to make a saint is more than to make a world out of nothing; and to keep sinful men from stumbling is more than to keep the stars in their courses. There is a free and rebellious will to be won and retained in the one case, whereas there is nothing but absolute and unresisting obedience in the other. The difference is that which is so beautifully expressed in the 103d and 104th Psalms. In the latter of these two exquisite songs of praise and thanksgiving Jehovah is praised as the Creator and Regulator of the world, in the former as the Pardoner and Preserver of His servants. In the one case blessing and praise is offered to the Lord—

"Who laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be moved for ever.
Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture;
The waters stood above the mountains.
They went up by the mountains,
They went down by the valleys,
Unto the place which Thou hadst founded for them.
Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.
O Lord, how manifold are Thy works!
In wisdom hast Thou made them all:
The earth is full of Thy riches.
Let the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
Let the Lord rejoice in His works:
Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth;
He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke."
—Ps. civ. 5, 6, 8, 9, 24, 31, 32.

But in the other song the Lord is praised, not so much in relation to the glorious universe which He creates and controls, but in relation to the spirits of men, whom He restores, and of angels, whom He retains, to willing obedience and service.

"Bless the Lord, O my Soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases:
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath He removed our transgressions from us.
Bless the Lord, ye angels of His;
Ye mighty in strength, that fulfil His word,
Hearkening unto the voice of His word,
Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts;
Ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure."
—Ps. ciii. 2, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 20, 21.

It is quite in harmony with such a strain as this that the joyous doxology with which St. Jude's stern letter suddenly ends is written. Its clauses lend themselves to that parallelism which distinguishes Hebrew poetry, and they have not only the spirit, but the form, of a concluding strophe of praise.

"Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling,
And to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy,
To the only God our Saviour,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Glory, majesty, dominion and power,
Before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen."

THE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER

PREFACE.

THE two letters which bear the name of St. Peter have from the earliest times met with very different degrees of acceptance. The genuineness of the First Epistle is attested by the unanimous voice of primitive Christendom. As it is addressed to Christians dwelling in different parts of Asia Minor, it is natural to look for a knowledge of it in those countries. And nowhere is it earlier noticed. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, a contemporary of the last surviving Apostle, and whose martyrdom took place about the middle of the second century, has repeated quotations from this Epistle. It was known also to Papias († 163), Bishop of Hierapolis, and to Melito (170), Bishop of Sardis. That it was known to the Greeks is seen from the Epistle to Diognetus, which for a long time was attributed to Justin Martyr († 165), while the "Shepherd" of Hermas, written at Rome, testifies that it was known there also at about the same date. The inclusion of it in the Peschito-Syriac Version bears witness to its early circulation in the Eastern Church, as also does its quotation in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch (178). Heretics, no less than the faithful, regarded it as a portion of authoritative Christian literature. Basilides in Alexandria and the Marcosians and Theodotus in Syria all knew and cited this Epistle. The Latin Church of Africa accepted it, as we can see from a few quotations in Tertullian († 218) and a greater number in the writings of Cyprian († 258). In the Alexandrian Church it is often quoted by both Clement († 218) and Origen († 254); while for Gaul we have the testimony of the Church of Vienne in the touching letter sent by the Christians there to their "brethren in Asia and Phrygia" (177), and of Irenæus, who was Bishop of Lyons shortly afterwards, and who, coming from Asia to fill that see, is a witness both for the East and the West. From the Christian Church of the early centuries it is hardly possible to produce stronger attestation.

But although so abundantly vouched for in ancient days, the Epistle has not been exempt from the assaults of modern criticism. Primitive Christendom regarded St. Peter, St. John, and St. Paul as heralds of one and the same Gospel, founded on the same promises, strengthened by the same faith. They were at one in what they taught and what they opposed. But some modern thinkers, taking as a thesis that the Gospel as set forth by the Apostle of the Circumcision differed widely from the doctrines of St. Paul, have proceeded to make an eclectic Christian literature, out of which the First Epistle of St. Peter has been rejected. Its language is too much in harmony with accepted writings of St. Paul. It can only have been compiled by some later hand to promote the opinion that there was no discord between the teachings of the first Christian preachers. Moreover, it is inconceivable, they consider, that a letter should be addressed by St. Peter to the Christians in those very lands where the missionary labours of St. Paul had been specially exerted, where the converts were in a peculiar sense his "little children."

Now in this first letter of St. Peter there is unquestionably much that corresponds in tone with the Epistle to the Romans, especially with the twelfth and thirteenth

chapters. In both letters Christians are exhorted to offer their bodies as spiritual sacrifices, to shun conformity with the world, to study to be sober in mind, and to use duly all the gifts which they possess; the same unfeigned love of the brethren is inculcated, the same patience under suffering. Christians are not to retaliate, but to overcome evil with good; they are to be in subjection to all lawful authority, and this for conscience' sake; to avoid all excesses, rioting, drunkenness, chambering, and wantonness, and to be ever looking forward to the coming of the Lord.

In like manner there will be found numerous passages in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians which in spirit and tone greatly resemble the words of St. Peter. At the very outset St. Paul addresses his converts as "chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blemish before Him in love"; tells them that they were "foreordained unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on them in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 3–6). Similarly St. Peter writes to "the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," and presently he adds that "according to God's great mercy they were begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (i. 1–3). In both epistles there is the same teaching, the same election in love, the same sonship, the same progress in holiness, the same free gift through Jesus Christ. But in neither is there a word that can be taken to militate against independent authorship. And the same remark applies to all the resemblances which exist between the two epistles in the exhortations to servants, wives, and husbands; in the commendations of humility, pity, courtesy; in the entreaties to the believers to gird up the loins of the mind and to lay aside all malice and hatred; in those passages which speak of them as strangers and pilgrims, as called from darkness to light, as being a spiritual house, built upon Christ as the head corner-stone. Of all these exhortations undoubted parallels are to be found; but they are only evidence of the common character which would pervade all the teaching of the apostolic missionaries where the people addressed were the same, the times not far apart, and the dangers and temptations known alike to all the writers. Hence parallels to St. Peter may be found in St. James too, but they are no proof that the one Apostle (or, as some critics say, some one writing under his name) copied from the other.

Nor is it easy to see reason why St. Peter might not be expected to write a letter to the congregations formed first by St. Paul. No Evangelist or Apostle could publish the message of the Gospel—that is, the life and works—of Christ without telling of His chosen followers; and amongst them, if our Gospels be a true picture, St. Peter must ever have filled a prominent place. The Churches in Asia assuredly had heard much of him, and in a time of persecution or impending trial nothing could be more fit than that the Apostle who had been most prominent amid Christ's companions should write from Babylon or from Rome, it may be, where the signs of the times would proclaim most clearly the sufferings for which the Christian inhabitants of the provinces should be prepared, to encourage the believers in Asia to steadfastness and to remind them that the same afflictions were being accomplished in their brethren that were elsewhere in the world.

This was likely enough, even had St. Peter never visited the districts to which his letter was addressed. But we seem to find traces of him in Corinth (1 Cor. ix. 5; *cf.* also xv. 5), and he certainly was not unknown by name to the Christians of that city.

And if so, why need we question his journeying through Asia Minor? And he was aware of the labours of his fellow-apostle. From personal intercourse and discussion, especially in connection with the council at Jerusalem, he would be sure that they were of one mind. It may be that he had learnt something of St. Paul's letters to the Churches. Under such circumstances it is not foreign to St. Peter's character, nay rather quite in harmony with it, that he should fulfil the Lord's command to "strengthen the brethren"; that he should send them an earnest assurance that, spite of sufferings and trials, this was the true grace of God, in which they should rejoice to stand.

But there are internal tokens in the Epistle which seem more powerful evidence of its genuineness than anything else. The writer calls himself "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ"; and he declares his personality by touches and allusions which a forger would never have fabricated. Thus he says, "All of you *gird yourselves* with humility, to serve one another" (v. 5). The verb which he employs here indicates a sort of girding about with some towel or apron, which a slave put on for doing some menial service. It is almost impossible that the writer had not in his thoughts the act of Christ when He gave His great lesson of humility; "If I have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet."

So, too, the Master's exhortation, "Feed My sheep," "Feed My lambs," comes to mind as we read, "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly" (v. 2). And St. Peter's own words spoken in the house of Cornelius are reproduced when the Father is declared to be One "who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to each man's work" (i. 17).

But it is in the allusions to Christ's passion and resurrection, those events which marked the deep fall and the rising again of St. Peter, that the personality of the Apostle becomes most manifest. He has been himself "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (v. 1). He can speak as an eye-witness of the Lord's death in the flesh (iii. 18; iv. 1) and His quickening in the spirit; can exhort men to courage because they are partakers of the sufferings of Christ (iv. 13). Who does not feel that the writer of the words, "Let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator" (iv. 19), is thinking of the scene on the cross, of the Saviour's finished work, of the dying cry, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit?"

Perhaps the most striking instance of this peculiarity, this tendency to dwell on the events of the Passion, is found in ii. 19–24. Speaking to servants, he argues, "What glory is it if when ye sin and *are buffeted* for it ye shall take it patiently?" And having used the word by which the Evangelists describe (Matt. xxvi. 67; Mark xiv. 65) the insults heaped upon the Lord at His trial, the writer is carried away in mind to the whole scene: "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously; in His own self He bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed." And in the last clause especially we see traces of one who had been present through the painful history. The word rendered "stripes" means "bruises" or "weals," such as come from savage blows, and is just the word which would occur to one who had seen the bruised body taken down from the cross, but hardly to any one else.

Again, the writer makes you feel without quoting that he has the words of Jesus

constantly in his mind. Thus in the exhortation, "Cast all your anxiety upon God, for He careth for you" (v. 7); when he says, "If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye" (iv. 14), or "Be sober; be vigilant" (v. 8), or "Be sober unto prayer" (iv. 7), or commends "not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but contrariwise blessing" (iii. 9), at each of the sentences—and the letter abounds with examples—there rise in the reader's mind some similar words of Christ, making him feel that he is perusing a writing of one to whom the Lord's language was abundantly familiar.

With the marks of personal character and associations meeting us constantly, and with the unbroken consensus of antiquity in favour of St. Peter's authorship, we shall not lightly allow speculations about hypothetical differences between the teaching of the Apostles of the Gentiles and of the circumcision to disturb our acceptance of this letter for what it proclaims itself to be: the work of the Apostle St. Peter, of one who was himself a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

Of the Second Epistle the whole history is very different. It appears to have been little known in the early Church, and is included by Eusebius (330) among the *ἀντιλεγόμενα*, "books to which objection was raised" as late as his day. It is true that in Clement of Rome there is a sentence (Ep. i. chap. xi.) which many have accepted as containing a clear allusion to the passage (2 Peter ii. 6, 7) which speaks of Lot and the destruction of Sodom. And if this could be demonstrated with certainty, it would be most valuable testimony. It would prove the Epistle to have been accepted at a very early date and by the important Church in Rome. But we have so far to go before we come upon any other notice that the silence makes us doubtful of the evidence from Clement. Moreover, such other witness as we do find is not of a very direct character. Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, about 256 A. D., in a letter of which a Latin version is preserved among the writings of Cyprian, uses words which probably indicate that he knew both the epistles of St. Peter; but he gives no quotation. The Second Epistle was no doubt meant for the same readers as the First; and that is addressed, among others, to the Christians of Cappadocia, so that there is no improbability in supposing the letter to have been early known there. Theophilus of Antioch (170) uses the comparison of the word to a lamp shining in a dark place in such a way as to give the impression that he knew the Epistle, and a similar possible reference is found in the writings of Ephraem Syrus (†378). Palladius (400), who was a friend of Chrysostom, and wrote at Rome, makes a clear allusion to 2 Peter; and in the Apology of Melito, Bishop of Sardis, there is a passage concerning the destruction of the world by fire at the last day which is strikingly parallel to 2 Peter iii. 5–7, and can hardly have been written without a knowledge of the Epistle.

This is a very small amount of early evidence, and among the more voluminous writers of the first three centuries we find no mention of the Epistle. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that by Eusebius it is classed among the works of less acceptance. But the same fate befell larger and more important writings than this Epistle. The Apocalypse and the Epistle to the Hebrews stand in the same list in Eusebius. And St. Peter's second letter has not the same general interest as the first, and therefore is likely to have been less widely circulated; and this is all that Eusebius's classification means. The books were not generally received because there was a less general knowledge of their existence and history.

But when the Church entered on the settlement of the New Testament Canon at the Council of Laodicæa (366), the Second Epistle of St. Peter was accepted; and no doubt there was evidence then before the assembled Fathers which time has now destroyed. Yet in the letter itself there are points which no doubt weighed with them, and which are patent to us as they were then. The writer claims to be St. Peter, an Apostle and the writer of a previous epistle. He speaks solemnly of his death as near at hand; and still more solemn, when viewed as evidence, is the declaration that he had been one of the witnesses of Christ's transfiguration. It is almost inconceivable that a forger, writing to warn against false teachers, writing in the interest of truth, should have thus deliberately assumed a name and experience to which he had no claim. These statements must have influenced the opinion of the Laodicæan Council, and we know that they did not act on light evidence; they did not on the strength of a name accept into their canon, but excluded, works at the time widely circulated and passing for histories or letters of some of the Apostles.

Moreover, when we consider the kind of teaching against which St. Peter's epistle is directed, it is difficult to place it anywhere except at about the same date as St. Paul's epistles. It speaks of the "fables" (*μῦθοι*, i. 16), the groundless, baseless fancies, of the early heretics, in the same manner which we find in St. Paul (*cf.* 1 Tim. i. 4; iv. 7). The same greed and covetousness (*πλεονεξία*) is noted by both the Apostles in the teachers against whom their voice is raised (*cf.* 2 Peter ii. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 5; Titus i. 11). There are the same beguiling promises of liberty (*cf.* 2 Peter ii. 19; 1 Cor. x. 29; Gal. v. 13), a perversion of the freedom of which St. Paul speaks so much to the Galatian converts; and just as he warns against "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty" (Gal. ii. 4). so does St. Peter condemn those "who privily bring in heresies of destruction" (2 Peter ii. 1). With so many common features in the two pictures, we can scarcely be wrong in referring them to the same times. No other period in early Church history suits the language of St. Peter so well as the few years before his martyrdom. The First Epistle may be dated eight or ten years earlier.

There is another morsel of evidence from the New Testament which is worth notice. St. Peter describes the heretics against whom he writes as following the error of Balaam the son of Beor, and notes this among the tokens of their covetousness. In the Apocalypse (ii. 14, 15) the same people are described, and in the same terms, but with an addition. They have received a definite name, and St. John terms them several times over "the Nicolaitanes." Such a distinctive title marks a later date than St. Peter's descriptive one, which is drawn from the Old Testament. The Apocalypse was assuredly written before the destruction of Jerusalem. If then we may take the mention of the Nicolaitanes by that designation as an indication of a later date than 2 Peter, we are again brought to the time to which we have already referred the Epistle: some time between 68 and 70 A. D.

Considerable discussion has arisen about the passages in 2 Peter which are like the language of St. Jude. There can be no doubt that either one Apostle copied the words of the other, or that both drew from a common original. But this point, in whatever way it be settled, need not militate against St. Peter's authorship. It is nothing unworthy of the Apostle, if he find to his hand the words of a fellow-teacher which will serve his need, to use what he finds. Nay, the letter itself tells us that he was prepared to do this. For he refers his readers (iii. 15) to the writings of St. Paul for support of his own exhortations. St. Peter's seems, however, to be the earlier of

the two epistles, if we compare his words, "There *shall be* false teachers, who *shall bring* in heresies of destruction," etc. (ii. 1), with St. Jude, who speaks of these misleading teachers as already existent and active: "There *are certain men crept in* unawares"; "*These are* spots now existing in the feasts of charity"; "*They are feasting among the brethren* without fear." And St. Jude seems clearly to be alluding to St. Peter's words (2 Peter iii. 3) when he says, "Remember ye the words which were spoken before of the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that they told you there should be *mockers*" (ἐμπαῖκται) "in the last time." This word for "mockers" is found only in St. Peter's epistle. It is nowhere else in the New Testament; and while St. Peter's words are a direct utterance, St. Jude's are a quotation.

But there are two or three features of resemblance between the style of St. Peter's First Epistle and the Second which support strongly the genuineness of the latter. The First Epistle has a large proportion of words found nowhere else in the New Testament. There are a score of such words in this short composition. Now the Second Epistle presents us with the same peculiarity in rather larger abundance. There are twenty-four words there which appear in no other New Testament writing. It seems to have been a peculiarity of the writer of both letters to use somewhat uncommon and striking words. Now take the Second Epistle to have been the work of an imitator. He would be sure to notice such a characteristic, and sure also to repeat, for the sake of connection, some distinctive expressions of the first letter in the second. But the case is much otherwise. There is the same abundance of unusual words in both epistles, but not a single repetition; the same peculiarity is manifest, but displays itself in entirely new material. This is an index of authorship, not of imitation.

There are one or two differences between the two epistles which in their way are of equal interest. The first letter was one of encouragement and consolation; the second is full of warning. Hence, though the coming of the Lord is dwelt on alike in the two, in the former it is set forth as a *revelation* (1 Peter i. 5), as a day for which believers were looking, and in which their hopes would be realised, and their afflictions at an end; in the second letter the same event is called a coming (παρουσία,) an appearing, a presence, but one which will usher in the great and terrible day of the Lord, and be the prelude of judgment to them that have fallen away.

Again, the sufferings of Christ are a theme much dwelt on in the First Epistle, where they are pointed to as the lot which Christians are to expect, and the Lord is the pattern which they are to imitate; in the Second they are hardly noticed. But was there not a cause for such reticence? Was it a time to urge on men the imitation of Christ when the danger was great that they would deny Him altogether?

No doubt many other points of evidence, which are lost to us, were presented to the Fathers of the Laodicæan Council, and with the result that the Second Epistle of St. Peter was received into the Canon side by side with the First. But the three centuries of want of acknowledgment have left their mark on its subsequent history, and many earnest minds have treated it as of less authority than other more accepted portions of the New Testament. Among these is Luther, who speaks of the First Epistle as one of the noblest in the New Testament, but is doutful about the claims of the Second. Similar was the judgment of Erasmus and of Calvin.

We cannot, however, go back to the evidence produced at Laodicæa. Time has swept that away, but, while doing so, has left us the result thereof; and the accept

ance of the Epistle by the Fathers there assembled will be judged by most men to stand in lieu of the evidence. No court of law would permit a decision so authenticated and of such standing to be disturbed or overruled.

And we ourselves can observe some points still which draw to the same conclusion. The letter harmonises in tone with the other New Testament writings, and some of its linguistic peculiarities are strikingly in accord with the universally accepted letter of St. Peter. We are therefore not unwilling, though we have not the early testimony which we could desire, and though the primitive Church held its genuineness for doubtful, to believe that ere this second letter was classed with the other New Testament writings these doubts were cleared away, and would be cleared away for us could we hear all the evidence tendered before those who fixed the contents of the Canon.

The discovery recently in Egypt of some fragments of the Gospel and Apocalypse once current under the name of St. Peter has drawn attention once more to the genuineness and authenticity of the Second Epistle in our Canon. But the difference in character between it and these apocryphal documents is very great. The Gospel ascribed to Peter seems to have been written by some one who held the opinion, current among the early heretics, that the Incarnation was unreal, and that the Divine in Christ Jesus had no participation in the sufferings at the Crucifixion. Hence our Lord is represented as having no sense of pain at that time. He is said to have been deserted by His "power" in the moment of death. The stature of the angels at the Resurrection is represented as very great, but that of the risen Christ much greater. To these peculiar features may be added the response made by the cross to a voice which was heard from heaven, the cross having followed the risen Christ from the tomb. In the fragments of the Apocalypse we have a description of the torments of the wicked utterly foreign to the character of the New Testament writings, in which the veil of the unseen world is rarely withdrawn. The circumstance and detail given in the apocryphal fragment to the punishments of sinners mark it as the parent of those mediæval legends of which the "Visions of Furseus" and "St. Patrick's Purgatory" afford well-known examples.

The study of these fragments, of which the Gospel may be dated about 170 A. D., sends us back to the contemplation of the Second Epistle of St. Peter more conscious than before at what a very early date errors, both of history and doctrine, were promulgated among the Christian societies, while at the same time we are impressed more strongly with the sense that the accord of the Second Epistle with Gospel history, where it is alluded to, as well as the simplicity of Christian doctrine which it enforces, mark it as not unworthy of that place in the Canon which was accorded to it in the very earliest councils which dealt with the contents of New Testament Scripture.

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THE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER.

BY THE REV. J. RAWSON LUMBY, D. D.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.

CHAPTER I.

THE WORK OF THE TRINITY IN MAN'S ELECTION AND SALVATION.

1 Peter i. 1, 2.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32), was the Lord's injunction to St. Peter, of which this Epistle may be considered as a part fulfilment. So richly stored is it with counsel, warning, and consolation that Luther, the conflicts of whose life will bear some comparison with the trials of these Asian converts, calls it one of the most precious portions of the New Testament Scriptures. Its value is further enhanced because in so many places the Apostle reverts in thought or word to his own life-history, and draws his teaching from the rich stream of personal experience. Even the name which he sets at the head of the letter had its lesson in connection with Jesus. Most Jews took a second name for profaner use in their commerce with the heathen; but to Simon, the son of Jonas, Peter must have been a specially sacred name, must have served as a watchword both to himself and to all others who had learnt the story of its bestowal and the meaning which was bound up with it.

That a letter by St. Peter should be, as this is, of a very practical character is no more than we might expect from what we know of the Apostle from the Gospels. Prompt in word and action, ever the spokesman of the twelve, he seems made for a guide and leader of men. What perhaps we should not have expected is the very definite doctrinal language with which the Epistle opens. Nowhere in the writings either of St. Paul or St. John do we find more full or more instructive teaching concerning the Holy Trinity. And herein St. Peter has been guided to choose the only order which tends to edification. Sound lessons for Christian life must be grounded upon a right faith, and a brother can afford no strength to his brethren unless first of all he point them clearly to the source whence both his strength and theirs must come.

Of the previous intercourse between St. Peter and those to whom he writes we can only judge from the Epistle itself. The Apostle's name disappears from New Testament history after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv.), but we feel sure his labours did not cease then; and though the first message of Christianity may have been brought to these Asiatic provinces by St. Paul, the allusions which St. Peter makes to the trials of the converts are such as seem impossible had he not himself laboured among them. The frequent reminders, the special warnings, could come only from one who knew their circumstances very intimately. Allusions to the former lusts indulged in in their days of ignorance, to the reproaches which they now have to suffer from their heathen neighbours, to their going astray like lost sheep, are a few of the unmistakable evidences of personal knowledge.

He writes to them as "sojourners of the dispersion." In the minds of the Jews this name would wake up sad memories of their past history. It told of that great break in the national unity which was made by the tarrying in Babylon of so many of the people at the time of the return, then of those painful periods in later days when their nation, as the vassal now of Persia, now of Greece, of Egypt, of Syria, and of Rome, was made the sport of the world-powers as they rose and fell, times in which Israel could see few tokens of the Divine favour, could hear no voice of the prophet to encourage or to guide. But now to those who had accepted the Gospel of Christ those dark years would be seen to have been in no wise barren of blessing and of profit. The scattered Jews had carried much of their faith abroad among the nations; schools of religious teaching had arisen; the chosen people in their dispersion had adopted the language best known among the other nations; and thus the outcome of those sorrowful times had been a preparation for the Gospel. Proselytes had been made in the countries of their exile, and a wider field opened for the Christian harvest. The dispersion of Israel had been made, as it were, a bridge over which the grace of God passed for publishing the glad tidings of the Gospel, and to gather Jew and Gentile alike into the fold of Christ.

But it would be a mistake to restrict the word "dispersion" here to the Jewish converts. The Apostle speaks more than once in his letter to those who had never been Jews, to men who (i. 14) had been fashioned according to their former lusts in ignorance; who had in times past (ii. 10) no share with God's people; who (iv. 13) had wrought the will of the Gentiles, walking in lasciviousness, lusts, and abominable idolatries. To these too since their conversion the name "dispersion" might be fitly applied. They were but a few here and there among the multitudes of heathendom. And their acceptance of the faith of Jesus must have given to their lives a different aspect. It must often be so with the faithful. Their life is from the world apart. It must have been specially thus with these Christians in Asia. They could be verily only strangers and sojourners; their true home could never be made among their heathen surroundings. As the Jew in old days sighed for Jerusalem, so their hope was centred on a Jerusalem above.

Yet God had a mission for them in the world. This is a special portion of St. Peter's message. As the scattered Jews of old had opened a door for the spreading of the Gospel, so the Christians of the dispersion were to be its witnesses. Their election had made them a peculiar people; but it was that they might show forth the praises of Him who had called them

out of darkness into His marvellous light, and that by their good works the heathen might be won to glorify God when in His own time He should visit them too with the day-star from on high.

But beside the words which speak of severance and pilgrimage, the Apostle uses one of a different character. With that large charity and hope which is stamped upon the whole of the New Testament, he calls these scattered Christian converts the elect of God. Just as St. Paul so often includes whole Churches, even though he find in them many things to blame and to reprove, under the title of "saints" or "called to be saints," so it is here. And the sense of their election is intended to be a mighty power. It is to bind them wherever they may be scattered into one communion in Christ Jesus. Through the world they are dispersed, but in Christ they constitute a great unity. And the sense of this is to lift their hearts above any sorrowing for their isolation in the world. For through Christ they have (i. 4) an inheritance, a home, a claim of sonship; and their salvation is ready to be revealed in the last time.

Later generations have witnessed much unprofitable controversy round this word "election." Some men have seen nothing else in the Bible, while others have hardly acknowledged it to be there at all. Then some have laboured to reconcile to their understandings the two truths of God's sovereignty and the freedom of the human will, not content to believe that in God's economy there may be things beyond their measure. St. Peter, like the other New Testament writers, enters on no such discussions. Whether amid the full assurance of newly quickened faith the first Christians found no room for intellectual difficulties, or whether the spirit within them led them to feel that such questions must ever be insoluble, we cannot know; but it is instructive to note that the Scripture does not raise them. They are the growth of later days, of times when Christianity was widespread, when men had lost the feeling that they were strangers and pilgrims of the dispersion, and were no longer prepared to welcome, with St. Peter and St. Paul, every Christian brother into the number of God's chosen ones, counting them as those who had been called to be saints.

Of the election of believers the Apostle here speaks in its origin, its progress, and its consummation. He views it as a process which must extend through the whole life, and connects its various stages with the Three Persons of the Trinity. But, with the same practical instinct which has already been noticed, he enters on no statements about the nature of the Godhead in itself; he neither discusses what may be known of God, nor how the knowledge is to be obtained. He says no word to intimate that the mention of three Persons may be difficult to understand in co-relation to the unity of the Godhead. Such inquiries exercise the mind, but can hardly further, what was St. Peter's special aim, the edification and comfort of the soul. That result comes from the inward experience of what each Person of the Godhead is to us, and on this the Apostle has a lesson. He makes plain for us the share which Father, Son, and Spirit bear in the work of human salvation. Christians, he teaches us, are elect, chosen to be saints, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; the election is maintained when their lives are constantly hallowed by the influence of the Holy Ghost; while in Christ they have not only an example of perfect obedience after which they must strive, but a Redeemer whose blood can cleanse them from all the sins from which the most earnest strivings will not set them free. Of these things the Christian soul can have experience. It is thus that the life of the elect believer begins, grows, and is perfected.

It begins "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Here St. Peter may be his own interpreter. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost he employs the same word, "foreknowledge," and he is the only one who uses it in the New Testament. There (Acts ii. 23) he says that Christ was delivered up to be crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. And on the same subject in this very chapter (i. 20) he speaks of Jesus as foreknown, as a Lamb without spot and blemish before the foundation of the world. In these passages we are carried back beyond the ages into the Divine council-chamber, and we find the whole course of human history naked and open before the eyes of the All-seeing. God knew even then what the history of the human race would be, saw that sin would find an entrance into the world, and that a sacrifice would be needed, if sinners were to be redeemed. Yet He called the world and its tenants into being, and provided the ransom in the person of His only Son. Why this was well-pleasing unto Him it is not ours to discuss; whether for the uplifting of humanity by providing an opportunity for moral obedience or for the greater manifestation of His infinite love. But whatever else is mysterious, one thing is plain: the counsel of the Holy One is seen to be a counsel of mercy and of love; and though its operation may not seldom be perplexing to our finite powers, the Apostle teaches us that this determination from all eternity was made with infinite tenderness. He tells us it was the ordinance of our Father. The beginning and the end thereof are hidden from us. We learn only a fragment of His dealings during the brief period of a human life. But men may rest content with the proof of their election in the sound of the Gospel message which they hear. They who are thus called may count themselves for chosen. This call is the Divine testimony that God is choosing them. Concerning His intention towards others who may seem to have passed away without hearing of His love, or who are living as though no loving message of glad tidings had ever been proclaimed, we must rest in ignorance, only assured that the Eternal God is as truly their Father as we know Him to be ours.

To limited human knowledge the course of the world has ever been, must ever be, full of darkness and perplexities. Men gaze upon it as they do upon the wrong side of a piece of tapestry as it is woven. To such observers the pattern is always obscure, many a time quite unintelligible. For full knowledge we have to wait to the end. Then the web will be reversed. God's designs and their working comprehended; we shall know even as we are known, and, with hearts and voices tuned to praise, shall cry, "He hath done all things well." Of such a revelation the poet (Shelley, "Adonais," Stanza lii.) sings, a revelation of the all-seeing, un-

changing Jehovah and of the glorious enlightenment that shall be in His presence:—

"The one remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly:
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until death tramples it to fragments."

In this wise would St. Peter have us think of the grace of election. It has its beginning from our Father; its fulfilment will also be with Him. The measure and the manner of its bestowal are according to His foreknowledge, according to the same foreknowledge which provided in Christ an atonement for sin, which appointed Him to die, and that not for some sinners only, but for the sins of the whole world.

But in the call according to God's foreknowledge the believer is not perfected. He must live worthily of his calling. And as his election at the first is of God, so the power to hold it fast is a Divine gift. He who would rejoice over God's election must feel and constantly foster within himself the "sanctification of the Spirit." To be made holy is his great need. This demands a life of progress, of renewal, a daily endeavour to restore the image which was lost at the Fall. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is a fundamental precept of both Old and New Testaments; and it is a continual admonition, speaking unto Christians that they go forward. Under the Law the lesson was enforced by external symbols. Holy ground, holy days, holy offices, kept men alive to the need of preparation, of purification, before they could be fit to draw near unto God or for God to draw near unto them.

For thus there is opened a more excellent way: the inward, spiritual cleansing of the heart. Christ has gone away where He was before, and sends down to His servants the Holy Ghost, who bestows power that the election of the Father may be made sure. Hence we can understand those frequent exhortations in the epistles, "Walk in the Spirit"; "Live in the Spirit"; "Quench not the Spirit." The Christian life is a struggle. The flesh is ever striving for the mastery. This enemy the believer must do to death. And as aforetime, so now, sanctification begins with purification. Christ sanctifies His Church, those whom He has called to Him out of the world; and the manner is by cleansing them through the washing of water with the word. Here we gladly think of that sacrament which He ordained for admission into the Church as the beginning of his Divine operation, as the wonted entrance of the Holy Ghost for His work of purifying. But that work must be continued. He is called "holy" because He makes men holy by His abode with them. And Christ has described for us how this is brought to pass. "He shall take of Mine," says our Lord, "and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine" (John xvi. 14, 15). Every good gift, which the Father who calls men hath, the Spirit is sent to impart. The words speak of the gradual manner of its bestowal; all things may be given, but they are given little by little, as men can or are fit to receive them. He shall take a portion of what is Mine, is the literal meaning of the Evangelist's phrase (John xvi. 15). The plural phrase, *πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ πατήρ*, marks the boundless supply, the singular, *ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήψεται*, the Spirit's choice of such a portion therefrom as best suits the receiver's needs and powers. In this wise men may become gradually conformed to the image of Christ, grow more and more like Him day by day. More and more will they drink in of the whole truth, and more and more will they be sanctified.

In this daily enlightenment must God's faithful ones live, a life whose atmosphere is the hallowing influence of the Holy Ghost. But it is to be no mere life of receptivity, with no effort of their own. The Apostle makes this clear elsewhere, when he says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (iii. 15)—make them fit abodes for His Spirit to dwell in; lead your lives in holy conversation, that the house may be swept and garnished, and you be vessels sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

Thus chosen by the Father and led onward by the Spirit, the Christian is brought ever nearer to the full purpose of his calling: "unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The Christ-pattern which the Spirit sets before men is in no feature more striking than in its perfect obedience. The prophetic announcement of this submission sounds down to us from the Psalms: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God"; and the incarnate Son declares of Himself, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent He, and to finish His work": and even in the hour of His supreme agony His word is still, "Father, not My will, but Thine, be done." Specially solemn, almost startling, is the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews when he says of Jesus that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," and that "it became the Father, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make Christ, the Captain of their salvation, perfect through suffering." With the Lord as an example, obedience is made the noblest, the New Testament form of sacrifice.

But when such obedience was connected with the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, the Jews among St. Peter's converts must have been carried in thought to that scene described in Exod. xxiv. There, through Moses as a mediator, we read of God's law being made known to Israel, and the people with one voice promised obedience: "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Then followed a sacrifice; and Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words"; and the Lord drew nigh unto His people, and the sight of the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai was like devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel.

For Christians there is a Mediator of a better covenant. We are not come unto the mount that burned with fire, but unto Mount Zion (Heb. xii. 18-22). In that other sacrament of His own institution, our Lord makes us partakers of the benefits of His Passion. With His own blood He constantly maketh His people pure, fitting them to appear in the presence of the Father. There at length the purpose of their election shall be complete in fulness of joy in the sight of Him who chose them before the foundation of the world.

Thus does the Apostle set forth his practical, profitable lessons on the work of the Trinity in

man's election and salvation; and he concludes them with a benediction part of which is very frequent in the letters of St. Paul: "Grace to you and peace." The early preachers felt that these two blessings travelled hand in hand, and comprised everything which a believer could need: God's favour and the happiness which is its fruit. Grace is the nurture of the Christian life; peace is its character. These strangers of the dispersion had been made partakers of the Divine grace. This very letter was one gift more, the consolation of which we can well conceive. But St. Peter models his benediction to be a fitting sequel to his previous teaching. "Grace," he says, "to you and peace be multiplied." The verb "be multiplied" is only used by him here and in the Second Epistle, and by St. Jude, whose letter has so much in common with St. Peter's.

In this prayer the same thought is with him as when he spake of the stages of the Christian election. There must ever be growth as the sign of life. Let them hold fast the grace already received, and more would be bestowed. Grace for grace is God's rule of giving, new store for what has been rightly used. This one word of his prayer would say to them, Seek constantly greater sanctification, more holiness, from the Spirit; yield your will to God in imitation of Jesus, who sanctified Himself that His servants might be sanctified. Then, though you be strangers of the dispersion, though the world will have none of you, you shall be kept in perfect peace, and feel sure that you can trust His words who says to His warfaring servants, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

CHAPTER II.

THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

1 Peter i. 3-9.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," words true of all this letter, but of no part more true than of the thanksgiving with which it opens. The Apostle recalls those dark three days in which the life he bore was worse than death. His vaunted fidelity had been put to the proof, and had failed in the trial; his denial had barred the approach to the Master whom he had disowned. The crucifixion of Jesus had followed close upon His arrest, and Peter's bitter tears of penitence could avail nothing. He to whom they might have appealed was lying in the grave. The Apostle's repentant weeping saved him from a Judas-like despair, but dreary must have been the desolation of his soul until the Easter morning's message told him that Jesus was alive again.

We can understand the fervency of his thanksgiving: "Blessed be God, which hath begotten us again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." No better image than the gift of a new life could he find to describe the restoration that came with the words of the angel from the empty tomb, "He is risen; go your way: tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee." The Lord forgave His sinning, sorrowing servant, and through this forgiveness he lived again, and bears printed for ever on his heart the memory of that life-giving. The very form of his phrase in this verse is an echo from the resurrection morning. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Only in a few passages resembling this in St. Paul's epistles * is God called "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." But Peter is mindful of the Lord's own words to Mary, "Go unto My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John xx. 17); and now that he is made one of Christ's heralds, the feeder of His sheep, he publishes the same message which was the source of his own highest joy, and which he would make a joy for them likewise. That God is called theirs, even as He is Christ's, is an earnest that Jesus has made them His brethren indeed. To the doctrine of their election according to the foreknowledge of the Father he now adds the further grace which couples the Fatherhood of God with the brotherhood of Christ.

That these gifts are purely of God's grace he also implies: "He begat us again." Just as in natural birth the child is utterly of the will of the parents, so is it in the spiritual new birth. "According to God's great mercy" we are born again and made heirs of all the consequent blessings. This passage from death unto life is rich, in the first place, in immediate comfort. Witness the rejoicing amidst his grief which St. Peter experienced when he could cry to the Master, "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee." But the new life looks for ever onward. It will be unbroken through eternity. Here we may taste the joy of our calling, may learn something of the Father's love, of the Saviour's grace, of the Spirit's help; but our best expectations centre ever in the future. The Apostle terms these expectations a lively, or rather a living, hope. The Christian's hope is living because Christ is alive again from the dead. It springs with ever-renewed life from that rent tomb. The grave is no longer a terminus. Life and hope endure beyond it. And more than this, there is a fresh principle of vitality infused into the soul of the new-born child of God. The Spirit, the Life-giver, has made His abode there; and death is swallowed up of victory.

In continuing his description of the living hope of the believer, the Apostle keeps in mind his simile of Fatherhood and sonship, and gives to the hope the further title of an inheritance. As sons of Adam, men are heirs from their birth, but only to the sad consequences of the primal transgression. Slaves they are, and not free men, as that other law in their members gives them daily proof. But in the resurrection of Jesus the agonised cry of St. Paul, "Who shall deliver me?" (Rom. vii. 24), has found its answer. Christians are begotten again, not to defeat and despair, but to a hope which is eternal, to an inheritance which will endure beyond the grave. And as in their spiritual growth they are ever aspiring to an ideal above and beyond them, in respect to the saintly inheritance they have a like experience. They begin to grasp it now in part, and have even here a precious earnest of the larger blessedness; they are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise and marked as the redeemed of God's own possession (Eph. i. 13, 14). But that which shall

* 2 Cor. i. 3, xi. 31; Eph. i. 3, with which may be compared Rom. xvi. 6.

be is rich with an exceeding wealth of glory; Christ keeps the good wine of His grace to the last.

How beggared earthly speech appears when we essay by it to picture the glory that shall be revealed for us! The inheritance of the Christian's hope demands for its description those unspeakable words which St. Paul heard in paradise, but could not utter. The tongues of men are constrained to fall back upon negatives. What it will be we cannot express. We only know some evils from which it will be free. It shall be incorruptible, like the God and Father (Rom. i. 23) who bestows it. Eternal, it shall contain within it no seed of decay, nothing which can cause it to perish. Neither shall it be subject to injury from without. It shall be undefiled, for we are to share it with our elder Brother, our High-priest (Heb. vii. 26), who is now made higher than the heavens. Earthly possessions are often sullied, now by the way they are attained, now by the way they are used. Neither spot nor blemish shall tarnish the beauty of the heavenly inheritance. It shall never fade away. It is amaranthine, like the crown of glory (1 Peter v. 4) which the chief Shepherd shall bestow at His appearing; it is as the unwithering flowers of paradise.

Nor are these the only things which make the heavenly to differ from the earthly inheritance. In this life, ere a son can succeed to heirship, the parent through whom it is derived must have passed away; while the many heirs to an earthly estate diminish, as their number increases, the shares of all the rest. From such conditions the Christian's future is free. His Father is the Eternal God, his inheritance the inexhaustible bounty of heaven. Each and all who share therein will find an increase of joy as the number grows of those who claim this eternal Fatherhood, and with it a place in the Father's home.

St. Peter adds another feature which gives further assurance to the believer's hope. The inheritance is reserved. Concerning it there can be no thought of dwindling or decay. It is where neither rust nor moth can corrupt, and where not even the archthief Satan himself can break through to steal. There needs no preservation of the incorruptible and undefiled, but it is especially kept for those for whom it is prepared. He who has gone before to make it ready said, "I go to prepare it for you." The Apostle has made choice of his preposition advisedly. He says, *εἰς ὑμᾶς*—on your behalf; for your own possession. The inheritance is where Christ has gone before us, in heaven, of which we can best think, as Himself hath taught us, as the place "where He was before" (John vi. 62), the Father's house, in which are many mansions. There it is in store, till we are made ready for it.

For the present life is only a preparation-time. Ere we are ready to depart we must pass through a probation. God suffers His beloved ones to be chastened, but He sends with the trial the means of rescue. They are guarded. The word which St. Peter here uses is one applicable to a military guard, such as would be needed in the country of an enemy. God sees what we stand in need of. For we are still in the territory of the prince of this world. But mark the abundant protection: "by the power of God through faith." The Apostle's language sets our guardianship forth under a double aspect. The Christian is "in" (*ἐν*) "the power of God." Here is the strength of our wardship. Under such care the believer is enabled to walk amid the trials of the world unscathed. Yet the Divine shield around him is not made effective unless he do his part also. Through faith the shelter becomes impregnable. The Christian goes forward with full assurance, his eyes fixed on the goal of duty which his Master has set before him, and, heedless of assailants, perseveres in the struggles which beset him. Then, even in the fiercest fires of trial, he beholds by his side the Son of God, and hears the voice, "It is I; be not afraid."

Thus to the faithful warfarer the victory is sure. And to this certainty St. Peter points as he continues, and calls the heavenly inheritance a salvation. This will be the consummation. "Sursum corda" is the believer's constant watchword. The completed bliss will not be attained here. But when the veil is lifted which separates this life from the next, it is ready to be manifested and to ravish the sight with its glory. The sense of this salvation ready to be revealed nerves the heart for every conflict. By faith weakness grows mighty. Thus comes to pass the paradox of the Christian life, which none but the faithful can comprehend: "When I am weak, then I am strong"; "I can do all things through Christ, that giveth me power."

Hence comes the wondrous spectacle, which St. Peter was contemplating, and which amazed the heathen world, exceeding joy in the midst of sufferings. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice," he says. Some have thought him to be referring to a mental realisation of the last time, about which he has just spoken—a realisation so vivid to the faith of these converts that they could exult in the prospect as though it had already arrived. And this exposition is countenanced in some degree by words which follow (ver. 9), where he describes them as now receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

But it seems less forced to consider the Apostle as speaking with some knowledge of the circumstances of these Asian Christians, a knowledge of the trials they had to undergo, and how hope was animating them to look onwards towards their inheritance, which was but a little while in reversion, towards the salvation which was so soon to be revealed. Full of this hope, he says, ye greatly rejoice, though ye have had many things to suffer. Then he proceeds to dwell on some of the grounds for their consolation. Their trials, they knew, were but for a little while, not a moment longer than the need should be. Their sorrow would have an end; their joy would last for evermore.

The form of St. Peter's words, it is true, seems to imply that there must always be the need for our chastening. And what else can the children of Adam expect? But it is He, the Father in heaven, who fixes both the nature and the duration of His children's discipline. Some men have felt within themselves the need of chastisement so keenly that they have devised systems for themselves whereby they should mortify the flesh, and prepare themselves for the last time. But of self-appointed chastenings the Apostle does not speak. Of such the converts to whom he writes had no need. They "had been put to grief in manifold temptations."

We can gather from the Epistle itself some notion of the troublous life these scattered Christians had amid the crowd of their heathen neighbours. They were regarded with contempt for refusing to mingle in the excesses which were so marked a feature of heathen life and heathen worship. They were railed upon as evil-doers. They suffered innocently, were constantly assailed with threatenings, and passed their time oft in such terror that St. Peter describes their life as a fiery trial.

Yet in the word (ποικίλος) which he here employs to picture the varied character of their sufferings we seem to have another hint that these did not fall out without the permission and watchful control of God Himself. It is a word which, while it tells of a countless variety, tells at the same time of fitness and order therein. The trials are meted out fitly, as men need and can profit by them. The Master's eye and hand are at work through them all; and the faithful God keeps always ready a way of deliverance. In this wise does St. Peter proclaim that the putting to grief may be made unto us a dispensation of mercy. Himself had been so put to grief by the thrice-repeated question, "Lovest thou Me?" (John xxi. 17). But a way was opened thereby for repentance of his triple denial, and that he might thrice over be entrusted with the feeding of Christ's flock. Such was the putting to grief of the Corinthian Church (2 Cor. vii. 9) by St. Paul's first letter, for it wrought in them repentance, so that they sorrowed after a godly sort. And such sorrow can exist side by side with—yea, be the source of—exceeding joy. The Apostle of the Gentiles is a witness when he says that he and his fellow-labourers are "sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing" (2 Cor. vi. 10).

The Christian does not allow troubles to overwhelm him. The very comparison which St. Peter here institutes, speaking though it does of a furnace of trial, bears within it somewhat of consolation. Gold that is proved by the fire loses all the dross which clung about it and was mingled with it before the refining. It comes forth in all its purity, all its worth; and so shall it be with the believer after his probation. The things of earth will lose their value in his eyes; they will fall away from him, neither will he load himself with the thick clay of the world's honours or wealth. The ties of such things have been sundered by his trials, and his heart is free to rise above the anxieties of time. And better even than the most refined gold, which, be it never so excellent, will yet be worn away, the faith of the believer comes forth stronger for all trial, and he shall hear at the last the welcome of the Master, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," the joy which He bestows, the joy which He shares with those that follow Him.

This is the revelation of Jesus Christ of which St. Peter speaks. This is the praise which through His atonement His servants shall find, and shall become sharers of the glory and honour which the Father has bestowed upon Him. To Christ then turns every affection. "Whom not having seen ye love." This is the test since Christ's ascension, and has the promise of special blessing. To His doubting Apostle Christ vouchsafed the evidence he desired, for our teaching as well as for his; but He added therewith, "Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed." And their joy is such as no tongue can tell. Not for that are they silent in their rejoicing; their hearts overflow, and their voices go forth in constant songs of praise. But ever there remains with them the sense, "The half has not been told."

For faith anticipates the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love Him, and enters into the unseen. The Holy Spirit within the soul is ever making fuller revelation of the deep things of God. The believer's knowledge is ever increasing; the eye-salve of faith clears his spiritual vision. The thanksgivings of yesterday are poor when considered in the illumination of to-day. His joy also is glorified. As his aspirations soar heavenward, the glory from on high comes forth, as it were, to meet him. By gazing in faith on the coming Lord, the Christian progresses, through the power of the Spirit, from glory to glory; and the ever-growing radiance is a part of that grace which no words can tell. But so true, so real, is the sense of Christ's presence that the Apostle describes it as full fruition. Believers "receive even now the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls." So assured does He make them of all which they have hoped for that they behold already the termination of their journey, the close of all trial, and are filled with the bliss which shall be fully theirs when Christ shall come to call His approved servants to their inheritance of salvation.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNITY AND GLORIOUSNESS OF THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION.

1 Peter i. 10-12.

The message of the Gospel unlocks the treasures of Old Testament revelation. Evangelists and Apostles are the exponents of the prophets. The continuity of Divine revelation has never been broken. The Spirit which spake through Joel of the pentecostal outpouring had spoken to men in the earlier days, to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David, and was now shed forth upon the first preachers of the Gospel, and bestowed abundantly for the work of the newly founded Church of Christ. St. Peter, himself a chief recipient of the gift, here proclaims the oneness of the whole of revelation; and more than this, he bears witness to the oneness of the teaching of the whole body of Christian missionaries. St. Paul and his fellow-labourers had spread the glad tidings first of all among these Asian converts; but there is no thought in St. Peter's mind of a different gospel from his own. Those who preached the Gospel to them in the first instance were, even as himself, working in and by the same Holy Spirit.

In the preceding verses of the chapter the thoughts of the Apostle have been dwelling on the future, on the time when the hope of the believer shall attain its fruition, and faith shall be lost in sight. He now turns his glance backward to notice how the promise of salvation has been the subject of revelation through all time. To those among the converts who had studied the Jewish Scriptures such a retrospect would be fruitful in instruction. They would comprehend with him how the truths which they now heard preached had been gradually shadowed forth in the Divine economy. That first proclamation of

the seed of the woman to be born for the overthrow of the tempter, but who yet must Himself be a Sufferer in the conflict. was now become luminous, and in outline presented the whole scheme of redemption. The study of the development of that scheme would beget a full trust in their hearts for the future as they contemplated the stages of its foreshadowing in the past.

"Concerning which salvation," he says, "the prophets sought and searched diligently." The Divine revelation could only be made as men were able to bear it, and the sentences of old must needs be dark. At first God's love was set forth by His covenants with the patriarchs. Then the wider scope of mercy was proclaimed in the promises given to Abraham and repeated to his posterity. In their seed, it was declared, not the chosen race alone, but all the nations of the earth, should be blessed. Here all through the history was ground enough for diligent searching among the faithful. How could these things be, Abraham solitary and aged, Isaac's sons at feud with each other, Jacob and his posterity in captivity? Even at their best estate these seemed little fitted for the destiny which had been foretold to them. But throughout the Mosaic history some clung to their faith, and their great leader foresaw that the promise would be fulfilled in its time through One of whom he was but a feeble representative. But to so wide a vision only a few attained.

In the evil days which followed, the hope of the people must often have dwindled down; but yet at times, as to Gideon's diminished army, it was made manifest that the Lord could do great things for His people: and the thought of the seed of the woman promised as a Deliverer lingered in many hearts, and enabled them to sing in thankfulness how the adversaries of the Lord should be broken in pieces, how out of heaven the Lord should thunder upon them, and prove Himself the Judge of all the ends of the earth, giving strength unto His king and exalting the horn of His anointed. In such wise the prophetic teaching, which had advanced from the blessing of an individual to the choice and exaltation of a chosen family, was expanded in the noblest spirits to the conception of a kingdom of God among all mankind, and assumed a more definite form when the promise was made to the Son of David that His throne should be established for ever.

But how imperfectly God's design was comprehended by the best among them we can see from the last words of David himself (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7). In them we have an instance of the searching which must have occupied other hearts beside that of the king of Israel. The Spirit of the Lord had spoken by him, and a promise of future glory had been made, when all should be brightness, every cloud dispersed. But the vision tarried. The house of David was not so with God. Yet he still held firmly to the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, a covenant of salvation, though as yet God made it not to grow. David may be numbered among those "who prophesied of the grace that should come" hereafter; and his words are shaped by a power above his own, to suggest the advent of Him who was to be the "dayspring from on high."

He and the other enlightened Israelites who have left us their thoughts and aspirations in the Psalter felt that the history of the chosen people was from first to last a grand parable (Psalm lxxviii. 2), and that the present could always be learning from the leading and discipline of the past. The miracles and the chastisements which they recite were all tokens of the sure promise, tokens that the people were not forgotten, but constantly aided by instruction, warning, and reproof. So that another psalmist, though still searching for the fuller meaning of the parables and dark sayings through which he was conducted, could sing, "God shall redeem my soul from the hand of the grave, for He shall take me" (Psalm xlix. 15). There is a confidence in the words, a confidence enough to sustain amid many trials. To such a man the present was not all. There was a life to come where God should be and rule, and his heart had not seldom gone forth to the questioning at what time and in what form the promises should be fulfilled. Like Abraham, such men had seen the day of Christ in vision and rejoiced over it, and the "Spirit of Christ was within them" to sustain them. But the things which they had heard and known, and of which their fathers had told them, supplied cause for deep searchings as "to the time and the manner of time unto which the Spirit pointed." The strength of the Lord and His wondrous works were to be rehearsed to the coming generations, that among them the hope might live, by them the searching be continued. And as time went on the vision was widened, for in no small number of the Psalms we find the promised blessedness described as the portion not of Israel only, but through Israel grace was to be extended to the ends of the earth. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands," is no solitary invocation.

And when we turn to those prophets whose writings we possess, we recognise that in them the Spirit of Christ was working and pointing forward to the coming redemption. But long before the days of Isaiah and Micah the Spirit of the Lord had come mightily upon His servants, and that picture of a glorious future which both those seers have given to us was not improbably the utterance of some earlier servant of the Lord: "It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 1). Thus far had they attained, but the search was not ended. "The last days"! When these should come was known to God alone; and they spake only as they were moved by Him, standing on their towers of spiritual elevation, hearkening what the Lord would say to them, and delivering His message with all the fulness they could command. But they were sure of the final bliss.

Of the same character are those words of Joel, which St. Peter quoted in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, "It shall come to pass afterward" (ii. 28). Beyond this was not yet revealed. But it was the voice of God which spake through the prophet: "In those days I will pour out My Spirit." And the Divine voice spake of visitations of another kind. It "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them." We feel sure that here St. Peter had in mind Isa. liii., which the New Testament has taught us to apply in its fullest sense to our blessed Lord.

But the language of St. Peter in this clause deserves special notice. He does not use the ordinary words by which the personal sufferings of Christ would generally be expressed, but he says rather, "the sufferings which pertain unto Christ." And here we may well consider whether the variation of phrase be not designed. St. Paul uses the simple direct expression (2 Cor. i. 5), and so does St. Peter himself (1 Peter iv. 13); and in those passages the Apostles are speaking of the sufferings of Christ as shared by His people. It would almost seem as if St. Peter's phrase in the verse before us were intended to convey this sense more fully. The sufferings pertain unto Christ, were specially borne by Him; but they fall also upon those who are, and have been, His people, both before and after the Incarnation.

Those prophecies of Isaiah which speak of the sufferings of the servant of the Lord had long been expounded as meant of the Jewish nation, and with such interpretation St. Peter was doubtless familiar. Hence may have come his altered phrase, capable of being interpreted, not only of Christ Himself, but of the sufferings of those who, like these Asiatic converts, were for the Lord's sake exposed to manifold trials. This double application of the words, to Christ and to His servants also, explains, it may be, the unique use of the word "glories" in the clause which follows: the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them. For the glories may be taken to signify not only that honour and glory which the Father has given unto Christ, but also the glory in which they shall share who have taken up their cross to follow Him. Nowhere else in the New Testament does this plural word occur. To draw a sense like this from it would minister no small comfort to the Christians in their trials; and just before St. Peter has described the joy which they should experience as "glorified," or "full of glory" (ver. 8). In like manner St. Paul speaks (Rom. viii. 18) of the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us in the resurrection.

It would also serve as consolation to the sufferers, who were thus pointed on to the future for Christ's best gifts, to know that a similar forward glance had been the lot of the prophets under the ancient dispensation. One here and there had felt, as Malachi (iii. 1), that the Lord whom they were seeking was soon to come; but we know of none before the aged Simeon to whom it had been made known that they should not die till they had seen the Lord's Christ. To the former generations "it was revealed," says the Apostle, "that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things." They beheld them, and greeted them, but it was afar off. They spake often one to another of a bliss that was to come; yet though praying, longing, and hoping for it, they saw it only with the eye of faith. The psalmists supply many illustrations of this forward projection of the thoughts which dwelt on the Messianic hope. Thus in Psalm xxii. 30, 31, while rejoicing over his own rescue from suffering, the speaker recognises that this is but a foreshadowing of another suffering and another deliverance, even the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. "It shall be told of the Lord unto the next generation. They shall come; they shall declare His righteousness to a people that shall be born, that He hath done it," and again in another place, "This shall be written for the generation to come, and a people which shall be created shall praise the Lord" (Psalm cii. 18). And these anticipations are ever coupled with the thought of the wider extension of the kingdom of God, with the time when "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord," "when the nations shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth His glory."

But the things which prophets and psalmists ministered "have now been announced unto you through them that preached the Gospel unto you." You, St. Peter would say, are now not heirs expectant, but possessors of the blessings which former ages of believers foresaw and foretold, just as in his pentecostal address he testifies, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." And those who have preached these glad tidings unto you, he continues, have not done so without warrant. They are joined by an unbroken link to the prophets who went before them. In those the Spirit of Christ wrought at such times as He found fit instruments for raising a little the veil that lay over the purposes of God. The preachers of the Gospel have the same Spirit, and speak unto you "by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven." These (and of St. Peter is this specially true) had witnessed the sufferings of Christ, and been made partakers of the glories of the outpoured Spirit. The promise of the Father had been fulfilled to them, and they had received a mouth and wisdom which their adversaries were not able to resist. The risen Lord, the assurance of a life to come, the guidance by the Spirit into all truth—these were now realities for them, and were to be made real for the rest of the world by their testimony.

And that he may further magnify that salvation which he has been describing as published in part under the Law and now assured by the message of the Gospel, he adds, "which things angels desire to look into." Of the whole Divine plan for man's redemption the angels could hardly be cognisant. Of God's love for man they had been made conscious, had been employed as His agents in the exhibition of that love, both under the old and under the new covenant. Their ministry, we know, was exercised in the lives of Abraham and Lot; they watched over Jacob and over Elijah in their solitude and weariness. One of their host was sent to deliver Daniel and to instruct the prophet Zechariah. At a later day they, who stand above mankind in the order of creation, and are pure enough to behold the presence of the Most High, were made messengers to announce how the Son of God had deigned to assume, not their nature, but the nature of humanity, and would by His suffering lift up the race from its slavery to sin. They proclaimed the birth of the Baptist, and brought the message of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin. They heralded the birth of Christ to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and a multitude of their glorious company sang the song of glory to God in the highest. They tended the God-Man at His temptation, strengthened Him in His agony, were present at His sepulchre, and gave the news of the Resurrection to the early visitants. Nor were their services at an end with Christ's ascension, though they were present on that occasion also.

To Cornelius and to Peter angels were made messengers, and our Lord has told us that their rejoicing is great over even one sinner that repenteth.

These immortal spirits whose home is before God's throne, and whose great office is to sing His praise, yet find in those ministrations to mankind in which they have been employed matter for admiration, matter which kindles in them fervent desire. They long to comprehend in all its fulness that grace which they are conscious God is shedding forth upon mankind. They would scan all the workings of His love and His forbearance towards sinners. These things are to them a subject of admiration, even as was the empty tomb of Jesus to the disciples after the Resurrection; and from their high estate the angelic host would fain stoop down to gaze their fill upon what God's goodness has wrought and is working out for mankind. They feel that this knowledge would add a new theme to the songs around the throne, would give them still greater cause to extol that grace which manifests its noblest features in showing mercy and pity.

And if such be the aspiration of angels, sinless beings who feel not the need of rescue, shall the tongues of men be dumb, men who know, each from the experience of his own heart, how great is the evil of sin in which they are entangled, how hopeless without Christ's death was their deliverance from its thraldom; who know how constant and how undeserved is the mercy of which they are partakers, how true to Himself God has been in their case? "I am Jehovah; I change not: therefore ye children of men are not destroyed."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S IDEAL, AND THE STEPS THEREUNTO.

1 Peter i. 13-21.

The Apostle, who has set forth the character of the Christian's election, who has given to the converts large assurance for the hope which he exhorts them to hold, who has proclaimed the exceeding glory of their inheritance in the future and how its nature had been foreshadowed in type and prophecy, now turns to those practical lessons which he would enforce from the doctrines of election and of future glory in heaven. Such glorious privileges cannot be looked forward to without awakening a sense of corresponding duties, and for these he would not have them unprepared. "Wherefore," he says, because you have the assurance of what the best men of old only dimly foresaw, "girding up the loins of your mind, be sober." The Apostle has in mind the words of his Master, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord" (Luke xii. 35, 36). The advent of the bridegroom may be sudden; those who would be of his train must be prepared for their summons. To be girt in body is a token of readiness for coming duty. And St. Peter's figure would speak more forcibly to Eastern ears than it does to ours. Without such girding the Oriental is helpless for active work, the encumbrance of his flowing robes being fatal to exertion. The heart of the Christian must be untrammelled with the cares, the affections, the pleasures of the world. He must be free to run the race which lies before him, as was the well-girt prophet who ran before the royal chariot to the entrance of Jezreel.

And the Christian life is no light care, as St. Peter pictures it. First, he says, "Be sober." To train the mind to exercise self-restraint is no easy duty at any time, but specially in a season of religious excitement. We know how converts in the very earliest days of Christianity were carried into excesses both in action and in word; and in every age of quickened activity some have been found with whom freedom degenerated into license, and emotion took the place of true religious feeling. The Jewish converts in the provinces of Asia might be tempted to despise those who still clung to the ancient faith, while some of those who had been won from heathenism might by their conduct alienate rather than win their brethren in Christ. We gather what was the nature of the peril when we find the Apostle (iv. 7) urging this sobriety as a frame of mind to be cultivated even in their prayers, and St. Paul in his advice to Timothy combining the exhortation to sobriety with "suffer hardship; do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. iv. 5). It is the frame of mind meet for the maintenance of sound doctrine, utterly opposed to those itching ears which are only satisfied with teaching according to their own lusts. Fitly therefore does our Apostle add to his first exhortation a second which will make the believers steadfast: "Set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you." In those early days this counsel was not always easy to follow. There were many enticements to wavering, many trials which made the firm hold on strong faith difficult to maintain. And with the "perfectly" must be combined that other sense of the word "to the end." The hope must be perfect in its nature, unshaken in its firmness, persuaded of the certainty of the future grace, and strengthened in that persuasion by the experience of the present working of the Spirit. But the language of the Apostle almost anticipates the future. He says not so much that the grace is "to be brought," but rather that it is even now "being brought" near and coming ever nearer; for the revelation of Jesus Christ is progressive. Though we learn something, it is only so much as teaches us that there is more still to learn of the boundless stores of grace. But as in a former verse he spake of believers as having already by faith their salvation in possession, even such is his language here. And mark his lesson on the free gift of God's grace. It is not a blessing to which the believer can attain of his own power. He can hope for it; he can feel assured that God in His own time will bestow it. But whenever it comes, either as present grace to help in trial, or future grace which shall be revealed, it is given, brought, bestowed; and its full fruition will only be reached "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." But assuredly these words may be applied to this life as well as to the next. He who said, "The Holy Spirit shall take of Mine and declare it unto you," designs to be ever more and more revealed in the hearts of His followers. His grace is being brought to them day by day, and trains continually unto obedi-

ence those who have been sprinkled with His blood.

And this obedience is the next precept for which they are to be made ready by the girding up of the loins of their minds, "as children of obedience," the obedience not of slaves, but of sons. Children they are become by virtue of the new birth, and obedience it is which gives them a claim upon God's Fatherhood. They must seek for the docility and trustfulness of the childlike character; they must accept a law other than their own wills, having taken upon them the yoke of Christ and aiming, in the light of His example, to become worthy of being reckoned among His true followers.

When they contemplate their own lives, they must feel that a mighty change is needed from what they were aforetime. St. Peter's words mark the completeness of the needed change: "not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts." In time past they had sought no further for a guide and pattern than their own perverted desires; now they must school themselves to say, "Do with me as Thou wilt, for I am Thine." And He whose grace has begotten them again will help them to frame their lives by His rule, will have them learn of Him. But while the Apostle dwells on the difference which must come over the lives of these converts, mark the wondrous charity with which he alludes to their former life in error. "In the time of your ignorance," he says. Even here he follows the example of the Lord, who prayed in His agony, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Sin blinds the moral and the mental vision too, and men so blinded sink deeper and deeper into the slough, while he who has learnt Christ has gained another source of light. But, to raise the ignorant, they must be taught; and tenderness makes teaching most effective, and charity dictates the apostolic words. So St. Paul at Athens to those who worshipped an unknown God offered instruction to win them from their ignorance, and pointed them to a God whose offspring they were, and to whose likeness they might be conformed.

Just so does St. Peter: "Like as He who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." This has been God's call from the first day until now, but what a hopeless height is this for the sinner to aim after, holy as God is holy! Yet it is the standard which Christ sets before us in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And why does He propose to us that which is impossible? Because with the command He is ready to supply the power. He knows our frailty; knows what is in man both of strength and weakness. At the same time He proclaims to us by this command what God intends to make of us. He will restore us again to His own likeness. That which was God's at first shall be made God's once more. The marred image, on which not even the superscription can be traced, shall again be revealed in full clearness, and the believer purged from all the defilements of sin by the grace and help of Him who says, "Be ye perfect," because He loves to make us so.

"Because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." This command comes down to us from the earliest days of the Law. But in those old times it could not be said, "in all manner of living." These words betoken the loftier standard of the New Testament. The patriarchs and prophets and the people among whom they lived were trained, and could only be trained, little by little. Even in the best among them we cannot hope for holiness in all manner of living. It was only by the types and figures of external purification that their thoughts were directed to the inner cleansing of the heart, and long generations passed before the lessons were learnt. The full sense of the Fatherhood of God was not attained under the Law, nor did men under it learn fully to live as children of obedience, children of a Father who loves and will succour every effort which they make to walk according to His law. The Incarnation has brought God nearer to man, and on this relationship of love the Apostle grounds his further exhortation.

"And if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." But the fear which St. Peter means is a fear which grows out of love, a fear to grieve One who is so abundant in mercy. Who can call on God as Father but the children of obedience? About the Father's will and His power to make you holy there need be no fear. He has called men and bidden them strive after holiness. The way is steep, but they will not be unattended. What fear then of failing to attain the goal? For the Father will also be the Judge. And here is the ground for eternal hope and thankfulness, which the Apostle expresses in words akin to those which he used in the house of Cornelius: "Now I see that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." Yes, this is the fear which God looks for, not a paralysing dread which checks all effort and kills out all hope. Our Judge knows that our work will be full of faults, but fear of Him must nerve us to make the endeavour. It is not what men do, the feeble sum of their performance, that He regards. The way, the spirit, the motive, from which it is wrought—these will be the ground of our Father's judgment. Hence the Gospel is a message for all the world alike. The poor and lowly, to whom no great deeds are possible, may through it live a life of hope. It is not great gifts poured into the treasury from an abundant store that have value in His eyes, but the gifts which come with a heart's sacrifice—these are precious indications, and receive the blessing, "They have done what they could." And God's children are to look on their life as no more than a brief pilgrimage. It is a time of sojourning, in which the small occurrences are of little account. Earth is to the Christian, what Egypt was of old to the Hebrews, no home, but a place of trial and oppression of the enemy. God will bring His children forth, even as He did of old. But the dread to be most entertained is lest the many attractions should, like the flesh-pots of the history, win the affection of the pilgrims, and make them not unwilling to linger in the house of bondage and to think lightly of peril which surrounds them there. The great preservative from this danger is to revive constantly the thought of the great things which have been done for us. Be in fear of the world and its beguilements, says St. Peter, "knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your

fathers." The redemption price is paid, has been paid for all men. Shall any then be willing to tarry in their slavery? Ye were redeemed. The work is complete. "It is finished," was the last sigh of the dying Lord, who before had testified that His true disciples might be of good cheer, because He had overcome the world.

But in the hearts of men the world and its allurements die very hard. The men for whom St. Peter wrote would surely find this so. They had many of them lived long either under Judaism or in heathendom, and would be surrounded still by friends and kinsmen who clung to the ancient teaching and customs. Prejudices were sure to abound, and the ties of blood in such cases are very strong, as we know ourselves from mission experience in India. The Apostle speaks of their manner of life as handed down from their fathers. He may have had in his thought the corruption of the human race from the sin of our first parents. Generation after generation has been involved in the consequences of that primal transgression. But he probably thought rather of the converts from idolatry and the life which they had led in their days of ignorance. Of God's covenant with the chosen people, though now it was abolished, St. Peter would hardly speak as a vain manner of life. But to the worship of the heathen the word might fitly be applied. Paul and Barnabas entreat the crowd at Lystra, who would have done sacrifice to them as to their gods, to turn from these vanities to serve the living God (Acts xiv. 15); and to the Ephesians St. Paul writes that they should no longer walk, as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind (Eph. iv. 17). The parents of such men, having themselves no knowledge, could impart none to their children, could not lift them higher, could not make them purer; and yet the ties of natural affection would plead strongly for what had been held right by their fathers for generations.

But the price which has been paid for their ransom may convince them how precious they are in the eyes of a Father in heaven. They are redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," even the blood of Christ. For ages the offering of sacrifices had kept before the minds of Israel the need of a redemption, but they could do no more. The blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer suffice only to the purifying of the flesh, and can never take away sin. But now the true fountain is opened, and St. Peter has learnt, and bears witness, what was the meaning of the words of Jesus, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (John xiii. 8). The door of mercy is opened, that by the knowledge of such wondrous love the hearts of men may be opened also.

And this counsel of God has been from all eternity. Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world" as the Lamb to be offered for human redemption. The world and its history form but a tiny fragment of God's mighty works, and yet for mankind a plan so overflowing with love was included in the vision of Jehovah before man or his home had existence except in the Divine mind. Now by the Incarnation the secret counsel is brought to light, and the foretokenings of type and prophecy receive their interpretation. "He was manifested at the end of the times for your sake." He was made flesh, and tabernacled among men; He showed by the signs which He wrought that He was the Saviour drawing near to them that they might draw near unto Him. His lifting up on the cross spake of the true healing of the souls of all who would look unto Him. And when death had done its work upon the human body, He was manifested more thoroughly as the beloved Son of God by His resurrection from the grave. The first Christians felt that God's work was now complete, salvation secured. It is not unnatural therefore that they should expect the drama of the world's history soon to be closed. For the Master had not seldom spoken of the coming of a speedy judgment. Hence the age in which they lived seemed to merit the name of "the end of the times." We now can see that the judgment of which Christ spake was wrought in great part by the overthrow of Jerusalem, though His words are still prospective, and will not find their entire fulfilment till the close of human history; and the whole Christian era may be intended and included in "the end of the times." This was the goal towards which God's counsel had been moving since the world was made. No new revelation is to be looked for, and we who live in the light of Christ's religion are those upon whom the ends of the world are come. In this sense the words may be applied in every age and to every generation of Christians. To them, as to St. Peter's converts, the preacher may testify, "For your sakes" all this was planned and wrought, and may offer the ransom of the Saviour to His people, assured that in this speck of time Christ is being manifested for their sake also. For "they through Him are believers in God," as the Lord Himself hath testified. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me"; "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." The words are as true to-day as when Christ was upon earth. Since the Fall the glory and majesty of Jehovah have been unapproachable. Sin rendered man both unfit and unable to have the pure communion of the days of innocence. It was the vision of Jesus by faith which brought Abraham near to God and filled him with joy. And so with all the saints and prophets of the first covenant. They beheld Him, but it was afar off. They greeted the maturing promises, but only as strangers and pilgrims upon earth. To the Asian converts and to us also the testimony of St. Peter and his fellows is from those who beheld the glory of God as it was manifested in Christ, who saw Him when raised from the dead, and watched His ascent into the glory of heaven. And by such witness faith in what God has wrought is confirmed. We are sure that He raised Christ from the dead; we are sure that He has received Him into glory: and thus through all generations the faith and hope of Christians are sustained and rest unshaken upon God.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD: ITS CHARACTER AND DUTIES.

1 Peter i. 22-ii. 3.

That holy lives have been lived in solitude none would venture to dispute, and that devout Christians have found strength for themselves

and given examples to the world by withdrawal from the society of their fellows is attested more than once in the history of Christendom. But with lives of such isolation and seclusion the New Testament exhibits little sympathy. To whatever preparation the Christian is exhorted, it is never with a view to himself. Though not of the world, he is to be in the world, that men may profit by his example. The prayer of the Lord for His disciples ere He left them was, not that they might be taken out of the world, but protected from its evils.

Christ's intention was to found a Church, a communion, a brotherhood, and all His language looks that way: "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren"; "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." And of like character is the teaching of the Epistles: "Be kindly affectioned in love of the brethren" (Rom. xii. 10); "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. xiii. 1). We are in no way surprised therefore when St. Peter turns from his exhortations to personal sobriety, obedience, and holiness, and addresses the converts on the application of these virtues, that through them they may bind in closer bonds the brotherhood of Christ: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently." Obedience is the sole evidence by which the believer can show that God's call has wrought in him effectually. His election is of the Father's foreknowledge, his sanctification is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and it is the sprinkling of the blood of Christ which makes him fit for entry into the house of the Father. In the Christian, so called and so aided, there must be a surrender of himself to the guidance of that spirit which deigns to guide him. The law in his members must be mortified, and another and purer law accepted as the rule of his life. This law St. Peter calls "the truth" because it has been made manifest in its perfection in the life of Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Of this example St. Paul testifies as "the truth which is in Jesus." He therefore who would cherish the Christian hope will purify himself even as Christ is pure. The way and means unto such purification is obedience.

This first and most needful step the Apostle believes, from his knowledge of their lives, that these Asian converts have taken in earnest, and thus have attained to a love of their brethren which differs utterly from the love which the world exhibits, which is true, sincere, unfeigned. But the believer's life is a life of constant progress. Daily advance is the evidence of vitality. All the language which Scripture applies to it proclaims this to be its character. It is called a walk, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare. The Christian all his life through will find himself so far from what Christ intends to make him that he must ever be pressing forward. Hence, though they have attained to a stage of purification, have put off in some degree the old man, the Apostle's exhortation is "Press forward"; "Love one another from the heart fervently." The English word describes a warmth and earnestness of love which is deep-seated and true, but the original expresses more than this, more of the sustained effort to which St. Peter is urging them. It points to incessant striving, to a constancy like that of the prayers of the Church for the Apostle himself when he was in prison, a prayer made unto God without ceasing. So steadfast must be the Christian love; and such love the purified, undistracted heart alone can manifest, a heart which has been released from the entanglements of earthly ambitions and strivings, whose affections are fully set on the things above.

Such souls must be filled with the Spirit; a steadfastness like this comes only of the new birth. And of this the converts are reminded in the words which follow: "having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God." It is true they are but at the outset of their Christian course; but if any man be in Christ, he is made a new creature. And in this connection the word of God might be taken in a twofold sense. First, the Word who was made flesh, in whom was light; and the light was the life of men. Through His resurrection God has begotten men again to a life which shall know no corruption. But the figure which the Apostle presently employs of the withering grass and the falling flower carries our mind rather to Christ's explanation of His own parable. The seed is the word of God, which liveth and abideth. And throughout the New Testament the life-possessing and life-giving power of the Gospel is made everywhere conspicuous. When it was first proclaimed, we read again and again, "The word of God grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts xii. 24; xix. 20); and the figurative language used to describe its character shows how potent is its might. It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. vi. 16); "It is quick and powerful" (Heb. iv. 12). By it Christ foiled the tempter. It makes those strong in whom it abides (1 John ii. 14). It is free, and not bound (2 Tim. ii. 9). St. Paul calls it "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. i. 16), "the word of truth, the gospel of salvation" (Eph. i. 13) and says, "It comes, not in word only, but in power" (1 Thess. i. 5). This is the incorruptible seed of which St Peter speaks. And his words force on our thoughts that for such a seed a fitting ground must be prepared, if the new life of which it is the source is to bear its due fruit. This preparation it is which the Apostle is anxious to enforce, the purifying and cleansing of the seed-plot of men's hearts. They must not be hardened so as to forbid it access, and leave it for every chance enemy to trample on or carry away; they must not be choked with alien thoughts and purposes: the cares of life, the pleasures of the world. Such things perish in the using, and can have no affinity with the living and abiding word of God, which, even as He, is eternal and unchanging.

And herewith is bound up a very solemn thought. The word may be neglected, may be choked, in individual hearts; but still it liveth and abideth, and will appear to testify against the scorners: "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth Him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself" (John xii. 48). But for those who accept the message of the word and live thereby St. Peter's language is full of comfort, especially to those who are in like affliction with these Asian Christians. For them the acceptance of the faith of Jesus must have meant the rending asunder of earthly ties; the natural brotherhood would be theirs no longer. But they are enrolled in a new family—a family which cannot

perish, whose seed is incorruptible, whose kinship shall stretch forward and be ever enlarging through all time and into eternity. For they, like the word by which they are begotten again, will live and abide for evermore.

And confirming this lesson by the prophecy of Isaiah (xl. 6-8), the Apostle thus links together the ancient Scriptures and the New Testament. But in so doing he shows by his language how he regards the latter as more excellent and a mighty advance upon the former. The margin of the Revised Version helpfully indicates the difference of the words. In Isaiah the teaching is styled a *saying*. It was the word whereby God, through some intermediary, made known his will to the children of men. But under the Gospel the word is that living, spiritual power which is used as synonymous with the Lord Himself. The word of good tidings has now been spoken unto men by a Son, the very image of the Divine substance, the effulgence of God's glory, and now possesses a might quick even to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is verily the living word of God (Heb. iv. 12).

And we of to-day can see what ground there was for the Apostle's faith and for his teaching, how true the prophetic word has been found in the events of history. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth for ever." When we cast our thoughts back to the time when St. Peter wrote, we see the converts who had accepted the word of God a mere handful of people amid the throngs of heathendom, the religion which they professed the scorn of all about them, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, and its preachers in the main a few poor, untrained, uninfluential men, of no rank or conspicuous ability. On the other hand, worshipping crowds proclaimed the greatness of Diana of the Ephesians, and the power of the Roman Empire was at its height, or seemed so, with the whole of the civilised world owning its sway. And now that world's wonder, the temple at Ephesus, is a pile of ruins, and over the Roman power such changes have passed that it has utterly faded out of existence; but the doctrines of the Galilean, who claimed to be the Incarnate Word of God, are daily extending their influence, proving their vitality to be Divine.

But though in his language he has seemed to mark the superiority of the Gospel message, the Apostle is deeply conscious that the office of the preacher has much, nay, its chief character, in common with that of the prophet. Hence he proceeds to call the Gospel message, now that it is left to the lips of Evangelists and Apostles to proclaim, a saying like that of Isaiah. In this way he links the New Testament to the Old, the prophet to the preacher. Both spake the same word of God; both were moved by the same spirit; both proclaimed the same deliverance, the one looking onward in hope to the coming Redeemer, the other proclaiming that the redemption had been accomplished. "This is the telling" (the saying) "of good tidings which was preached unto you."

Here Peter seems to allude to a preaching earlier than his own, and to none can we attribute the evangelisation of these parts of Asia with more probability than to St. Paul and his missionary colleagues. But there was no note of disagreement between these early ambassadors of Christ. They could all say of their work, "Whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed."

Having spoken of the seed, the Apostle now turns to the seed plot which needs its special preparation. It must be cleared and broken up, or the seed, though scattered, will have small chance of roothold.

But here St. Peter recurs to his former metaphor. He has spoken (i. 13) of the Christian's equipment, how with girded loins he should prepare himself for the coming struggle. He now speaks of what he must lay aside. He has been purified, or made to long after purification, through his obedience to the truth, so that he can with earnest desire seek to make known his love to the brethren; and the word of God is powerful to overcome such dispositions as are destructive of brotherly love. Hence it is to no hopeless, unaided conflict that the Apostle urges his converts when he writes of their "putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." It is a formidable list of evils, but St. Peter's words treat them as forming no part of the true man. These are overgrowths, which can be stripped away, though the operation will many a time be painful enough; they have enveloped and enclosed the sinner, and cling close about him, but the sanctification of the Spirit can help him to be unclothed of them all. They are the forces which make for discord. The word of good tidings began with "peace on earth, good will towards men." Hence those who hearken to the message must put away everything contrary thereto. First in the Apostle's enumeration stands a general term, wickedness, those which follow it being various forms of its development. We learn how utterly alien this wickedness is to the spirit of Christ when we notice the employment of the word to describe the sin of Simon: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right before God" (Acts viii. 22). Such a man had no comprehension of the source of the Apostolic powers; the sacred things of God were unknown to one who could treat such gifts as merchandise. And it is full of interest in the present connection to observe that what our English Version there renders "matter" is really, as the margin (R. V.) shows, "word." It was the word of God which was mighty in the first preachers, which was growing and prevailing as they testified unto Christ, and in this "word" a heart like Simon's could have no share. He was no fit member of the fellowship of Christ.

Guile was the sin of Jacob, a sin which brake the bond of brotherhood between him and Esau, and wrought so much misery in the whole of Jacob's family history. Guile was not found in Nathanael. The searching eye of Jesus saw that the sin of the "supplanter" was not in him. Hence he is pointed out as an example of the true Israel, that which the race of Jacob was intended to become.

That hypocrisy is a foe to brotherhood our Lord makes evident as he reproaches the Pharisees for this sin. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican," are words which could never rise to the lips of him whose heart was purified by the Spirit of God; and envy brings hatred in its train. It was by envy that Saul was incited to seek the death of David; it was from envy that Joseph's

brethren sold him into Egypt; through envy a greater than Joseph was sold to be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 18), and this sin led to war in heaven itself.

From evil-speaking these Asian converts themselves had to suffer, and would know by experience its mischievous effects. They were spoken against as evil-doers, as the Apostle notes twice over (1 Peter ii. 12; iii. 15). This evil adds cowardice to its other baneful qualities, for it takes advantage of the absence of him against whom it is directed, and is that vice which in 2 Cor. xii. 20 is described as backbiting, a rendering which the Revised Version leaves undisturbed, while those who indulge in it are called backbiters (Rom. i. 30). St. James has much to say in its dispraise: "Speak not one against another, brethren. He that speaketh against a brother or judgeth his brother speaketh against the law, and judgeth the law" (James iv. 11). Such a one is intruding into the prerogative of God Himself, and passing sentence where he can have no sure knowledge of the acts which he judges. "Evil-speaking," says one of the Apostolic Fathers,* "is a restless demon, never at peace. So speak no evil of any, nor take pleasure in listening thereto." By good works St. Peter instructs his converts to live down such cowardly slanders, that those who revile their good manner of life in Christ may be put to shame thereby. Purity will overcome iniquity, innocence gain the day against deceit.

But the transformation to which the Apostle exhorts them must be verily to become a new creation, and so he goes on to speak of their condition as one akin to that of new-born babes. These, by natural instincts, turn away from all that will hurt them, and seek only what can nourish and support. To such right inclinations, to such simplicity of desire, must the Christian be brought. He has been born again of the word of God. From this he is to seek his constant nurture, as instinctively as the babe turns to its mother's breast. This is able to save the soul (James i. 21), but it cannot be received unless the vices which war against it be put away, and a spirit of meekness take their place. They seek other and less pure food for their support.

Christians are to long for the spiritual milk which is without guile. This food for babes in Christ is the word, which is taken by the Spirit and offered a nurture for the soul. But there must be a longing for, a readiness to accept, what is offered. For the spiritual appeals to the reason of man, and though offered, is not forced on him. The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. And the purification, the clearing off and putting away corrupt dispositions, about which the Apostle speaks so earnestly, applies an eye-salve to the inward vision which helps us to see things in their true light, and so to long for what is really profitable food without guile, which does not disappoint the hope of those that seek it. "That ye may grow thereby unto salvation." It is called the word of salvation. "To you," says St. Paul to the men of Antioch (Acts xiii. 26), is the word of this salvation sent forth; and through it is proclaimed the remission of sins. The healthy condition of the life of the soul is evidenced by these two signs: longing for proper food and growth by partaking thereof. For there is no standing still in spiritual life, any more than in the natural life. Where there is no growth, decay has already set in; if there be no waxing of the powers, they have already begun to wane. To the natural human growth there must needs come this waning; the body will decay: but the spiritual increase can continue, must continue, until the stature of the fulness of Christ be attained, till we come to be made like unto Him when we see Him as He is. Watch, then, strive and pray for growth, "if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The true food once found and appreciated, the joy of this support will be such that no other will ever be desired. Hence St. Peter adopts, or rather adapts, the words of the Psalmist (xxxiv. 9) who tells of the blessedness of trusting in the Lord. The angels of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and setteth them free. This is the initial stage: the deliverance from the power of evil. Then come the desire and longing for the true strength. "O taste and see that the Lord is gracious; blessed is the man that findeth refuge in Him." The joy of such a refuge can come even to those who are suffering after the fashion of the Asian converts. But the Psalmist's words are full of teaching. God's training is empirical. Spiritual experience comes before spiritual knowledge. Well does St. Bernard say of this lesson, though his words pass the power of translation, "Unless you have tasted you will not see. The food is the hidden manna; it is the new name which no one knows but he who receives it. It is not external training, but the unction of the Spirit, which teaches; it is not knowledge (*scientia*) which grasps the truth, but the conscience (*conscientia*) which attests it."

* Hermas, Mand., ii. 2.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS.

1 Peter ii. 4-10.

Leaving the exhortation to individual duties, the Apostle turns now to describe the Christian society in relation to its Divine Founder, and tells both of the privileges possessed by believers, and of the services which they ought to render. He employs for illustration a figure very common in Holy Scripture, and compares the faithful to stones in the structure of some noble edifice, built upon a sure foundation. Such language on his lips must have had a deep significance. He was the rock-man; his name Peter was bestowed by Christ in recognition of his grand confession: and Jesus had consecrated the simile which the Apostle uses by His own words, "Upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18), words which were daily finding a blessed fulfilment in the growth of these Asian Churches.

A rock is no unusual figure in the Old Testament to represent God's faithfulness, and its use is specially frequent in Isaiah and the Psalms. "In the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock" (Isa. xxvi. 4), says the prophet; again he calls God "the rock of Israel" (xxx. 29); while the prayers of the Psalmist are full of the same thought concerning the Divine might and protection: "Be Thou my strong rock and my fortress" (Psalm xxxi. 2); "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (lxi. 2); "O God, my rock and my Redeemer" (xix. 14).

But the language of the New Testament goes farther than that of the Old. Strength, protection, permanence—these were attributes of the rock of which Isaiah spake and David sang. The life-possessing and life-imparting virtue of the Spirit of Christ is a part of the glad tidings of the Gospel. Through Him were light and immortality brought to light. The rock which lives is found in Jesus Christ. In Him is life without measure, ready to be imparted to all who seek to be built up in Him.

"Unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious." By purification of thought, and act, and word, that childlike frame has been sought after which fits them to draw near; and they come with full assurance. Jesus they know as the Crucified, as the Lord who came to His own, and they received Him not. Generations of preparation had not made Jewry ready for her King's coming, had failed to impress the people with the signs of His advent; and so they disowned Him, and cried, "We have no king but Cæsar." But the converts know Jesus also as Him who was raised from the dead and exalted to glory. This honour He hath "with God." No other than He could bring salvation. Therefore has he received a name that is above every name. And "with God" here signifies that heavenly exaltation and glory. The sense is as when Jesus testifies, "I speak what I have seen with My Father" (John viii. 38)—that is, in heaven—or when He prays, "Glorify me, O Father, with Thine own self" (xvii. 5). From this excellent glory He sends down His Spirit, and gives to His people a share of that life which has been made manifest in Him. Their part is but to come, to seek, and every one that seeketh is sure to find.

"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." Not because they are living men does the Apostle speak of them as living stones. They may be full of the vigour of natural life, yet have no part in Christ. The life which joins men to Him comes by the new birth. And the union of believers with Christ makes itself patent by a daily progress. He is a living stone; they are to be made more and more like Him by a constant drawing near, a constant drinking in from His fulness of the life which is the light of men. In this light new graces grow within them; old sins are cast aside. By this preparation, this shaping of the living stones, the Spirit fits Christians for their place in the Spiritual building, unites them with one another and with Christ, fashions out of them a true communion of saints—saints, who, that they may advance in saintliness, have duties to perform both directly to God and for His sake to the world around. By diligence therein the upbuilding goes daily forward.

First, they are "to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." From the day when God revealed His will on Sinai, such has been the ideal set before His chosen servants. "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6) stands in the preface of the Divinely given law. And God changes not. Hence the praise of the Lamb's finished work when He has purchased unto God men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation is sung before the throne in the self-same strain: "Thou madest them to be unto God a kingdom and priests" (Rev. v. 10). Under the early dispensation God was leading men up from material sacrifices to pay unto Him true spiritual worship. The Psalmist has learnt the lesson when he pleads, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord" (Psalm iv. 6); and Hosea's sense of what was well-pleasing to God is made clear in his exhortation, "Take with you words and return unto the Lord; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good, so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips" (xiv. 3). The Apostle to the Romans is hardly more explicit than this when he urges, "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (xii. 1), or to the Hebrews, "Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name" (xiii. 15).

But the Apostles could add to the exhortations of the prophets and psalmists a ground of blessed assurance, could promise how these living sacrifices, these offerings of praise, had gained a certainty of acceptance through Jesus Christ: "Through Him we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in Him" (Eph. iii. 12); and in another place, "Having Him as a great priest over the house of God," that spiritual house into which believers are builded, "let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. x. 22). Thus do believers become priests unto God, in every place lifting up holy hands in prayer, prayer which is made acceptable through their great High-priest.

It was only from oral teaching that these Asian Christians knew of those lessons which we now can quote as the earliest messages to the Church of Christ. The Scripture was to them as yet the Scripture of the Old Testament, and to this St. Peter points them for the confirmation which it supplies. And his quotation is worthy of notice both for its manner and its matter: "Because it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame." The passage is from Isaiah (xxviii. 16); but a comparison with that verse shows us that the Apostle has not quoted all the words of the prophet, and that what he has given corresponds much more closely with the Greek of the Septuagint than with the Hebrew. The latter concludes, "He that believeth shall not make haste," and contains some words not represented in the version of the Seventy. The variations which St. Peter accepts are such as to assure us that for him (and the same is true for the rest of the Apostles) the purport, the spiritual lessons, of the word were all which he counted essential. Neither Christ Himself nor His Apostles adhere in quotation to precise verbal exactness. They felt that there lay behind the older record so many deep meanings for which the fathers of old were not prepared, but which Gospel light made clear. To somewhat of this fuller sense the translators of the Septuagint seem to have been guided. They lived nearer to the rising of the day-star. Through their labours God was in part preparing the world for the message of Christ. The words which Isaiah was guided to use express the confidence of a believer who was looking onward to God's promise as in the future: "He shall not make haste." He knows that the purpose of God will be brought to pass;

that, as the prophet elsewhere says, "The Lord will hasten it in its time" (lx. 22). Man is not to step in, Jacob-like, to anticipate the Divine working.

But "shall not be ashamed" was a form of the promise more suited to the days of St. Peter and these infant Churches. For the name of Christ was in many ways made a reproach; and only men of faith, like Moses and the heroes celebrated with him in Heb. xi., could count that reproach greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Other and weaker hearts needed encouragement, needed to be pointed to the privileges and glories which are the inheritance of the followers of Jesus. And in this spirit he applies the prophetic words, "For you therefore which believe is the preciousness." Faith makes real all the offers of the Gospel. It opens heaven, as to the vision of St. Stephen, so that while they are still here believers behold the glory of God to which Christ has been exalted, are assured of the victory which has been won for them, and that in His strength they may conquer also. Thus they receive continually the earnest of those precious and exceeding great promises (2 Peter i. 4) whereby they become partakers of the Divine nature.

But all men have not faith. The Bible tells us this on every page. God knows what is in man, and in His revelation He has set forth not only invitations and blessings, but warnings and penalties. Life and good, death and evil—these have been continually proclaimed as linked together by God's law, but ever with the exhortation, "Choose life." Of such warning messages St. Peter gives examples from prophecy and psalm: "But for such as disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner" (Psalm cxviii. 22), "and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" (Isa. viii. 14); "for they stumble at the word, being disobedient." Here the Apostle touches the root of the evil. The test of faith is obedience. It was so in Eden; it must be ever so. But now, as then, the tempter comes with his insidious questionings, "Hath God said?" and sowing doubts, he goes his way, leaving them to work; and work they do. Now it is the truth, now the wisdom, of the command, that men stumble at. But in each case they disobey. Those leave it unobserved; these despise and set it at naught. And the penalty is sure. For mark the twofold aspect of God's dealing which is set forth in the passages chosen by St. Peter to enforce his lesson. Spite of man's disobedience, God's purpose is not thwarted. The stone which He laid in Zion has been made the head of the corner. Though rejected by some builders it has lost none of its preciousness, none of its strength. Those who draw near unto it find life thereby; are made fit for their places in the Divine building, in the kingdom of the Lord's house which He will most surely establish as the latter days draw on. But they who disobey are overthrown. The despised stone, which is the sure word of God, rises up in men's self-chosen path, and makes them fall, and at the last, if they persist in despising it, will appear for their condemnation.

"Whereunto also they were appointed." The Apostle has in mind the words of Isaiah, how the prophet, in that place from which he has just quoted, declares that many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. This is the lot of the disobedient. These penalties dog that sin. It is the unvarying law of God. The Bible teaches this from first to last, by precepts as well as by examples. The disobedient must stumble. But the Bible does not teach that any were appointed unto disobedience. Such fatalist lessons are alien to God's infinite love. The two ways are set before all men. God tries us thus because He has gifted us above the rest of creation, that we may render Him a willing service. But neither prophet nor Apostle teaches that to stumble is to be finally cast away. Both picture God's mercy in as large terms as those in which St. Paul speaks of the Jews: "Did God cast off His people? God forbid. . . . They, if they continue not in their unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom. xi.).

A hardening in part hath befallen Israel, and to the Church of Christ there is offered the blessedness which aforetime was to be the portion of the chosen people. But the offer is made on like terms of obedient service, and involves large duties. St. Peter marks the likeness of the two offers by choosing the words of the Old Testament to describe the Christian calling, with its privileges and its duties. Believers in Christ are a peculiar treasure unto God from among all people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, even as was said to Israel (Exod. xix. 5, 6) when they came out of Egypt and received the Law from Sinai. But among the dispersion, for whom he writes, there were those who had been heathens, as well as the converts from Judaism. That he may show them also to be embraced in the new covenant, and their calling contemplated under the old, the Apostle points to another of God's promises, where Hosea (i. 10; ii. 23) tells of the grace that was ready to be shed forth on them which in time past were no people, but now are the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Thus all, Jew and Gentile, are to be made one holy fellowship, one people for God's own possession.

And this kingdom of God's priests has its duty to the world as well as unto God. Israel in time past was chosen to be God's witness to the rest of mankind, so that when men saw that no nation had God so nigh unto them as Jehovah was whenever Israel called upon Him, that no nation had statutes and judgments so righteous as all the Law which had been given from Sinai, they might be constrained to say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people," and might themselves be won to the service of a God so present and so holy. And now each member of the Christian body, while offering himself a living sacrifice to God, while delighting to do His will, while treasuring His law, is to exercise himself in wider duties, that God's glory may be displayed unto all men. One of the psalmists, whose words have been in part referred to Christ Himself, testifies how this priesthood for mankind should be fulfilled: "I have published righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation; I have not concealed Thy loving-kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalm xl. 9, 10). These were the excellences which the Psalmist had found in God's service, and his heart ran over with desire to impart the knowledge unto others. With juster reason shall

Christ's servants be prompted to a like evangel. They cannot hold their peace, specially while they consider how great blessings those lose who as yet own no allegiance to their Master.

"That ye may show forth the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." This theme fills the rest of the letter. The Apostle teaches that in every condition this duty has its place and its opportunities. Subjects may fulfil it, as they yield obedience to their rulers, servants in the midst of service to their masters, wives and husbands in their family life, each individual in the society where his lot is cast, and specially those who preside over the Christian congregations. Wherever the goodness of God's mercy has been tasted, there should be hearts full of thanksgiving, voices tuned to the praise of Him who has done great things for them. Lives led with this aim will make men to be truly what God designs: a holy nation; a kingdom of priests. And ever as men walk thus will the kingdom for which we daily pray be brought nearer.

The opportunities for winning men to Christ differ in modern times from those which were open to the earliest Christian converts; but there is still no lack of adversaries, no lack of those by whom the hope of the believer is deemed unreasonable: and now, as then, the good works which the opponents behold in Christian lives will have their efficacy. These cannot for ever be spoken against. A good manner of life in Christ shall, through His grace, finally put the gainsayers to shame. They shall learn, and gain blessing with the lesson, that the stone which they have so long been rejecting has been set up by God to be the foundation of His Church, the head stone of the corner, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIANS AS PILGRIMS IN THE WORLD.

1 Peter ii. 11-17.

The Apostle opens his exhortations with a word eminently Christian: "Beloved." It is a word whose history makes us alive to and thankful for the Septuagint Version. Without that translation there would have been no channel through which the religious ideas of Judaism could have been conveyed to the minds of the Western peoples. There are several Greek words which signify "to love," but bound up with every one of them is some sense which renders it ill-fitted to describe true Christian love and still less suited for expressing the love of God to man. The word in the text has been fashioned to tell of that love which St. Paul describes in his "more excellent way" (1 Cor. xiii.). In classic speech it implies more of the outward exhibition of welcome, than of deep affection. But the translators of the Septuagint have taken it specially for themselves, and use it first to express the love of Abraham for Isaac (Gen. xxii. 2); and, thus consecrating and elevating it, they have brought it at length to great dignity, for they employ it to signify the love of the Lord for His people and the highest love of man to God: "The Lord preserveth all them that love Him" (Psalm cxlv. 20); "The Lord loveth the righteous" (cxlvi. 8). So in the New Testament it can be used of the "well-beloved" Son Himself. With such an expression of their union to each other in the Lord does St. Peter preface his admonitions. They are counsels of love.

"I beseech you, as sojourners and pilgrims." The Christian looks for a life eternal. In comparison thereof the best things of this time are of little account, while the evil of the world renders it no safe resting-place. It is but as a lodging for a brief night, and at dawn the traveller sets forward for his true home. Hence the argument of the Apostolic entreaty. You have no long time to stay, and none to waste; your motto is ever "Onward!" "I beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Of the perils of life's journey the Psalmist gives us a telling sketch in the first verse of Psalm i.; and if we may accept the words as the outcome of David's experience, they teach us the subtlety of these lusts of the flesh, as they war against the soul. They had led David to adultery and murder. The first stage of the course through which they carry you is described as walking by the counsel of the ungodly. It is not being of their number, but only being ready to accept their advice; and though the course has begun, it is still possible for him who walks to turn round and to turn back. The next step shows captivation. The man stands in the way of sinners, not afraid of his company now, though they have a taint of positive guilt instead of the negative character of ungodliness. But the war against the soul goes on; and the captive at the next stage sinks down willingly, is pleased with his chains, sits in the seat of the scorners, as ready now as they to make a mock at sin. With good reason does St. Peter use most solemn words of entreaty. The peril at all times is great. The flesh warreth against the spirit. We cannot do the things that we would. But for these men the danger was extreme. Some of them had lived in surroundings where such sins were counted a part of religious duty; had the support of long prescription; were sanctioned and indulged in by those of the convert's own blood.

Yet the Apostle does not counsel the new-made Christians to run away from this battle. They owe a duty to those who are out of the way, and must not shrink from it, be it ever so painful: "having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles." Their lives are to be led in the sight of their fellow-men, to be so led as to have the approval of a clear conscience, and to be void of offence in the eyes of others. This outward seemliness is what Christian love exhibits as a testimony to Christ's grace and an attraction unto the world, making known unto all men the unsearchable riches of Christ: "that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." The seemly conduct of believers must be continuous, or it will fail of its effect. It is not one display of Christian conduct, nor occasional spasmodic manifestations thereof, which will win men to love the way of Christ. And this is the result without which Christ's people are not to rest satisfied. The evil reports of the adversaries are ill-grounded, but they do not think so; and the only means of removing their perverse view is by a continuous revelation of the excellence of Christ's service. They may rail, but we must bless; they may persecute: we must not retaliate, but returning good always for

their evil, make them see at length that this way which they are attacking has a character and a power to which they have been strangers. This enlightenment is implied in the word "behold": "They behold your good works." It denotes initiation into a mystery. And to unbelievers Christ's religion must be a mystery. The clearing of the vision leads them up to faith. The word in every place where it occurs in the New Testament is St. Peter's own, and he employs it once (2 Peter i. 16) to describe the vision, the insight, into the glory of Christ, which he and his fellows gained at the Transfiguration. Such a sight removes all questionings, and constrains the enlightened soul to join in the exclamation, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." The victory for Christ is to be won on the very ground where the opposition was made. In the very matter over which the enemy reviled, there shall they praise God for that which they erewhile maligned. This it is which constitutes their day of visitation. Some have thought the visitation intended was to be one of punishment for obstinate withstanding of the truth, but it surely harmonises better with the glory of God that the dispensation should be one of instruction and light. We seem to have a notable example of what is meant in the history of St. Paul. He in all earnestness persecuted the Way unto the death. The day of visitation came to him, a day which, while darkening the bodily vision, gave a clearness to the soul. The persecutor became the Apostle to the Gentiles, and the world bore him witness that now he preached the faith of which he had once made havoc (Gal. i. 23). This was God's own conquest, but in the same manner will believers be helped to win their victory. They are to aim at nothing less, never to rest content till the accusers of their good deeds are brought to glory in the performance of the same. So was Justin Martyr won to the side of Christianity: "When I heard the Christians accused and saw them fearless of death and of everything else that is counted fearful, I was sure they could not be living in wickedness and in the love of pleasures" (2 Apol. xii.). Well-doing shall not fail of its reward. Men will testify, as of Isaac of old, "We saw plainly that the Lord was with thee, and we said, Let there now be an oath betwixt us" (Gen. xxvi. 28).

The Apostle now turns to one illustration of Christian behaviour wherein the converts might be tempted to think themselves absolved from some portion of their duty. They were living under heathen rulers. Did their freedom in Christ release them from obligations to the civil powers? The question was sure to arise. St. Peter supplies both a rule and a reason: "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." Christians, just as other men, hold their place in the commonweal. All that the state requires citizens to do in aid of good government, order, the support of institutions and the like, will fall upon them, as upon others. Whether the demands made upon them in this wise be always for ends of which they would approve, they are not to discuss so long as their rulers provide duly for the social order and welfare. This is the apostolic rule. The reason is, Men are to submit thus for the Lord's sake. The powers that be are ordained of God, and He would have obedience yielded to them. The Bible knows nothing about forms of government; these are to be ordered as men at various times and under various conditions deem most helpful. But the Bible doctrine is that God uses all powers of the world for His own purposes and to work out His will. Of Pharaoh, who had deliberately despised God's messages through Moses, the Divine voice declared that he would long ago have been cut off from the earth, but was made to stand that he might show God's power, and that His name might be declared throughout all the earth (Exod. ix. 15, 16); and of the Assyrian at a later day (Isa. x. 10, 12) God tells how he was used as the rod of the Divine anger, but that the fruit of his stout heart and the glory of his high looks would surely be punished. God employs for His ends instruments with which He is not always well pleased. These can inflict His penalties, yea, even may be made to advance His glory. Pilate was assured by Christ Himself that the power which he was about to exercise was only by Divine permission: "Thou wouldest have no power against Me except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11); and St. Paul enforces obedience to authorities equally with St. Peter: "He that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God" (Rom. xiii. 2). Be subject, therefore, "whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise for them that do well." The order under which these converts were living was superintended by some officer appointed by the Roman emperor, and to this the form of the Apostle's words applies. The king is the Cæsar; the governor is the procurator or subordinate official by whom the imperial power was represented in the provinces. When St. Peter wrote, Nero ruled in Rome, and was represented abroad by ministers often of a like character.

How extreme must after this be the case of those who would claim freedom to resist the rulers under whom they live. God has allowed them to stand, He is using them for His own purposes, they may be the ministers of His vengeance, and to Him alone does vengeance belong. He intends them also to recognise the merit of the doers of good. It may be that they do not fulfil God's intent in either wise, yet while He suffers them to keep their power the Christian's duty is obedience to every civil enactment, for anarchy would be a curse both to him and to others, bringing in its train more hurt than help. When Christians shall be found among those who abide by the law of the lands wherein they dwell, even should their faith not be accepted by their rulers, their good citizenship will hardly fail to disarm hatred and abate persecution. And so they are to range themselves ever on the side of order. "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." For this end believers are to abide in the world, that through them the world may be renewed. The opponents of their faith suffer, says the Apostle, from lack of knowledge. As he says in another place, "they rail in matters whereof they are ignorant" (2 Peter ii. 12). Had men known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and did they know, they would not persecute His followers. But knowledge will not come without a preacher. Such preachers of the excellence of their faith shall the law-abiding Christians in each community be made. They shall publish the lessons of their own experience; they shall win

favour by their example. The world will recognise that these men have a secret which others do not possess, will find that they yield obedience to earthly rulers because they are above all things servants of God. It was through convicting them of their ignorance that Jesus put the Sadducees to silence. "Ye do err," was His argument, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 34). And when men are made sensible of such ignorance, they are silenced for very shame (1 Cor. xv. 34). This word "silenced" is very expressive both in the Gospel and here. It implies that a bridle or muzzle is put upon the mouth of ignorance, so that it may either be guided into a better way, or, if not so, be checked from doing harm. For some there are who not only will be ignorant, but foolish also, whom no teaching will profit. But even these will in the end be silenced. So, as says the brother Apostle, "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21).

The first part of the Apostle's exhortation in our verse had in view, it may be, more especially the Gentile converts. Their past life had been one of evil-doing in the sight of God; those whom they had left, and who were most likely to be their adversaries, were still walking in the same ways, and were to be won over and conquered for Christ. He now turns more directly to those who had been Jews. These were no longer bound to the observance of the ceremonial law, and we know from the New Testament as well as from Church history that with this release there were exhibited in the lives of many such excesses as made them a disgrace to the Christian name. We find much about these in the Second Epistle. St. Peter would not keep the Jewish converts under the burden of the Law, but he warns them against their besetting danger: "as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God." There were bad Jews, even as there have been bad Christians. These would welcome a rule which set them at liberty from the Mosaic observances, to which their adherence aforetime had been in outward seeming rather than in earnest zeal. To these St. Peter preaches that to lay aside Judaism is not to embrace Christianity. The Leader of the new faith had ever taught a different lesson. He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, and to set forth God's will in a nobler aspect. Those who would follow Him must take up the cross. His service is a yoke which restrains from all evil. Those who come to Christ come as bondservants of God, free only because they are bound to the observance of the noblest law. They must lay aside the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and not vindicate their freedom by using it as an occasion to riot and self-indulgence.

And the Apostle binds together all his teaching in four closing precepts: "Honour all men; Love the brotherhood; Fear God; Honour the king." All men, without distinction, are to be honoured, because in all there remains the image of God. It may be defaced, blurred exceedingly. The more needful is it to deal considerately with such, that we may help to restore what has been marred. Those who are our brethren in Christ, the brotherhood, we shall own with affection, seeking to be of one heart and one soul with them, because they belong to Christ. For them we shall have, if we be true to our faith, that mighty love which passeth in excellence both faith and hope. But the exhortation of St. Peter speaks in this wise: Ye who hold your brethren in Christ unspeakably dear, do not allow that love to suffice, to swallow up all regard for other men. They also need your thoughts, your help. The heathen, the unbelievers—these have the strongest possible claim, even their great need. And so with the other pair of precepts. Ye who fear God, which is your foremost duty, do not let that fear lessen your willingness to do honour to your earthly rulers. The feelings toward God and the king differ in character and in degree, but both have their place in proper share in the heart of the true servant of Christ.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

1 Peter ii. 18-25.

The Gospel history shows very clearly that during our Lord's lifetime His followers were drawn largely from the ranks of the poor. It was fitting that He who had been proclaimed in prophecy as "the servant of the Lord" should enter the world in humble estate; and, from the lowly position of the Virgin Mother and her husband, the life of Jesus for thirty years must have been spent in comparative poverty and amid poor surroundings. The major part of His chosen disciples were fisherfolk and such-like. And though we read of the wife of Herod's steward among the women who ministered unto Him, and of the richer Joseph of Arimathæa as a secret disciple, these are marked exceptions. To the poor His Gospel was preached, and among the poor it first made its way. The question of the chief priests, "Hath any of the rulers believed on Him, or of the Pharisees?" (John vii. 48) tells its own tale, as does also the significant record, "The common people heard Him gladly" (Mark xii. 37).

It need not therefore much surprise us if St. Peter, now that he begins to classify his counsels, addresses himself first to "household servants": "Servants, be in subjection to your masters, with all fear." We have, however, to bear in mind, as we consider the Apostle's exhortation, that most of those whom he addresses were slaves. They had no power of withdrawing themselves, though their service should prove burdensome and grievous. St. Paul, in writing to the same class, nearly always employs the word which means "bondservants." Yet his counsel agrees with St. Peter's. Thus he exhorts that their service be "with fear and trembling" (Eph. vi. 5); in Col. iii. 22, "Obey in all things them that are your masters." And to Timothy and Titus it is given as a part of their charge to "exhort servants to be in subjection to their own masters and to be well-pleasing to them in all things" (1 Tim. vi. 1; Titus ii. 9).

When St. Peter and St. Paul wrote, this slave population was everywhere very numerous. Gibbon calculates that in the reign of Claudius the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world; Robertson places the estimate much higher. These formed, then, a very large share of the public to which the first preachers had to appeal, and we can understand the importance to the Christian cause of the behaviour of these humble, but doubtless most

numerous, members of the society. Their lives would be a daily sermon in the houses of their masters. Hence the very earnest exhortations addressed to them that by their conduct they should adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that they should count their masters worthy of all honour; that the name of God and of the doctrine be not blasphemed; that they should be in subjection with all fear. Everything in the New Testament concerning slaves goes to show that they were a most important factor in the early Christian societies.

Men wonder nowadays that there is so little said by any of the Apostles about freeing slaves from their bondage. The best men in those times and long before appear to have regarded slavery as one of the institutions with which they were bound to rest content. It flourished everywhere; it was countenanced in the Scriptures of the older dispensation. Eleazar was Abraham's slave, and the Law in many passages contemplates the possession by Israelites of persons who were bought with their money. Hence we find no remonstrance against slave-holding in the New Testament writings, only advice to those who were in such bondage to cultivate a spirit which would render it less galling and to strive that by their behaviour the cause of Christ might be advanced. St. Paul represents the ideas of his age when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Wast thou called being a bondservant? Care not for it; but if thou canst be made free, use it rather" (1 Cor. vii. 21). Freedom was worth having, but any heroic effort to get rid of the yoke is not encouraged in the Epistles. Yet it must have been a lot which called for the exercise of much moral strength to make it bearable. Even from the house of the Christian Philemon the slave Onesimus found cause to run away. But St. Paul in his letter admits no right on the slave's part to take this course. With the Apostle there is no question that the first duty is to go back to his master. All that he urges is that the common profession of Christianity by slave and master ought to, and doubtless would, alleviate the conditions of servitude. There were in Christianity, as time has shown, germs which would fructify, a spirit which some day would strike off the chains of slaves. But the vision of such a time had not dawned either for St. Paul or St. Peter. Christ has overcome the world in many other matters beside slavery. It is only that Christians are so tardy in awaking to the fulness of His lessons.

So in apostolic days the rights and claims of slave-masters were looked upon as indisputable. Be subject, "not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." There is to be no resistance, no lapse in duty. About service rendered to good masters there might be little apprehension, but even here St. Paul finds occasion for warning. "They that have believing masters," he says, "let them not despise them because they are brethren" (1 Tim. vi. 2). Christian freedom was not without its dangers in many forms, especially to minds wherein liberty was a strange idea. But froward masters are to be faithfully served likewise, and care is to be taken withal to remove every occasion for their frowardness. The apostolic lesson is to make suffering endurable, noble, acceptable to God, by seeing that it be always undeserved. How strange a doctrine this in the eyes of the world! The rule of purely human conduct would be just the opposite. If wrong be undeserved, rebel at once. Christianity supplies a motive for the contrary course: "conscience toward God." The world's spirit is not His spirit, and to have praise with Him should be the Christian's single aim. Men can at times be patient when rebuke is deserved, but the world sees that that deserves no credit. "What thank have ye?" they cry. But they give no praise for the bearing of unmerited rebuke.

The world counts such conduct weakness, and is still far from comprehending the Divineness of the virtue of yielding patiently to wrong. God has long been teaching the lesson, but it has been slowly learnt. He chose the milder, timid Jacob rather than the fiery Esau. Both had faults in multitude. With the world Esau is oft the favourite. At a later day he stamps with approval the noble mercy of David in sparing Saul, while round Daniel and his companions in Babylon there gathers something of a halo of New Testament sanctity by reason of the noble confession which they made under persecution. These are chapters in the Divine lesson-book. Such lives marked stages in the preparation for the Servant of the Lord. Men, if they would have hearkened, were being trained to estimate such a character at God's value. Now Christ's example is before us, and we are bidden to follow it.

"For hereunto were ye called." Strange invitation to be dictated by love, a call to suffering! And yet the Master at first promises nothing else to His followers: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24). And what can a Christian wish for but to be like Christ? And the very reason given ought to make us love the cross. We are called unto suffering because Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. He has trodden the hard road, the winepress of the wrath of God, alone and for men. At this point the Apostle begins to apply to Christ Isaiah's description of the suffering "Servant of the Lord," "who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (Isa. liii.). But soon the memory of the scenes he had witnessed is present with him; and his words, though holding to the spirit of Isaiah's picture, become a description of what he himself had seen and heard when Jesus was taken and crucified: "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." How the brief words sum up and recall the dark history—Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod; the mockery, the scourging, the railing crowd, the dying Jesus, and the parting prayer, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

So far the Apostle speaks of the example of Christ, which, though far above and beyond us, we are exhorted and called on to follow. And there are many who will go with him thus far who value our Lord's work only for its lofty example. Indeed, it is characteristic of those who deny the mediatorial office of Christ to be loudest in magnifying the grandeur of His character. To His good works, His love for men, His spotless life, His noble lessons, they accord untiring praise, as though thereby they would atone for denying Him that office which is more glorious still. But St. Peter stops at no such half-way house. He knows in whom he has believed, knows Him for the Son of the living God, a

Teacher with whom were the words of eternal life. So in pregnant words he sets forth the doctrine of the Atonement as the end of Christ's suffering: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness." He bare our sins. The words tell of something beyond our powers to comprehend; but some light is shed on them by a kindred passage (Matt. viii. 17), where the Evangelist applies to the work of Jesus those other words from Isa. liii., "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." The narrative in the Gospel has just recorded how Jesus wrought many miracles. First, a leper was healed, then the centurion's servant, next Simon's wife's mother, and afterwards many sick and demoniacs beside. There is no record here of the effect produced on Jesus Himself by these exhibitions of miraculous power, but from other passages in the Gospels we do find that He was conscious in Himself of a demand on His power when such cures were wrought. Thus we are told, at the cure of the woman with the issue, that Jesus perceived in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth (Mark v. 30); and again when many were cured, that "power came forth from Him and healed them all" (Luke vi. 19). Of the woman Jesus says expressly, "Thy faith hath made thee whole"; and the manifestation of eagerness to touch Jesus is a sign of the faith of the others whom the Divine power blessed with health.

The Bible recognises everywhere the analogy between sin and sickness. May we not trace some analogy between the Lord's works of healing and that mightier deliverance from sin won by Christ upon the cross, an analogy which may help, if but a little, to give meaning to the bearing by Christ of human sins? A power went forth when the sick were healed; and through that imparted power they were restored to health, faith being the pathway which brought the Divine virtue to their aid. Thus Jesus bore their diseases and took them away. Look through this figure on the work of our redemption. Christ has borne the burden of sin. He has died for sin that men may die from sin, that sin may be slain in us, the fell disease healed by the power of His suffering. We cannot comprehend what was done for the sick when Christ was on earth, nor what is wrought for sinners by His grace in heaven. Those alone who reap the blessing know its certainty; and they can but say, as the blind man whose sight was restored, "One thing I know: that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John ix. 25).

To this teaching, that Christ's suffering wrought man's rescue, St. Peter adds emphasis by another quotation from that chapter of Isaiah which he has so much in mind: "by whose stripes ye were healed." Christ was stricken, and God grants to His sufferings a power to heal the souls of those whom He loves because they strive to love Him. Healing through wounds! Soundness through that which speaks only of injury! Mysterious dispensation! But long ago it had been foreshadowed, and shown also how little connection there was to be, except through faith, between the remedy and the disease. Those who were bitten of the serpents in the wilderness gazed on the brazen serpent, and were healed. In the dead brass was no virtue, but God was pleased to make of it a speaking sacrament; so has it pleased Him to give healing of sins to those who by faith appropriate the sacrifice on Calvary. Christ has claimed the type for Himself: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John xii. 32).

And now, as is so often his wont, St. Peter varies the figure. The wounded sinner finding cure becomes the wandering sheep that has been brought back into the fold: "for ye were going astray like sheep, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." But the message, the teaching, the love, is all the same. He who before was the great Exemplar, whose footsteps we should follow, is now the Shepherd, the Good Shepherd, who goes before His sheep. This Shepherd has been a Sufferer, too. He has given Himself up as prey to the wolves that His flock might be saved. Now, with a voice of love, He calls His sheep by name; and hearing, they follow Him.

But He is more than this. Brought within the fold, the sheep still need His care; and it is freely given. He is the Bishop, the Overseer, the Watchman for His people's safety, who, having gathered them within the fold, tends them with constant watchfulness. The figure passes over thus into the reality in the Apostle's closing words. The cure which the great Healer desires to accomplish is in the souls of men. For them His care is bestowed, first to bring them safe out of the way of evil, then for ever to keep them under the sheltering care of His abundant love.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN WIVES AND HUSBANDS.

1 Peter iii. 1-7.

The Apostle gave at first (ii. 13) the rule of Christian submission generally; then proceeded to apply it to the cases of citizens and of servants. In the same way he now gives injunctions concerning the behaviour of wives and husbands. The precept with which he began holds good for them also. "In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." The life and teaching of Jesus had wrought a great change in the position of women, a change which can be observed from the earliest days of Christianity. We can gather in what estimation women were generally held among the Jews at that time from the expression used in the account of our Lord's interview with the woman of Samaria. There it is said (John iv. 27) that the disciples marvelled that Jesus was talking with a woman. Such a feeling must afterwards have been entirely dispelled, for all through the earthly life of Christ we find Him attended by women who ministered unto Him; we read of His close friendship with Mary and Martha, and are told, at the time of His death (Matt. xxvii. 55), that many women beheld the Crucifixion afar off, having followed Him from Galilee. Women were the earliest visitors to the tomb on the great Easter morning, and to them, among the first (Luke xxiv. 22), was the Lord's resurrection made known.

We are not surprised therefore, in the history of the infant Church, to read (Acts i. 14) that women were present among the disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, nor to learn how the daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts xxi. 9) took a share in the labours of their father for the cause of Christ,

or that Priscilla (Acts xviii. 26), equally with her husband, was active in Christian good offices. Other examples occur in the Acts of the Apostles: Dorcas, Lydia, and the mother of Timothy; and the constant mention of women which we find in the salutations with which St. Paul concludes his letters make it clear how large a part they played in the early propagation of the faith. "Fellow-workers," "servants of the Church," "labourers in the Lord," are among the terms which the Apostle applies to them; and we know from the Pastoral Epistles what help the primitive Church derived from the labours of its deaconesses and widows.

To be occupied in such duties was sure to give to women an influence which they had never possessed before; and the women converts, in countries such as these Asiatic provinces, were exposed to the same sort of danger which beset the slave population at their acceptance of the Christian faith. They might begin to think meanly of others, even of their own husbands, if they were still content to abide in heathenism. Such women might incline at times to take counsel for their life's guidance with Christian men among the various congregations to which they belonged and to set a value on their advice above any which they could obtain from their own husbands. They might come to entertain doubts also whether they ought to maintain the relations of married life with their heathen partners. With the knowledge that such cases might occur, St. Peter gives this lesson, and as in the case of slaves, so here, he gives no countenance to the idea that to become a Christian breaks off previous relations. Wives, though they have accepted the faith, have wifely duties still. Like Christian citizens living in a heathen commonwealth, they are not by religion released from their previously contracted obligations; they are to abide in their estate, and use it, if it may be done, for the furtherance of the cause of Christ. Be in subjection to your own husbands; they have still their claim on your duty.

There is much gentleness in the Apostle's next words. He knows that there may arise cases where believing wives have husbands who are heathen. But he speaks hopefully, as thinking they would not be of frequent occurrence: "even if any obey not the word." Wives, especially if they be of such a character as the Apostle would have them be, could not have been won to the faith of Christ without much converse with their husbands on so deep a subject; and the word which was working effectually in the one would often have its influence with the other. It might not always be so. But husbands, though not obeying the word as yet, are not to be despaired of.

And here we may turn aside to dwell on the tone of hope in which St. Peter speaks of these husbands who obey not. For the word (ἀπειθοῦντες) by which they are described, is the same that is used in ii. 18 of those who stumble at the word, being disobedient. The lessons here given to Christian wives, not to despair of winning their husbands for Christ, gives warrant for what was said on the former passage: that the disobedience which causes men to stumble need not last for ever, nor imply final obduracy and rejection from God's grace. But this by the way.

The Apostle adds the strongest motive to confirm wives in holding to their married state: "That the husbands may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives: beholding your chaste behaviour coupled with fear." "Without the word" here means that there is to be no discussion. They are so to live as to make their lives a sermon without words, to work conviction without debate; then, when the victory is won, there will remain no trace of combat: all will tell of gain, and nothing of loss.

And once again St. Peter uses his special word (ἐποπτεύειν) as he describes how the husbands shall be affected by the behaviour of their wives. They shall gaze on it as a mystery, the key to which they do not possess. The wives in heathen homes must have been obliged to hear and see many things which were grievous and distasteful. The husbands could hardly fail to know that it was so. If, then, they still found wifely regard and respect, wifely submission, with no assertion of a law of their own, no comparison of the lives of Christian men with those of their own husbands, if a silent, consistent walk were all the protest which the Christian wives offered against their heathen environments, such a life could hardly fail of its effect. There must be a powerful motive, a mighty, strengthening power, that enabled women to abide uncomplainingly in their estate. For this the husbands would surely search, and in their search would learn secrets to which they were strangers, would learn how their tongue was restrained where remonstrance might seem more natural, how pure life was maintained in spite of temptations to laxity, and the marriage bond exalted with religious observance even when reverence for the husband was meeting with no equal return. Such lives would be more powerful than oratory, have a charm beyond resistance, would win the husbands first to wonder, then to praise, and in the end to imitation.

And from describing the grace of such a life the Apostle turns to contrast it with other adornments of which the world thinks highly. "Whose adorning," he says, "let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, and of putting on apparel." We can see from the catalogue in Isaiah (iii. 18-23) that the daughters of Zion in old days had gone to great lengths in this outside bravery, and provoked the Lord to smite them. These had forgotten the simplicity of Sarah. But that in the house of Abraham there were found no such ornaments is hardly to be believed. The patriarch, who sent (Gen. xxiv. 53) to Rebekah jewels of silver and jewels of gold, did not leave his own wife unadorned. Nor does the language of St. Peter condemn Rebekah's bracelets, if they be worn with Rebekah's modesty. The New Testament does not teach us to neglect or despise the body. A misrendering in the Authorised Version, "Who shall change our vile body" (Phil. iii. 21), has long seemed to lend countenance to such a notion. It is one of the gains of the Revised Version that we now read in that place, "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation." Sin has robbed the body of its primal dignity, but it is to be restored and made like unto the body of Christ's glory. And He did not despise the body when He deigned to wear it that He might draw nearer unto us. If these things be present to our thoughts we shall seek to bestow on the body whatever may make it comely. The mischief arises when the adornment of the outer brings neglect of the inner man,

when fine apparel has for its companions the haughtiness, the stretched-forth necks, and wanton eyes which Isaiah rebukes. Then it is that it rightly comes under condemnation. When the jewel is (as Rebekah's was) the gift of some dear one—a parent, a husband, a near kinsman—it rouses grateful reminiscences, and may fitly be prized, and holily worn, and ranked near to the rings of betrothal and of marriage.

Let these be the feelings which regulate womanly adornment, and it may be made a part of the culture of the heart, the inner man, which St. Peter urges the Christian wives to be careful to adorn: Let your adorning "be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." All Scripture regards man as of twofold nature, the outward and the inward, of which the latter is the more precious. He is a Jew who is one inwardly (Rom. ii. 29); the inward man delighteth in the law of God (Rom. vii. 22); while the outward man perishes the inward man may be renewed day by day (2 Cor. iv. 16), being strengthened with power through God's Spirit. This hidden man is the centre from which all the strength of Christian life comes. Let this be rightly adorned, and the outward life will need no strict rules; there will be no fear of excess, least of all when the inner life is cared for because it is precious before God. Its pure array passeth gold and gems, be they ever so beautiful. This is a grace which never fades, but will flourish through eternity.

The Apostle proceeds to commend it by a noble example. The Old Testament Scriptures do not dwell largely on the lives of women, but a study of what is said will oftentimes reveal deeper meaning in the record and put force into a solitary word. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews couples Sarah with Abraham in the list of heroes and heroines of faith, and St. Peter from a single word finds a text to extol the submission which she showed to her husband. He probably refers to Gen. xviii. 12, where she gives the title of "lord" to Abraham, as Rachel in another place (Gen. xxxi. 35) does to her father Laban: "For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." A Scripture example which has more in common with the experience of the Asian women is the life of Hannah. Her lot, for a time at least, was as full of grief and disappointment as theirs could be, but her trust in God was unshaken. Her patience under provocation was exemplary, while the picture of her home life is one full of touching affection on the part of both husband and wife; and the mother's gratitude, when her prayer was granted, is set forth in her noble hymn of thanksgiving and in the devotion of her child to the service of the God who had bestowed him. Ruth is another of those holy women who must have been in St. Peter's thoughts, who, though not of the house of Israel, manifested virtues in her life which made her fit to be the ancestress of King David. The Apostle, however, seems to have had a purpose in his special mention of Sarah. As the sons of Israel looked back to Abraham and to the covenant sealed with him, yea, not seldom prided themselves on being his children, so the daughters of Israel counted themselves as Sarah's daughters after the flesh. St. Peter now gives them another ground for that claim. God's promises to Abraham have been fulfilled in Christ, and so Christian Jewesses are more truly than ever daughters of Sarah. "Whose children ye now are." But to the heathen converts the same door was opened. They by their faith were now made partakers of the ancient covenant. They too were become Sarah's daughters. Let them, one and all, continue in the well-doing which has been commended; let it be seen in the daily round (*ἀναστροφῇ*) of their lives, led in quietness and humility. The excessive love of adornment against which they are warned marks a condition of boldness and unrest. But unrest may enter into the other actions of their life. Their behaviour is to be coupled with fear and reverence, but it should eschew everything which partakes of flighty irregularity. It should be steady and consistent, running into no extremes, either of humiliation or the contrary. "Do well, and be not put in fear by any terror."

The Apostle now addresses Christian husbands. In his counsel to subjects and slaves he has not dwelt on the duties of rulers and masters. Perhaps he judged it unlikely that his letter would come to the hands of many such, or it may be he thought the lessons which he had to give were more needed by the subject people, if Christ's cause were to be furthered. But with husbands and wives life has of necessity a great deal in common, and the one partner can hardly receive counsel which is not of interest to the other. To the wives the Apostle spake as though examples of unbelieving husbands might be rare. Christian husbands with unbelieving wives he hardly seems to contemplate. We know from St. Paul (1 Cor. vii. 16) that there were such. But doubtless heathen wives hearkened to Christian husbands more readily than heathen husbands to their Christian wives. The husbands are to use their position as heads of their wives with judgment and discretion: "Dwell with your wives according to knowledge." The knowledge of which St. Peter speaks is not religious, godly, Christian knowledge, but that foresight and thoughtfulness which the responsibility of the husband calls for. He will understand what things for his wife's sake he should do or leave undone. This knowledge, which results in considerate conduct towards her, will manifest itself in Christian chivalry. The woman is physically the feebler of the two. No burden beyond her powers will be laid upon her; and by reason of her weaker nature regard and honour will be felt to be her due. For the woman is the glory of the man (1 Cor. xi. 7). Such observance will not degenerate into undue adulation nor foolish fondness, apt to foster pride and conceit, but will be inspired by the sense that in God's creation neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man.

But beyond and above these daily graces of domestic and social intercourse, the Apostle would have husband and wife knit together by a higher bond. They are "joint heirs of the grace of life." Both are meant to be partakers of the heavenly inheritance, and such participation makes their chief duty here to be preparation for the life to come. Those who are bound together not by wedlock only, but by the hope of a common salvation, will find a motive in that thought to help each other in life's pilgrimage, each to shun all that might cause the other to stumble: "That your prayers be not hindered." They are fellow-travellers with the same needs. Together they

can bring their requests before God, and where the two join in heart and soul Christ has promised to be present as the Third. And in praying they will know one another's necessities. This is the grandest knowledge the husband can attain to for the honouring of his wife; and using it, he will speed their united supplications to the throne of grace, and the union of hearts will not fail of its blessing.

CHAPTER X.

THEY WHO BLESS ARE BLESSED.

1 Peter iii. 8-16.

The Apostle now ceases from his special admonitions, and enforces generally such qualities and conduct as must mark all who fear the Lord. "Finally," he says—and the word may indicate the close of his counsels; but the virtues which he inculcates are of so important a character that he may very well intend them as the apex and crown of all his previous advice—"be ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded." St. Peter has here grouped together a number of epithets of which all but one are only used in the New Testament by himself, and they are of that graphic character which is so conspicuous in all the Apostle's language. "Like-minded." If the word be not there, the spirit is largely exemplified in the early history of the Church. How often we hear the phrase "with one accord" in the opening chapters of the Acts. Thus the disciples continued in prayer (i. 14); thus they went daily to the temple (ii. 46); thus they lifted up their voices to God (iv. 24), for all they that believed were of one heart and one soul (iv. 32). Such lives exhibit harmony of thought, the same aim and purpose. The men may not, will not, always use the same means or follow the same methods, but they will all be seeking one result. Such unity is worth more than uniformity. "Compassionate." This feeling St. Paul describes (Rom. xii. 15) as rejoicing with them that do rejoice and weeping with them that weep. For the παθήματα of this life are not always sorrowful, though the best of them are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed (Rom. viii. 18). "Loving as brethren." The sense of the brotherhood of Christians is strongly marked in all the New Testament Scriptures. It is the name by which our Lord claims fellowship with men, being not ashamed to call them brethren. It is the designation of the Christian body from the first (Matt. xxiii. 8), is constantly found in the Acts and the Epistles (Acts vi. 3; ix. 30; xi. 29), and has been used of the Church in every age, marking how as one family we dwell in Him. Next comes the word which is not St. Peter's alone: "Tender-hearted." St. Paul has it (Eph. iv. 32), but it is no Greek notion. It was a Jewish idea that deep feeling was closely connected with some of the organs of the body; and in the Old Testament, as in the story of Joseph (Gen. xliii. 30) and elsewhere (i. Kings iii. 26), we come upon such phrases as "His bowels did yearn upon his brother." This Hebrew notion the LXX. has conveyed into Greek by the word which St. Peter here uses, and which those translators had used and consecrated long before. For them so exalted was the thought contained in it that they employ it in the prayer of Manasses (ver. 7.) to express the tenderness of God towards the penitent, the yearning love of the Father, who sees the prodigal afar off, and has compassion. "Humble-minded." This word and those akin to it are almost a New Testament creation. The heathen had no admiration for the temper it expresses, and where they do use the word it is in a bad sense as signifying "cowardly" and "mean-spirited." Before Christ none had taught, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xxiii. 11).

It is manifest that if such harmony, kind feeling, attachment, affection, and humility flourished among believers, these virtues would put discord to the rout, and leave no occasion for rending the oneness of the Christian body. They would also be proof against evil from without, both in deed and speech, neither tempted to "render evil for evil" in their actions nor "reviling for reviling" in their words. They have a duty to the world, and cannot thus belie their Christian profession. They are called to adorn the doctrine of their Saviour, and the Master's Sermon has among its prominent precepts "Bless them that curse you." This is the spirit of St. Peter's exhortation, "But contrariwise blessing"; that is, Be ye of those who bless. For there is a law of recompense with God in good things as in evil; the blessers shall be blessed: "For hereunto were ye called, that ye should inherit a blessing." It is as though he urged them thus: Ye were aforetime enemies of God; but ye have been made partakers of His heavenly calling (Heb. iii. 1), that ye may come to blessing. This should move you to bless your enemies. And more than this, the servant of God may receive no blessing from the world, may get curses for his blessing; but yet he knows where to flee for consolation. He can pray with the Psalmist, "Let them curse, but bless Thou" (Psalm cix. 28), conscious that the Lord will stand at the right hand of the needy.

The psalmists knew much of such trials, and it is from the words of one of them (Psalm xxxiv. 12-16) that St. Peter enforces his own lesson. It is a psalm full of the knowledge of the trials of God's servants: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous"; but it is rich also in plenitude of comfort: "The Lord delivereth him out of them all." The father of long ago teaches thus to his children the fear of the Lord: "He that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: and let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil." A glance at the Psalm will show that the Apostle has not quoted precisely; and though he has much in common with the Greek of the LXX., he does not adhere closely to that. But he gives to the full the spirit both of the Hebrew and the Greek. The life of which the Psalmist speaks is life in this world. The original explains this by making the latter clause of the verse, "and loveth many days, that he may see good." And the love is to be a noble feeling, a desire to make life worth living. Such a life must exhibit watchfulness over words and actions. The precepts begin at the beginning, with control of the tongue. Control that, and you are master of the rest. "It is a little member, but

boasteth great things." "The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body" (James iii. 5, 6). It needs to be kept as with a bridle, and not only when the ungodly are in sight, but constantly. But the words of the Psalm contemplate a further danger. Men may give good words with the lips while the heart is full of bitterness. Then the lips are lying, and this is an evil as great as the former, and more perilous to him who commits it, because the sin does not come to the light that it may be reproved, but contrives to wear the mask of virtue.

And the actions need watchfulness also. They must not only possess the negative quality of abstinence from evil, but the positive stamp of good deeds done. "By their fruits ye shall know them." And the work will be no light one. Peace is to be sought, and the Apostle uses a word which implies that a chase is needful to obtain it. St. Paul has a passage very much in the spirit of St. Peter's teaching here, and the words of which picture distinctly the difficulties which the Christian will have to labour against: "Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3). This tells us why our Apostle urges the pursuit of peace. It is the clasp which binds the Christian communion together. From all sorts of causes men are prone to fall apart, to break the oneness; and peace is able to hold them fast. Hence the diligence in seeking it, the earnestness of the pursuit that it may not elude us.

But when all is done, when men have not been sitting with folded hands waiting and dreaming that peace would come without pursuit, but have laboured for it, they do not always attain to it. "I am for peace," says the Psalmist, "but when I speak, they are for war" (Psalm cxx. 7). And so the disappointed struggler is directed to the sure source of consolation amid discomfiture. The Lord marks his efforts, knows their earnest purpose in spite of their ill-success. He beholds also those who have withstood them, but with far other regard. St. Peter has not quoted what the Psalmist says of their fate: "God will root out the remembrance of them from the earth." God's righteous pilgrim is not forgotten. His prayer is heard, and will be answered for good. No shadow has come between him and God, though his lot seem very dark. Neither can the wrongdoer raise a shadow to screen himself from the all-seeing eyes. All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Thus far St. Peter has used the language of the Psalmist, and among the converts the Jews would be sure to supply from the context those other words, "O fear the Lord, all ye His saints; for they that fear Him lack nothing." The Apostle clothes that same thought in his own words: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?" He has repeatedly dwelt on the power of goodness to win unbelievers to its side (ii. 12, 15; iii. 1), and the same idea shapes his words now. In those days the Zealots were well known, and their unbounded enthusiasm for their evil cause. Josephus lays the destruction of Jerusalem at their door. The Apostle would have Christ's disciples "zealots" for Him. Let there be nothing half-hearted in their service, and its power will be irresistible. It will avail either to silence and confound the adversaries, or to strengthen the faithful so that the smell of the furnace of persecution shall not pass upon them. They shall be enabled to break the chains with which their foes would bind them as easily as Samson his green withes. "But and if ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye." If ye endure chastening, God is dealing with you as with sons. He has called Himself your Father; Christ has claimed you for brethren. He, the righteous, suffered; shall we not reckon it for a blessing to be worthy to bear the cross? Only let us be of good courage. He that endureth to the end shall find salvation. "And fear not their fear, neither be troubled." Again St. Peter applies the promises of the ancient Scriptures. In the days of Isaiah all Judah was in terror, king and people alike, before the gathering armies of Syria and Israel. In their dread comes the prophetic message, and says to the confederates, "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces," and to the tiny power of Judah, "Let the Lord of hosts be your fear, and let Him be your dread, and He shall be for a sanctuary" (Isa. viii. 12, 13). The condition of these Asian converts was one of heaviness through manifold temptations. While the believer lives here he always has his assailants, and in those early days the rulers of the earth were not seldom among the adversaries of the Christians. Hence the Apostle's exhortation is most apposite: Fear not their fear—the things which they would dread, and with which they will threaten you. For what are they? They may take away your property. Be not troubled; you would soon have had to leave it. The loss a few years sooner is no terrible affliction. They may drive you from one land to another. To strangers and sojourners what can that signify? If they cast you into prison, the Lord who shut the lions' mouths for Daniel is your Lord also; and I, Peter, know how angel-hands have removed chains and opened prison doors. And should they scourge and torture you, do you shrink from thus being made like unto your Master? "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord."

Isaiah's message to disheartened Judah was, "The Lord of hosts, Him shall ye sanctify." On His word shall ye rely, assured that He, the holy God, will fail neither in wisdom nor power. To think otherwise is not to sanctify Him. The Lord knoweth how to deliver out of temptation. St. Peter, who knew Christ as the Son of the living God, applies to the Son the words first spoken of the Father. The Son is one with the Father. Hence he bids the afflicted converts, suffering for righteousness' sake, not to be afraid of the world's terror, but to sanctify Christ in their hearts as Lord. He is the Emmanuel, whom Isaiah was sent to promise. God has dwelt among men, and will be the God and the Deliverer of all His faithful ones. This sense of "God with us" they know, and with the knowledge comes a power not their own, and they fear no more the fear of their adversaries.

It is against foes of another sort that the Christian has now to hold fast his faith, and sanctify Christ as his Lord. There are those who deny Him all that is supernatural, and all that speaks of the Divine in His history; who treat the resurrection and ascension of the Lord as groundless legends, due to the ignorance of His followers; and who leave to the Jesus of the Gospels only the qualities of a better fellow-man. These are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

And of such dangerous teaching it would seem as if St. Peter had been thinking in the words that follow: "Being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you." The believer rests on Christ in faith. But though in his belief there must be much which he cannot fathom, yet it is a belief for men. His service is a reasonable service. He can point to abundance of evidence as ground for his faith; he believes because he has experienced the power of the Spirit, and fears not to trust the Christ whom he has sanctified in his heart as Lord; he knows in whom he has believed. But beside this, he can study the Old Testament; and there he learns how the coming incarnation dominates every portion of the volume, how from the first redemption through the seed of the woman was made known; and he follows the revelation step by step till in the evangel of Isaiah he has predictions almost as vivid and plain as the narrative of the Gospels. Those four narratives are another warrant for his faith, their wondrous agreement amid multitudinous divergences, divergences so marked that none could have ventured to put them forth as history except while the knowledge of those who had seen the Lord and been witnesses of His actions was available to vouch for and stamp as true these varicoloured pictures of the life of Jesus. He has further vouchers in the lives and letters of those who knew and followed the Lord, followed Him, most of them, on the road that led through persecution unto death. And beside all this, there stands and grows the Church built upon this history, strong with the power of this faith and in her holy worship sanctifying Christ as her Lord. These are things to which the Christian appeals. They are not the only reasons for belief, but they are those of which he can make other men cognisant, and to which the world cannot continue always blind; and they have a force against which the gates of hell have not yet been, nor ever will be, able to prevail.

These reasons he gives "with meekness and fear"—with meekness, because in that spirit all the victories of the Lord are to be won; with fear, lest by feeble advocacy the cause of Christ may suffer. And he does not bring words alone with him to the struggle, but the power of a godly life; he is prepared for the conflict by the possession of a good conscience before God and men; he bears in mind the prophetic exhortation, "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord" (Isa. lii. 11). That injunction was given to those who were in their day strangers and pilgrims. But with the good conscience, pureness of heart in the service of the Lord, there need be no haste, no flight. The Lord will go before them; the God of Israel will be their rearward. And the good conscience has lost none of its efficacy: "Wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ." Of the Christian's faith and hope, his revilers know nothing, but his good life and his reasons for it men can see and hear. And these shall gain the victory. But they must go hand in hand. The deeds must bear out the words. When he testifies that his hope is placed where neither persecutions nor revilings avail against it, his life must show him fearless of what the world can do. His position toward it must be that which St. Peter himself took: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv. 19). Men may marvel at what they see in him, but they will take knowledge that he has been with Jesus. He is created, newcreated, in Christ Jesus unto good works (Eph. ii. 10). His revilers use him despitefully; but, according to Christ's lesson, he prays for them, and their shafts glance pointless off. Well does St. Paul close his catalogue of the Christian armour "with all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 18). Thus does the believer wield his weapons effectually. His revilers have no reason for their words; he is careful that they shall have none. As with Peter and John the council could say nothing against their good deed and let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, so shall it be with others of the faithful; and, for very shame at the futility of their accusations and assaults, the revilers shall be put to silence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REWARDS OF SUFFERING FOR WELL-DOING.

1 Peter iii. 17-22.

The Apostle comes back to his solemn subject. Why are the righteous called to suffering? The question was perplexing these Asian Christians when St. Peter wrote. Previous ages had pondered over it, Job and his friends among the number; and men ponder over it still. St. Peter has suggested several answers: The faith of Christ's servants after trial will be found praiseworthy at the appearance of their Lord; to bear wrong with patience is acceptable with God; it is a happy lot, Christ has said, to suffer in the cause of righteousness. His next response to the question is more solemn than these: Suffering is sent to the righteous by the will of God. It never comes otherwise, and is meant to serve two several purposes: it is intended to benefit the unrighteous, and to be a blessing and glory to the righteous who endure it.

He shows that this is God's will by two examples. Christ, the sinless, suffered at the hands of sinful men, and for their sakes, as well as for all sinners; and though we only can approach the subject with deep reverence and use the language of Scripture rather than our own about the effect of suffering on Christ Himself, we are taught therein that He was made perfect as the Leader of salvation by the things which He suffered: and the Apostle here describes the sequel of those sufferings by the session on the right hand of God in heaven, where angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto Him.

But God's ordinance in respect of the suffering of the godly has been the same from of old. In the ancient world Noah had found grace in God's sight in the midst of a graceless world. He was made a witness and a preacher of righteousness; and the faithful building of the ark at God's command was a constant testimony to the wrong-doers, whose sole response was mockery and a continuance in the corruption of their way. But God had not left them without witness; and when the Deluge came at length, some hearts may have gone forth to God in

penitence, though too late to be saved from the destruction. To Noah and those with him safety was assured; and when the door of the ark was opened, and the small band of the rescued came forth, it was to have the welcome of God's blessing and to be pointed to a token of His everlasting covenant. In this wise St. Peter adds once more to the consolations of those who endure grief and suffering wrongfully, and thus does he set forth the general drift of his argument. But the whole passage is so replete with helpful lessons that it merits the fullest consideration.

"For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." For evil-doing suffering is certain to come. It cannot be escaped. God has linked the two together by an unalterable law. Such suffering is penal. But when the righteous are afflicted their lot is not of law, but of God's merciful appointment and selection, and is ordained with a purpose of blessing both to themselves and others. The words of St. Peter are very emphatic concerning God's ordinance: "If the will of God so will." It is not always clear to men. Therefore St. Paul (Eph. i. 9) speaks of the mystery of the Divine will, but in the same place (i. 5) of the good pleasure thereof. It is exercised with love, and not with anger. It was the feeling with which God looked forth upon the new-created world, and, behold, it was very good. With the same feeling He longs to behold it rescued and restored. Such is the desire, such the aim, with which God permits trial and distress to fall upon the righteous. And that the sufferers may be kept in mind of God's remedial purpose herein, the Apostle adduces the example of Christ Himself: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God." The suffering Christ should give pause to all questionings about the sufferings of His servants. Their lot may be hard to explain. But be their lives ever so pure, their purposes ever so lofty, "in many things we offend all," and need not murmur if we be chastened.

But as we think of the sinless Jesus and His unequalled sufferings, we learn the applicability of the prophet's lamentation, "See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow" (Lam. i. 12). The burden of the unrighteous world was laid upon the righteous Son of God, and this because of God's love for sinners. Herein was the love of God manifested in us. Sinful men were the material chosen for the display of the Divine love, and God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. It was of God's ordinance and the Son's obedience that redemption was thus purchased. That we might live, the sinless Christ must die, and ere He died must be put to grief by the opposition of those whom He came to save; must lament and be hindered in His works of mercy by the want of faith among His own kindred, by the persistent sins of those cities in which His mightiest works were wrought; must shed tears of anguish over the city of David, which would know nothing of the things which belonged unto her peace. This was the chastisement of the innocent to gain peace for the guilty, that God might thus commend His love to men, and Christ might bring them back to the Father. And this bringing back is not the mere action of a guide. This He is, but He is far more: He helps those who are coming at every step, and as they draw near they find through Him that the Father's house and the Father's welcome are waiting for their return. Shall men complain, nay, shall they not be lost in praise, if God will at all consent to use their trials to extend His kingdom and His glory, and thus make them partakers of the sufferings of Christ? Such a lot had been welcome to St. Peter: "They departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name" (Acts v. 41); and here in his epistle he publishes the joy of such shame; publishes it that others through all ages may suffer gladly, trusting their God to use the pains He sends to magnify His glory. The lesson is for all men at all times. Christ suffered for sins once; but once here means once for all, and proclaims to each generation of sinners that Jesus bore His cross for them.

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." The suffering of Jesus went thus far, that there might be nothing in the cup of human woe which He had not tasted. His spirit was parted from the flesh, as when we die. The body lay in the grave; the spirit passed to the world of the departed. But the triumph of death was short. After the three days' burial came the miracle of miracles. The dead Jesus returned to life, and that resurrection is made the earnest of a future life to all believers. Thus began the recompense of the righteous Sufferer, and the power of the resurrection makes suffering endurable to the godly, makes them rejoice to be conformed unto Christ's death and forgetful of all things save the prize of the high calling which lies before them to be won. Nor was it with Christ's spirit during those three days as with the souls of other departed ones. He, the sinless One, had no judgment to await; His stay there was that dwelling in paradise which He foreknew and spake of to the penitent thief.

"In which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." At this point we come upon a twofold line of interpretation, occasioned by the difficulty which constantly arises of deciding whether *πνεῦμα*—"spirit"—is to be understood of the Divine Spirit or of the spiritual part of man's nature as distinguished from the flesh. Those who have taken the words "quickened in the Spirit" of the previous verse in the former of these senses explain this passage of the preaching of Christ to the antediluvian world through His servant Noah. The Divine fiat had gone forth. The Flood was to come and bring destruction to the bodies of all but Noah and his family. But within those doomed bodies souls were shut up, and these the love of Christ would not willingly give over. They should hear, while still in their prison of the flesh, the offer of His grace; and should they repent, the waves which wrought destruction of the body might release them from the bondage of corruption. This was the purpose of God's long-suffering, which waited and appealed while the ark was a-preparing. Thus did the Divine Spirit of Christ go forth as a herald of mercy to the impenitent, proclaiming that for their souls the door of forgiveness was not yet closed.

Those, on the contrary, who refer "quickened in the spirit" to the human soul of Christ, take this text as an additional authority for the doctrine in the Apostles' Creed that our Lord's human soul after the Crucifixion descended into hell. Thus, they hold, His pure spirit went beyond this world to experience all that human spirits can know before the judgment comes. Thither He came but as a Herald. Death and the grave had no power to detain Him. In mercy to those who had passed away before the Incarnation, He brought the message of the mediatorial work which He had completed in His crucifixion. The sinners before the Flood are singled out for mention by St. Peter as sinners above all men, so sunk in wickedness that but eight were found worthy to be saved from the Deluge. Thus the magnitude of Christ's mercy is glorified. He who goes to seek these must long to save all men. And to carry this message of glad tidings is part of the recompense for the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, a portion of what made it a blessing to suffer for well-doing.

Up to the sixteenth century the latter exposition and application of the words found most favour, but at the time of the Reformation the chief authorities expounded them of the preaching of Christ's Spirit through the ministry of the patriarch. For the main argument with which St. Peter is dealing these applications, however interesting in themselves, are not deeply important. He wants to set before the converts a warrant for what he has said about the blessedness of suffering for righteousness. If we accept the application to Noah, the example is a powerful one. His sufferings must have been manifold.

The long time between the threatened judgment and its accomplishment was filled with the opposition of sinners and their mockery and taunts over his patient labour on the ark, to say nothing of the distress of soul when he found his preaching falling ever on deaf ears. But his trial had its reward at last when the little band were shut in by God Himself, and the ark bore them safely on the rising waters. And if he could feel that any, though perishing in body, had by repentance been saved in soul, this would make light the burden even of greater suffering than had fallen to the patriarch, to know the joy which comes from converting a sinner from the error of his way and therein saving a soul from death.

And if we refer the words "quickened in the spirit" to the soul of Christ, parted from the body and present in the spirit-world, they are a link to connect this passage with words of the Apostle's sermon on the day of Pentecost. There he does speak of the Lord's descent into hell, and teaches how David of old spake thereof and of the Resurrection "that neither was He left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts ii. 31). In this sense the quickening in the spirit is the beginning of Christ's victory and triumph. It is the earnest of eternal life to all believers. And how welcome a message to those who, like Abraham, had rejoiced in faith to see the day of Christ, to hear from His own lips the tidings of the victory won! Of the Herald of such a Gospel message, of Him who by His suffering delivered those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage, we may, with all reverence, speak as "being made perfect by becoming the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him" (Heb. v. 9).

"Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved." The building of the ark was the test of Noah's faith, the ark itself the means of his preservation. In the patriarch's sufferings St. Peter has found an apt parallel to the life of these Asian Christians: the same godless surroundings; the same opposition and mockery; the same need for steadfast faith. But if rightly pondered, the Old Testament lesson is rich in teaching. Noah becomes a preacher of righteousness, not for his own generation only, but for all time. He suffered in his well-doing. Nothing stings more keenly than scorn and contempt. These he experienced to the full. He came as God's herald to men who had put God out of all their thoughts. His message was full of terror: "Behold, I do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is in the earth shall die" (Gen. vi. 17). Few heeded; fewer still believed. But when the work of the messenger was over; when the ark was prepared, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened; when he and his were shut in by God, then appeared the blessedness. And if haply there had been any in whom he had beheld signs of repentance, how the thought that some souls were saved, though their bodies were drowned with the rest, would magnify the rejoicing of the rescued; and the overthrow of the ungodly would proclaim how little ultimate bliss there could be in evil-doing. All these things would come home to the hearts of the "strangers of the dispersion."

And were they few in number? Fewer still were those who stood with Noah in the world's corruption. But God was with him; he walked with God, and found grace in His eyes; and God blessed him when the Flood was gone, and by the sign of the covenant, the faithful witness in heaven (Psalms lxxxix. 37), has placed a memorial of the happiness of his well-doing before the eyes of mankind for ever. And it would comfort the believers if they kept in mind the object which St. Peter has so often set before them, and on which he would have them set their desire in their distress. There was hope, nay assurance, that the heathen world around them would be won by their steadfast well-doing to the service of the Lord. Christ did not send His followers on a hopeless quest when He said, "Go, baptise all nations." It was no material ark they were set to fashion; they were exalted to be builders of the Church of Christ. And to put one stone upon another in that building was a joy worth earning by a life of sacrifice.

"Saved through water." But God appointed the same waves to be the destruction of the disobedient. With no faith-built ark in which to ride safe, the sinners perished in the mighty waters which to Noah were the pathway of deliverance. A solemn thought this for those who have the offer of the antitype which the Apostle turns next to mention! This double use which God makes of His creatures—how to some they bring punishment, to others preservation—is the theme of several noble chapters in the book of Wisdom (xi.-xvi.), expanding the lesson taught by the pillar of a cloud, which was light to Is-

rael, while it was thick darkness to the Egyptians.

"Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism." Under the new covenant also water has been chosen by Christ to be the symbol of His grace. His servants are baptised into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is the door appointed for entrance into the family. But the waters of the Flood would have overwhelmed Noah, even as the rest, had he not been within the ark, and the ark would not have been made had he been lacking in faith. So in baptism must no more saving office be ascribed to the water. Even the Divine word, "the word of hearing, did not profit some, because they were not united by faith with them that heard aright" (Heb. iv. 2). Neither does the sign in baptism, though Divinely instituted, profit, being alone. The Christian, having been cleansed by the washing of water with the word, is sanctified by Christ because of his faith. The washing of regeneration must be joined with the renewing of the Holy Ghost. That Spirit does not renew, but convicts of sin those who believe not on Christ (John xvi. 8). In his salvation Noah accepted and acted on God's warning about things not seen as yet, and so his baptism became effectual. In faith, too, Israel marched through the Red Sea, and beheld the overthrow of their heathen pursuers. And baptism mixed with faith is saving now. Those Old Testament deliverances were figures only of the true, and were but for temporal rescue. Christ's ordinance is that to which they testified before His coming, and is coupled with the promise of His presence even unto the end of the world.

And that there may be no place for doubting, the Apostle subjoins a twofold explanation. First he tells us what baptism is not, then what it is and what it bestows. It is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh." Were this all, it would avail no more than the cardinal ordinances (with meats and drinks and divers washings) which were imposed of old until a time of reformation. Through them the way into the holy place was not made manifest, nor could be. True baptism is "the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." This is a spiritual purification, wrought through the might of Christ's resurrection. And the Apostle describes it by the effect which it produces in the religious condition and attitude of him who has experienced it. The sinner who loves his sin dare not question his conscience. That witness would pronounce for his condemnation. So he finds it best to lull it to sleep, or perhaps deaden it altogether. But to him who, being risen with Christ in faith, seeks those things that are above, who strives to make himself spiritually purer day by day, there is no such dread. Rather by constant questioning and self-examination he labours that his conscience may be void of offence towards God and man. That man not only dares, but knows it to be a most solemn duty, thus to purge his conscience. So the effect of baptism is daily felt, and the questioned soul thankfully bears witness to the active presence of the Spirit, for the bestowal of which the Sacrament was the primal pledge.

Others have rendered *ἐπερώτημα* "an appeal," and have joined it very closely with the words "toward God." These have found in the Apostle's explanation the recognition of that power to draw nigh unto God which the purified conscience both feels, and feels the need of. There are daily stumblings, the constant want of help; and through Christ's resurrection the way is opened, a new and living way, into the holiest, and the power is granted of appealing unto God, while the sense of baptismal grace already bestowed gives confidence and certainty that our petitions will be granted.

"Who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Now the Apostle turns back to his main subject. The righteous who suffers for, and in, his righteousness, may not only be a blessing to others, but may himself find blessing. We dare only use the words which the Spirit has supplied when we speak of Christ being perfected by what He endured. But the Apostle to the Hebrews has a clear teaching. He speaks of Christ as being "the effulgence of God's glory, and the very image of His person" (Heb. i. 3). Yet he tells that, "though He was a Son, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and became thus the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. v. 8). And he goes further, and teaches that this submission of Christ to suffering was in harmony with the Divine character and according to God's own purpose: "It became Him for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii. 10). From all eternity Christ was perfect as the Son of God, but He has suffered that He may be a perfect Mediator. Why this was well-pleasing unto the Father it is not ours to know, nor can we by searching find. But, the sufferings ended, He is crowned with glory; He is exalted to the right hand of the Father; He is made Lord of all. This He taught His disciples ere He sent them to baptise: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18). Having taken hold of the seed of Abraham and consented to be made lower than the angels, He has now been set "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 21). Thus does St. Paul teach even as St. Peter; and we may believe, though we fail to grasp the manner thereof, that through His humiliation our blessed Lord has been exalted, not only because He receives for ever the praises of the redeemed, but because He has wrought through His suffering that which was well-pleasing in the sight of the Father.

The whole clause before us is worthy of notice for another reason. It was doubtless written before our Gospels were in circulation, when the life and work of Jesus were only published by the oral teaching of the Apostles and their fellows; yet in a summary form it covers the whole field of the Gospel story. Those to whom this Epistle was written had been taught that Jesus was the Christ, had heard of His righteous life among men, of His sufferings, death, and resurrection, had been taught that afterwards He was taken up into heaven. They knew also that the baptism by which they had been admitted into the Christian communion was His ordinance and the appointed door into the

Church which He lived and died to build up among men. Thus, without the Gospels, we have the Gospel in the Epistles, and a witness to the integrity of that history of Christ's life which has come down to us in the narratives of the Evangelists. And when all the contributions of the Apostolic Epistles are put side by side, we may easily gather from them that the history of Jesus which we have now is that which the Church has possessed from the beginning of the Gospel.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LESSONS OF SUFFERING.

1 Peter iv. 1-6.

It is always hard to swim against the stream; and if the effort be a moral one, the difficulty is not lessened. These early Christians were finding it so. For them there must have existed hardships of which to-day we can have no experience, and form but an imperfect estimate. If they lived among a Jewish population, these were sure to be offended at the new faith. And when we remember the zeal for persecution of a Saul of Tarsus, we can see that in many cases the better the Jew the more would he feel himself bound, if possible, to exterminate the new doctrines. Among the heathen the lot of the Christians was often worse. Did the people listen a while to the teaching of the missionaries, yet so unstable were they that, as at Lystra, to-day might see them stoning those whom yesterday they were venerating as gods; and they could easily, by reason of their greater numbers, bring the magistrates to inflict penalties even where the multitude refrained from mob violence. The cry, "These men exceedingly trouble our city," or "These who turn the world upside down are come among us," was sure to find a ready audience; while the uproar and violence which raged in a city like Ephesus, when Paul and his companions preached there, show how many temporal interests could be banded together against the Christian cause. On individual believers, not of the number of the preachers, the more violent attacks might not fall; but to suffer in the flesh was the lot of most of them in St. Peter's day. Hence the strong figure he employs to describe the preparation they will need: "Arm ye yourselves"—make you ready, for you are going forth to battle. St. Paul also, writing to Rome and Corinth, uses the same figure: "Let us put on the armour of light," "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

"Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind." Though some strokes of the foe will fall on the flesh, the conflict is really a spiritual one. The suffering in the body is to be sustained and surmounted by an inward power; the armour of light and of righteousness is the equipment of the soul, which panoply the Apostle here calls the mind of Christ. Now what is the mind of Christ which can avail His struggling servants? The word implies intention, purpose, resolution, that on which the heart is set. Now the intention of Christ's life was to oppose and overcome all that was evil, and to consecrate Himself to all good for the love of His people. This latter He tells us in His parting prayer for His disciples: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John xvii. 19), while every action of His life proclaims His determined enmity against sin. This brought Him obloquy while He lived in the world, and in the end a shameful death; but these things did not abate His hatred of sin, nor lessen His love for sinners. For still into the city where He reigns there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth (Rev. xxi. 27), though to the faithful penitent "the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and he that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

Christ bare willingly all that was laid upon Him that He might bring men unto God. This is the spirit, this the purpose, the intent, with which His followers are to be actuated: to have the same strenuous abhorrence of sin, the same devotion in themselves to goodness, which shall make them inflexible, however fiercely they may be assailed. Let them only make the resolve, and power shall be bestowed to strengthen them. He who says, "Arm yourselves," supplies the weapons when His servants need them. Jesus Himself found them ready when the tempter came, and drew them in all their keenness and strength from the Divine armoury. Satan comes to others as he came to Christ, and will make them flinch and waver, if he can. At times he offers attractive baits; at times he brings fear to his aid. But, in whatever shape he comes or sends his agents, let them but cling to the mind of Christ, and they shall, like Him, say triumphantly, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

"For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." God intends it to be so, and the earnest Christian strives with all his might that it may be so. To help men God sends them sufferings, and intends them to have a moral effect on the life. They are not penal; they are the discipline of perfect love desiring that men should be held back from straying. Men cannot always see the purposes of God at first, and are prone to bewail their lot. But here and there a saint of old has left his testimony. One of the later psalmists had discovered the blessedness of God-sent trials: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe Thy word"; and, in thankful acknowledgment of the love which sent the blows, he adds, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes" (Psalm cxix. 67, 71). Hezekiah had learnt the lesson, though it brought him close to the gates of the grave; but he testifies, "Behold, it was for my peace that I had great bitterness. . . . Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa. xxxviii. 17). God had blotted out the evil record, that he who had suffered in the flesh might cease from sin. It is good for us thus to recognise that God's dispensations are for our correction and teaching, and that without them we should have been verily desolate, left to choose our own way, which would surely have been evil; and though we cannot cease from sin while we are in the flesh, God's mercy places the ideal state before us—"He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin"—that we may be strengthened, nevermore to submit ourselves to the yoke of wickedness. How shall he that is dead to sin live any longer therein? Live therein he cannot. Of that old man within him he will have

no resurrection, for though the motions, the promptings to evil, are there, the love of evil is slain by the greater love of Christ.

"That ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." Christians must live out their lives till God calls them, and for the rest of their time in the flesh they will be among their wonted surroundings. Just as Christian slaves must abide with their masters, and Christian wives continue with their husbands, so each several believer must do his duty where God has placed him. But because he is a believer it will be done in a different spirit. He is daily cutting himself away from what the world counts for life; he has begun to live in the Spirit, and the natural man is weakened day by day; he knows that what is born of the flesh is flesh, and bears the taint of sin: so he refuses to follow where it would lead him. Men often plead for evil habits that they are natural, forgetting that "natural" thus used means human, corrupt nature. The birth of the Spirit transforms this nature, and the renewed man goes about his worldly life with a new motive, new purposes. He must follow his lawful calling like other folks, but the sense of his pilgrimage makes him to differ; he is longing to depart, and holds himself in constant readiness. Worldly men live as though they were rooted here and would never be moved. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names" (Psalm xlix. 11). To the servant of Christ life wears another aspect. He is content to live on, for God so wills it, and has work for him to do. To continue in the flesh may be, as it was to St. Paul, the fruit of his labour. And he welcomes this owning of his work, and will spend his powers in like service. Yet, with the Apostle, he has ever "the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it is very far better" (Phil. i. 23).

And as he strives to fulfil God's intent by crucifying the old man and ceasing from sin, the Christian rejoices in a growing sense of freedom. To follow the lusts of men was to serve many and hard taskmasters. Riches, fame, luxury, sensual indulgences, riotous living, are all keen to win new slaves, and paint their lures in the most attractive colours; and one appetite will make itself the ally of another, lust hard by greed, so that the chains of him who takes service with them are riveted many times over, and difficult, often impossible, to be cast off. But the will of God is one: "One is your Master"; "Love the Lord your God with all your heart"; "And all ye are brethren"; "Love your neighbour as yourself." Then shall you enter into life. And the life of this promise is not that fragment of time which remains to men in the flesh, but that unending after-life where the natural body shall be exchanged for a spiritual body, and death be swallowed up in victory.

"For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles." The Apostle here seems to be addressing the Jews who, living among the Gentiles, had, like their forefathers in Canaan, learned their works. The nation was not so prone to fall away into heathendom after the Captivity; yet some of them in the dispersion, like Samson when he went down unto the Philistines, may have been captured and blinded and made to serve. The proximity of evil is infectious. To the Gentile converts St. Peter speaks elsewhere as having been slaves to their lusts in ignorance (i. 14). But whether Jew or Gentile, when they had once tasted the joy of this purer service, this law of obedience which made them truly free, they would be strengthened to suffer in the flesh rather than fall back upon their former life. The time would seem enough, far more than enough, to have been thus defiled. All was God's; all that remained must be given to Him with strenuous devotion.

St. Peter seems to place in contrast, as he describes the two ways of life, two words, one by which he denotes the service of God, by the other devotion to the world and its attractions. The former (θέλημα) implies a pleasure and joy; it is the will of God, that which He delights in, and which He makes to be a joy to those who serve Him. The other (βούλημα) has a sense of longing, unsatisfied want, a state which craves for something which it cannot attain. St. Paul describes it as "led away by divers lusts, ever learning" (but in an evil school), "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, corrupted in mind, reprobate" (2 Tim. iii. 7). Such is the desire of the Gentiles. The Apostle describes it in his next words: "To have walked in lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries." How gross heathendom can be our missionaries from time to time reveal to us. All the corruptions which they describe were reigning in full power round about these converts. When men change the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of corruptible man or even worse, and worship and serve the creature, their own animal passions, rather than the Creator, there is no depth of degradation to which they may not sink. St. Paul has painted for us some dark pictures of what such lives could be (Rom. i. 24-32; Col. iii. 5-8). But though Christianity in our own land has forced sin to veil some of its fouler aspects, vice has not changed its nature. The same passions rule in the hearts of those who live to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God. The flesh warreth against the Spirit, even if the Spirit be not utterly quenched, and brings men into its slavery. For the sake of Christ, then, and for love of the brethren, the faithful have need still to be proclaiming, "Let the time past suffice," and by their actions to testify that they are willing to suffer in the flesh, if so be they may thereby be sustained in the battle against sin and may strengthen their brethren to walk in a new way.

"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." The godless love to be a large company, that they may keep one another in heart. Hence they who have been of them, and would fain withdraw, have no easy task; and to win new comrades sinners are ever most solicitous. Their invitations at first will take a friendly tone. Solomon understood them well, and described them in warning to his son: "Come with us," they say: "let us lay wait for blood; let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as Sheol, and whole as those that go down into the pit. We shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoil. Thou shalt cast thy lot among us; we will all have one purse"

(Prov. i. 11-14). This is one fashion of their excess of riot, but there are many more. The Apostle's words picture their life as an overflow, a deluge. And the figure is not strange in Holy Writ. "The floods of ungodly men made me afraid," says the Psalmist (Psalm xviii. 14); and St. Jude, writing about the same time as St. Peter and of the same evil days, calls such sinners "wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shames" (Jude 14). "Shames," he says, because the floods of excess pour on in overwhelming abundance, and those who escape from them do so only with much suffering in the flesh, sent of God, to set them free from sin.

And if there be no hope of winning recruits or alluring back those who have escaped, the godless follow another course. They hate, and persecute, and malign. Ever since the days of Cain this has been the policy of the wicked, though not all push it so far as did the first murderer (1 John iii. 12). For the life of the righteous is a constant reproach to them. They have made their own choice, but it yields them no comfort; and if one means of making others as wretched as themselves fails, they take another. They point the finger of hatred and scorn at the faithful. To the Greeks Christ's faith was foolishness. The Athenians, full of this world's wisdom, asked about Paul, "What will this babbler say?" and mocked as they heard of the resurrection of the dead. With them and such as they this life is all. But the Christian has his consolation: he has committed his cause to another Judge, before whom they also who speak evil of him must appear.

"Who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." The Christian looks on to the coming judgment. He can therefore disregard the censures of men. Neither the penalties nor the revilings of the world trouble him. They are a part of the judgment in the present life; by them God is chastening him, preparing him by the suffering in the flesh to be more ready for the coming of the Lord. In that day it will be seen how the servant has been made like unto his Master, how he has welcomed the purging which Christ gives to His servants that they may bring forth more fruit. He believes, yea knows, that in the Judge who has been teaching and judging him here day by day he will find a Mediator and a Saviour. With the unbeliever all is otherwise. He has refused correction, has chosen his own path, and drawn away his neck from the yoke of Christ; his judgment is all yet to come. The Judge is ready, but He is full of mercy. St. Peter's phrase implies this. It tells of readiness, but also of holding back, of a desire to spare. He is on His throne, the record is prepared, but yet He waits; He is Himself the long-suffering Vinedresser who pleads, "Let it alone this year also."

Such has been the mercy of God even from the days of Eden. In the first temptation Eve adds one sin upon another. First she listens to the insidious questioning which proclaims the speaker a foe to God: then without remonstrance she hears God's truth declared a lie; hearkens to an aspersion of the Divine goodness; then yields to the tempter, sins, and leads her husband into sin. Not till then does God's judgment fall, which might have fallen at the first offence; and when it is pronounced, it is full of pity, and gives more space for repentance. So, though the Judge be ready, His mercy waits. For He will judge the dead as well as the living, and while men live His compassion goes forth in its fulness to the ignorant and them that are out of the way.

"For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." "Unto this end"—what does it signify? What but that God has ever been true to the name under which He first revealed Himself: "The Lord God, merciful and gracious" (Exod. xxxiv. 6); that He has been preaching the Gospel to sinners by His dispensations from the first day until now? Thus was the Gospel preached unto Abraham (Gal. iii. 8) when he was called from the home of his fathers, and pointed forward through a life of trial to a world-wide blessing. Heeding the lesson, he was gladdened by the knowledge of the day of Christ. In like manner and unto this end was the Gospel sent to God's people in the wilderness (Heb. iv. 2), even as unto us; but the word of hearing did not profit them. With many of them God was not well pleased. Yet He showed them in signs His Gospel sacraments. They were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, did all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drank the same spiritual drink (1 Cor. x. 2-4), for Christ was with them, as their Rock of refreshing, all their journey through the desert, preaching the Gospel by visitations now of mercy, now of affliction. Unto this end He brought them many a time under the yoke of their enemies; unto this end He sent them into captivity. Thus were they being judged, as men count judgments, if haply they might listen in this life to the gospel of trial and pain, and so live at last, as God counts life, in the spirit, when the final judgment-day is over. They are dead, but to every generation of them was the Gospel preached, that God might gather Him a great multitude to stand on His right hand in the day of account.

Some have applied the words of this verse to the sinners of the days of Noah, connecting them closely with iii. 19; and truly, though they be but one example out of a world of mercies, they are very notable. They were doomed; they were dead while they lived: "Everything that is in the earth shall die" (Gen. vi. 17). Yet to them the preacher was sent, and unto this end: that though they were to be drowned in the Deluge, and so in men's sight be judged, their souls might be saved, as God would have them saved, in the great day of the Lord. But every visitation is a gospel, a gospel unto this end: that through judgment here a people may be made ready in God's sight to be called unto His rest.

Few passages have more powerful lessons than this for every age. The world is full of suffering in the flesh. Who has not known it in many kinds? But it is in consequence, to those who will hear, very full of Gospel sermons. They cry aloud, Sin no more; the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. Suffering does not mean that God is not full of love; rather it is a token that, in His great love, He is training us, opening our eyes to our wrong-doings that we may cast them off, and giving us a true standard to judge between the desire of the Gentiles and the will of God. And though men may look on us as sore af-

flicted, our Father, when the rest of our time in the flesh shall be ended, will give us the true life with Him in the spirit.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE FOR GOD'S GLORY.

1 Peter iv. 7-11.

"But the end of all things is at hand." Well-nigh two thousand years have passed away since the Apostle wrote these words. What are we to think of the teaching they convey? For it is not St. Peter's teaching only. Those who laboured with him were all of the same mind; all gave the same note of warning to their converts. St. Paul exhorts the Philippians, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5); and in the first letter to the Corinthians the last words before his benediction are to the same purport: "Maran atha" (1 Cor. xvi. 22); that is, The Lord cometh. St. James preaches, "Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James v. 8). To the Hebrews the Apostle writes, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x. 37). While St. John, who lived longer than any of the rest, conveys the warning even in more solemn tones: "Little children, it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18). Are we to look on these admonitions as so many mistaken utterances? Are we to think that the disciples had misunderstood the Lord's teaching, or would they say the same words if they were with us to-day?

We may allow that those who had been present at the Ascension, and had heard the words of the angels declaring that "this same Jesus should so come as they had seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11), might expect His return to judge the world to be not far distant. But, in whatever they say in reference thereto, their main concern is that men should be ready. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh," is the ground-text of all their exhortations. Now had arrived the fulness of the time (Gal. iv. 4) in which God had sent forth His Son, born of a woman; and if we take the verb of St. Peter's sentence (ἤγγικε, "has come near"), we feel that he viewed the new era on which the world had entered in this light. And so did the other Apostles. One says, "Now once in the end of the ages hath Christ been manifested" (Heb. ix. 26); another teaches that things of old "were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). God has spoken aforetime "in many portions and in many ways, but in the end of these days He hath spoken in His Son" (Heb. i. 2). All things are now summed up in Christ; He is the end of all things. Prophecy, type, sacrifice, all have passed away. There will come no new revelation; no word more will be added to the Divine book. Its lessons will find in each generation new illustrations, new applications, but will admit no change of form or substance. The Christian dispensation, be it long or short, is the last time; it will close with the Second Advent. And continual preparedness is to be the Christian's attitude. And this is the purport of St. Peter's next exhortations, which are as forceful to-day as they were eighteen hundred years ago.

"Be ye therefore of sound mind." Exactly the counsel which should follow the previous lesson. It was misinterpreted at first, as it has been since. We know how unwisely the Thessalonians behaved when they had been told by St. Paul, "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. v. 2). The Apostle learnt that they were sorely disturbed, and wrote them a second letter, from which we can gather how far they had wandered from soundness of mind. At first the Apostle speaks gently: "Be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present" (2 Thess. ii. 2). But soon he shows us how the excitement had operated. Some among them had begun to walk disorderly, apparently thinking that they might live upon the community, working not at all, but being busybodies. These made, no doubt, the approach of the day of the Lord their pretext. St. Paul bids such men in quietness to work and eat their own bread. To be found at their duty was the best way of preparing for the end.

How soundness of mind may serve the Church of Christ is seen in the settlement of that murmuring which arose (Acts vi. 1) as soon as the Christian disciples began to be multiplied in Jerusalem. It was the Grecian Jews who complained that their widows were neglected. The Apostles wisely withdrew from the distribution about which the complaint was made, and more wisely still gave the oversight into the hands of Greeks (as the forms of all their names bear witness) who would be fully trusted by the murmurers. "And the word of God increased." The pages of Church history supply examples in abundance of the need in religious matters for this soundness of mind. We need not go back to very ancient times. What sore evils led to and arose out of the peasant war in Germany in the days of the Reformation, followed by those excesses which disgraced the name of Christianity in Münster and other parts of Westphalia! And in our own land, both at that time and subsequently, the unwise enthusiasm of those who acted as though whatever had been must be wrong hindered sorely the temperate efforts of the more conservative and sober minds; while undue prominence given to single doctrines of the Gospel has many times warped men's minds; and does so still, making the cause of Christ to be hardly spoken of. A sense of proportion is a gift which the Church may fitly pray for in her members, and that, while they seek to foster the sevenfold graces of the Holy Spirit, they may ever keep in mind the mercy of Him who bestows only a portion on each of us as we can receive it, and makes no man the steward of them all.

"And be sober unto prayer." The Apostle selects one example wherein the sound mind ought to be sought after, and he has chosen it so as to be of general application. The wisdom to which he is exhorting is needed for all men, both those who teach and those who hear, those who serve tables and those who are served thereby. Many members of the Christian body, however, will not be concerned with such special duties. But all will pray, and so to prayer he applies his precept. "Be sober."

A sound mind will preserve us from extravagance in our approach unto God. For even here extravagance may intrude. The Corinthian Church had gone very far wrong in this respect. Over-elated, losing soundness of mind, through the bestowal of certain gifts, they had introduced such irregularities into their religious meetings that St. Paul speaks of occasions when they might have been regarded as madmen (1 Cor. xiv. 23). These were public prayers. St. James applies the same standard to private prayers: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James iv. 3). There is no true prayer in your petitions. You have selected in your own hearts what you would fain have and do, and you come before God with these as your supplications. There is no thought in them of yielding to God's will, but only the sense that if your petitions were granted you would reap a present satisfaction. Ye ask amiss. Many a heart can testify to the proneness to err thus by want of sobriety.

"Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves." Soundness of mind and sobriety should dominate every part of the believer's life; but there are other virtues of pre-eminent excellence, unto which, though they be far above him, he is encouraged to aspire. Of these St. Peter, like St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii. 13), places love at the summit, above all things. The word he uses signifies that perfect love which is the attribute of God Himself. To frail humanity it must ever be an ideal. But the Apostle in his second epistle (2 Peter i. 7) has given a progressive list of graces to be sought after in a holy life, a series of mountain summits each above the other, and each made visible through the one below it. Here, too, love comes as the climax; and the Revised Version marks it as far above mere human affection: "In your love of the brethren supply also love." Here is no anticlimax, if we once appreciate the grandeur of the concluding term.

In the present verse, however, the Apostle exhorts that this Divine quality is to be exercised by the converts among themselves, and exercised with much earnestness and diligence. It is to be the grace which pervades all their lives, and extends itself to every condition thereof. But we understand why St. Peter has used this word for love as soon as we come to the clause which follows: "For love covereth a multitude of sins." To cover sin is godlike. It has been often asked, Whose sins are covered by this love, those of him who loves, or of him who is loved? The question can have but one answer. There is nothing in the New Testament to warrant such a doctrine as that love towards one's fellow-men will hide, atone for, or cancel any man's sins. When our Lord says of the woman who was a sinner, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (Luke vii. 47), it is not love to the brethren of which He is speaking, but love to God, which she had manifested by her actions toward Himself; and when He presently adds, "Thy faith hath saved thee," He tells us the secret of her availing love. But when men are animated by that love toward their neighbours which shows likest God's, they are tender to their offences; they look to the future more than to the past, hoping all things, believing all things; they have tasted God's mercy in the pardon of their own sins, and labour to do thus unto others, to cast their sins out of sight, to put them, as God does when He forgives, behind their back, as though in being forgiven they were also forgotten. The phrase is quoted by St. Peter from Prov. x. 12, where Solomon says, "Love covereth all sins," and our Lord's words to St. Peter himself (Matt. xviii. 22) about forgiving until seventy times seven times practically set no limit to the extension of pardon to the repentant. Thus taught, the Apostle uses the noble word ἀγάπη of human tenderness to offenders, because he would urge men to a boundless, all-embracing, godlike pity for sinners.

"Using hospitality one to another without murmuring." We need only reflect on the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles to realise how large a part hospitality must have played in the early Church as soon as the preachers extended their labours beyond Jerusalem. The house of Simon the tanner, where Peter was entertained many days (ix. 43); the friends who at Antioch received Paul and Barnabas and kept them for a whole year (xi. 26); the petition of Lydia, "Come into my house, and abide there" (xvi. 15); and Jason's reception of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica (xvii. 7), are but illustrations of what must have been the general custom. Nor would such welcome be needed for the Apostles alone. The Churches must have been very familiar with cases of brethren driven from their own country by persecution, or severed from their own kinsfolk by the adoption of the new faith. To such the kind offices of the Christian congregations must have been constantly extended, so that hospitality was consecrated into a blessed and righteous duty. To be "given to hospitality" (Rom. xii. 13) is reckoned among the marks whereby it shall be known that believers, being many, are one body in Christ; and from the salutations in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we can frame a picture of the large work of lodging and caring for strangers as it entered into the duties of a Christian life. The brethren at Rome are exhorted to receive and help Phœbe, the bringer of the Epistle, because she had been a succourer of many, and of Paul himself. Of Priscilla and Aquila, who are next named, we know that they were friends and fellow-workers with St. Paul in Corinth, and that in Ephesus they showed their Christian love toward the stranger Apollos; and not only so, but they provided a place where the brethren might assemble for their worship. Later on are mentioned Mary, who bestowed much labour on the brethren; Urbanus, a helper in Christ, and the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus, whole families made friends through the extension of hospitality. Of the mother of Rufus St. Paul speaks tenderly as his own mother also. The coupling together of Philologus and Julia suggests that they were husband and wife and had opened their doors to the brethren, and the notice of Nereus and his sister points to similar good offices. And from whatever place the Epistle was sent to Rome, there Tertius, St. Paul's amanuensis, was under the hospitable roof of Gaius, whom he speaks of as the host of the whole Church. Doubtless at times the burden might fall heavily on some of the poorer brethren. Hence the need for the Apostle's addition "without murmuring." The word is the same which is used (Acts vi. 1) of the complaints of the Grecians. And in this matter, as in all, a sound mind would

be called for, that loads might be placed by the Churches only on such as were able to bear them.

The intimate fellowship that would grow out of such exercise of kind offices must have been a power to encourage greatly the labourers for Christ. As they dwelt together, hours not given to public ministrations would be spent in private converse, and would knit the members together, and forward the common work. As St. Paul writes to Philemon, who appears to have been eminent in good offices, the hearts of the saints were refreshed by this godly intercourse. In friendly communion the love of all would wax warmer, zeal become more earnest, the weak would be strengthened, and the strong grow stronger.

"According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." The close connection between "gifts" and "grace" is better marked in the Greek than it can be in the English. The *χαρίσματα* are bestowed upon us by the *χάρις* of God. But every word in the sentence is full of force. Each hath received a gift. None can plead his lack of faculty; none can claim exemption from the duty of ministering; none is so poor but he has something that he can lay out for the brethren. All have time; all have kind words: the least can give, what is the best of gifts, a good example. But what we have is not our own; it is received: and humility would teach us to believe that God has bestowed on us the powers which we are best fitted, by place and opportunities, to use in His service. None can say of any gift, "It is all my own; I may do with it as I please." God has set the world about us full of His exchangers. The poor, the feeble, the doubting, the fearful—these are God's bankers, with whom we may put out our gifts to usury. And Himself is the security for all that we deposit thus: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me." Hence we live under the responsibility of stewardship. And every man's gift is given to profit withal (*πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον*, 1 Cor. xii. 7). The Greek implies that it must be shared with others. Nor can any of us make it a profit to himself till he have found the way to make it profitable to his brethren.

That he may give more precision to his counsel, the Apostle proceeds to speak of gifts under two heads into which they are naturally divided. First come those which St. Paul (Rom. xii. 6-8) ranges under the head of prophecy, embracing therein teaching and exhortation likewise: "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God." The first Christian preachers must have gained their knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus by listening to the narratives of the Twelve, and must have gone forth to give their teaching orally. The training of those who were appointed to minister in the various places whither the apostolic missions penetrated must have been of the same kind. In those first years there was work to be done which would seem more important than the writing of a Gospel history. When such preachers published to the congregations what they had learnt of the Master's lessons, their sermons would be orally given, and though conveying the same instruction, would be liable to constant modifications of words. It was from such oral teaching that the variations found in the Gospel narratives probably had their origin. The preachers gave the spirit, and as nearly as possible the text, of what they had been taught. Perhaps by memoranda or otherwise, they would refresh their knowledge of the apostolic words, so as to adhere as much as might be to what they had first received. The word *λόγια*—oracles—which the Apostle here employs, seems intended to remind such preachers and teachers that they now, as the Jews of old, had received "living oracles" (Acts vii. 38), words by which spiritual life was conveyed, to deliver to the Church. Those of them who were Jews would call to mind how God's prophets had constantly prefaced their message with "Thus saith the Lord" or concluded it with the Divine accrediting, "I am the Lord"; and that the Christian prophet must bear in mind that he is only an ambassador, and must abide by his commission, if he would speak with authority, that as a steward he must ever think of the account to be some day given of "the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 2) with which he was entrusted, and must "handle aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii. 15). For all such is St. Peter's admonition, "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God."

And next he turns to those gifts which are to be exercised in deeds, and not in words: "If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth." Under "ministry" St. Paul classes (Rom. xii. 7, 8) giving, ruling, showing mercy. These are duties which secure the temporal condition of the Church and her members. The New Testament story suggests many offices which could be discharged by those who had not devoted themselves in a special manner to the ministry of the word. How much service would be called for by those collections for the saints which St. Paul urges so frequently upon the Churches! How many houses would find employment in such labours as were exhibited in the home of Dorcas! How many a traveller, bent on his secular work, would carry apostolic messages or letters to the flocks of the dispersion! To these may be added those offices of mercy which St. James describes as *θρησκεία*, outward acts of religion, to visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction. The strength which God supplieth embraces every faculty or possession, be it wealth, administrative skill, or special knowledge. The physician and the craftsman alike may spend their powers for Christ. All may be consecrated, ministered, as supplied of God. And it is a gain to the Church when, following the apostolic pattern, these duties of external religion are severed from the prophecy, the spiritual work of the teacher.

"That in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This is to be the thought which animates all who minister: that each man's service may be so rendered to his brethren that it will work for the glory of God. And Christ has led the way. He testifies in His final prayer, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John xvii. 4). Of our work we can use no such words. We are but unprofitable servants. In many things we offend all. But all may labour in the Christlike spirit; and thus through Him, through service

rendered in His name and for His sake, will God be glorified. The thought of Jesus humbling Himself, taking the form of a servant, testifying of Himself, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many," can give a dignity to lowliest labour, and at the same time can impart consolation to the true labourers, for whom this mighty ransom has been paid, their inheritance won, their salvation achieved; while the Conqueror of sin and death, their Redeemer, has taken His seat at God's right hand, where worshipping spirits ever praise Him, saying, "Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory, and the honour, and the power" (Rev. iv. 11).

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BELIEVER'S DOUBLE JOY.

1 Peter iv. 12-14.

After the benediction in ver. 11, we might have supposed that the exhortations of the Apostle were ended. But he now proceeds to make general application of the lessons which above (ii. 19) he had confined to a particular class: the Christians who were in slavery. And the times appear to have called for consolation. The Churches were in great tribulation. St. Peter speaks here, more than in any other passage of the Epistle, as if persecution were afflicting the whole Christian body: "Beloved" —the word embraces them all—"think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, ... as though a strange thing happened unto you." His strong word implies extreme suffering. St. John uses it (Rev. xviii. 9, 18) of the burning up of the mystical Babylon, and it is found nowhere else in the New Testament. A trial meriting this description was harassing the Asian Christians; but spite of the intensity of suffering, which may be inferred from his language, he bids the converts not to wonder at it or deem it other than their proper lot: "Think it not strange."

He does not enter upon reasons for his admonition, or he might have selected a goodly list of Old Testament saints who for their faith were called to suffer. For the Jewish brethren, Joseph and David, Elijah and Micaiah, David and his companions in exile, Job and Nehemiah, would have been forcible examples of suffering for righteousness. The Apostle, however, selects only the loftiest instance. Christ, the Master whom they were pledged to serve, had suffered, and had said, besides, that all who would follow Him must take up the cross. Need they wonder, then, if in their case they found the Lord's teaching coming true?

But, in describing the purpose of their trials, the Apostle introduces some words which place their affliction in a distinct light: "Which cometh upon you to prove you"—literally, for your proving (*πρὸς πειρασμὸν ὑμῖν*). And the word is that which is constantly used of "temptation," whether sent of God or coming in some other way. When viewed as a process of proving, the believers would be able to find some contentment under their persecutions. God was putting them to the test. He would know if they are in earnest in His service, and so they are cast into the furnace, God's wonted discipline. The prophet Zechariah tells both of the process, and the God-intended result: "I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xii. 9). And the Psalmist bears like testimony: "The Lord trieth the righteous" (Psalm xi. 5), and says that for those who are found faithful the end is blessedness: "We went through fire and through water, but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm lxvi. 12).

Such thoughts would yield comfort to those for whom St. Peter immediately wrote. They were suffering for Christ's sake; their faith in Him was being tested. But the Apostle's words are left for the edification of all generations of believers. Throughout all time and everywhere there has been abundance of grief and pain. How may sufferers to-day participate in the apostolic consolation? How may they learn to think it not strange that they are afflicted?

The Apostle's words supply the answer to such questions. And they are no light or infrequent questionings both for ourselves and others. Men are prone to lament over temporal losses or bodily sufferings, their own or others', in tones which convey the idea that such trials will in the end be compensated and made efficacious for the future blessing of the sufferer. The New Testament has no such doctrine. "The trial which cometh upon you to prove you," is St. Peter's expression. There is much suffering in the world which is in no sense a participation of the sufferings of Christ, in no sense a God-sent trial for proving the faith of the sufferer.

Here, if honestly questioned, the individual conscience will give the true answer; and if that inward witness condemn the life for no excesses, of which suffering is the appointed fruit, if the bodily pains be not the outcome of a life lived to the flesh, nor the sorrow and poverty the result of follies and extravagance aforetime, then, with the anguish and distress which God hath sent (for we may then count them as of His sending), the Spirit will have bestowed light that we may discern their purpose, light which will show us God's hand weaning us from the world and making us ready for going home, or, it may be, giving to others through us His teaching in message and example. Then the enlightened and pacified soul will be able to rejoice amid pain, conscious of purification; and will out of the midst of sorrow see God's designs justified. Satan will look on such times as his opportunity, and suggest to the Christian that he is unduly afflicted and forgotten of God; but the joy which comes from being able to look trouble in the face, as sent by a Father, drives away despondency and puts the enemy to rout. He is triumphant who can rest on a faithful God, with an assurance that with the temptation He will also make the way of escape, that he may be able to endure it (1 Cor. x. 13).

But dare we then pray, as Christ has taught us, "Lead us not into temptation"? Yes, if we ponder rightly on the purport of our petition. Christ does not bid us pray to God not to try us; He Himself made no such prayer for His disciples; He was Himself submitted to such trial: "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief" (Isa. liii. 10). Nay, one

Evangelist (Mark i. 12) tells us how He was not led, but driven forth, of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Yet He taught the prayer to His disciples, and He did so because He knew both what was in man, and what was in the world. In the latter since sin entered, the tempter has found manifold enticements to lead men astray. All that belongs to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, riches, influence, beauty, popularity, prosperity of every kind, may be used as tests of faith, may be made to glorify God; but they can also be perverted in the using. And there dwell within man strong desires, which he is prompted to gratify at times, without heeding whether their gratification be right or wrong; and when desire and opportunity meet, there is peril to the tempted.

> "How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
> Makes ill deeds done!"

And when desire has once gained the mastery, the next yielding is sooner made; the forbidden path becomes the constant walk; the moral principle—the godlike in the conscience—is neglected; men grow weaker, are led away of their own lusts and enticed.

On the other hand, if the unlawful desire be resisted from the first, each succeeding conflict will offer less hardship, each new victory be more easily gained, and the virtuous act will become a holy habit; the man will walk with God. For this end God uses the evil, of which Satan is the father, to be a discipline, and turns the snares of the enemy into a means of strength for those whom he would captivate. Knowing all this, Christ has left us His prayer. In it He would teach us to ask that God should protect us in such wise that the desire to sin which dwells within us may not be roused to activity by opportunities of indulgence, or that, if we are thrown where such opportunities exist, the desire may be killed in our hearts. Thus our peril will be lessened, and we shall be helped to walk in the right way, through His grace. Our strong passions will grow weaker, and our weak virtues stronger, day by day.

And such a petition should check all overweening confidence in our own power to withstand temptation, all overreadiness to put ourselves in the way of danger that we may show our strength, and that we can stand though others may fall. The sin and folly of such presumption would be constantly present to St. Peter's mind. He could not forget how his own faith failed when he would make a show of it by walking to meet Jesus over the sea of Galilee. Still less could he forget that utterance of self-confidence, which thought scorn of trials to come, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." It needed but the timid suggestion of a servant-maid to call forth that manifestation of feebleness for which only tears of deepest penitence could atone, and which remained the darkest memory in the Apostle's life. He above all men knew to the full the need we have to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

And in respect of courting trial, even when the suffering to be encountered would be allowed by all men to be suffering for righteousness' sake, the New Testament gives us many lessons that we should not offer ourselves to unnecessary danger. Our Lord Himself (John viii. 59), when the Jews took up stones to cast at Him, hid Himself and conveyed Himself out of harm's way. At another time we are told, "He would not walk in Judea because the Jews sought to kill Him" (John vii. 1). St. Paul, too (2 Cor. xi. 33), to avoid uncalled-for suffering, was let down by the wall of Damascus, and afterwards made use of the dissensions of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts xxiii. 6) to divert the storm which their combined animosity would have raised against him. In this spirit St. Peter gives his counsel. "Make sure," he would say, "that the trials you bear are sent to prove you. Let constant self-questioning testify that they *are* proving you; then wonder not that they are sent, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ." He who thus learns the blessing of trial thanks the Lord for his troublous days. He has a double joy, rejoicing in this life, sorrowful yet alway rejoicing; and is assured that at the revelation of Christ's glory his joy shall be still more abundant.

"If ye are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are ye." It was a joy to the Apostles (Acts v. 41) at the beginning of their ministry that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name. Their offence is described as speaking in the name of Jesus, and filling Jerusalem with their teaching. The feeling of their persecutors was so strong that they were minded to slay them, but upon wiser counsel they only beat them and let them go. St. Paul's commission to Damascus (Acts ix. 14) was to bind all that called upon the name of Christ, and his work after his conversion was to be "to bear Christ's name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." What such preaching would be, we gather from St. Peter's words (Acts ii. 22). They taught men that Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God by powers, and wonders, and signs, had been crucified and slain by the Jews, but that God had raised Him from the dead; that He was now exalted by the right hand of God and was ordained of God (Acts x. 42) to be the Judge of quick and dead; that to Him all the prophets bare witness that through His name every one that believeth on Him should receive remission of sins. St. Paul and the rest preached the same doctrine. All that had happened in Christ's life was "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4) of the Old Testament; Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. ii. 2), Jesus and the resurrection (Acts xvii. 18), are the topics constant in his letters and on his lips. And for their doctrine and their faith preachers and hearers suffered persecution and reproach.

In our land suffering such as theirs is no more laid upon us, but for all that the reproach of Christ has not ceased. Our days are specially marked by a desire for demonstration on every subject, and it comes to pass thereby that those who are willing in spiritual things to walk by faith rank in the estimation of many as the less enlightened portion of the world, and are pictured as such in much of our modern literature. All that tells of miracle in the life of Jesus is by many cast altogether aside, as alien to the reign of law under which the world exists; and the Gospel narratives of the virgin-birth, the wonderful works, the Resurrection, and the Ascension are treated as the invention of the fervid imaginations of the first followers of Jesus; while to cling to them as verities, and to

their importance and significance in the work of the world's salvation, stamps men as laggards in the march of modern speculation. To accept the New Testament story as the fulfilment of predictions in the Old is reckoned by many for ungrounded superstition; and among the unbelieving there are keen eyes still which gladly mark the slips and stumblings of professing Christians, and throw the obloquy of individuals broadcast upon the whole body.

To hold fast faith at such a time, to accept the Gospels as true and their teaching as the words of eternal life, to see in Christ the Redeemer appointed from eternity by the foreknowledge of God, and to believe that in Him His people find remission of sins, to see and acknowledge above the reign of law the power of the almighty Lawgiver—these things are still beset with trials for those who will live in earnest according to such faith; and if we receive less of the blessing which St. Peter here speaks of as accompanying the reproach of Christ, may we not fear that we exhibit less of the zeal and fervour of the Christians to whom he wrote?

"Because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resteth upon you." In the former clause the Apostle, speaking of the joy of believers, exhorted the converts to a present rejoicing, even in the midst of sufferings, because these were borne for Christ's sake, that so, when He shall appear in whose name they have suffered, their rejoicing may be still more abundant. In like manner he seems here to regard their blessedness in a double aspect. The Spirit of glory rests upon them. A power is imparted to them whereby they accept their pains gladly, and therein glorify God, and the same Spirit fills them with a sense of future glory. Like Stephen before his persecutors, they become filled with the Holy Ghost, their spirits are lifted heavenwards, and even now they behold the glory of God, and Jesus sitting on the right hand of God. Thus suffering is robbed of its sting, and Christ's reproach becomes a present blessing.

St. Paul combines the same thoughts in his appeal to the Roman Christians. "Let us rejoice," he urges, "in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. v. 2). This is the glory to be revealed in the presence of Jesus Christ, that eternal weight of glory which affliction worketh for us more and more exceedingly. But he continues, "Let us rejoice also in our tribulations," knowing that by them we may glorify God in our bodies, and that they are the pledge of glory to come. "For tribulation worketh patience, and patience probation, and probation hope, and hope putteth not to shame"—it will not be disappointed; fruition will surely come—"because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which was given unto us." This is the Spirit of God of which St. Peter here speaks. It rests like the cloud of glory above the cherubim, and bestows all spiritual power and blessing; it rests on the suffering believer, and gives him rest.

The Authorised Version has here retained a clause which appears to have been at first but an explanatory note, written in the margin of some copy, and then to have been incorporated with the text: "On their part He is evil-spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." We cannot regret the preservation of such a note. It dates back to very early times. The student who made it could write in the language of the New Testament and in its spirit also. It gives us the sense which was then felt to have most prominence and to be the most important. The way of Christ was evil-spoken of, and it could be no strange thing in those days for His followers to be put to fiery trial. Yet the writer feels that the blessedness of the believer is most secured who, regardless of blasphemers around him, strives with all his powers that in his body, whether by life or by death, Christ shall be magnified.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIGHTEOUS HAVE JUDGMENT HERE.

1 Peter iv. 15-19.

The Apostle now goes one step farther in his exhortations. The brethren are suffering for Christ's cause, and may draw comfort from Christ's example, and be encouraged to patience under their persecutions. But these very sufferings, he would have them see, are God's judgment on His servants in this world, that they may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they are called to suffer. They must be watchful not to deserve punishment for offences that bring disgrace on themselves and on the cause of Christ.

"For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters." He appears to divide these offences into two classes, made distinct by the recurrence of ὡς, "as." The first three concern crimes of which the laws of any land would naturally take cognisance. "Evil-doer" was the word employed by the Jews when they brought our Lord to Pilate: "If he were not an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him up unto thee" (John xviii. 30). The last-named offence, meddling in other men's matters, would bring upon the Christians social odium and render them generally unpopular; and it was precisely the kind of conduct likely to prevail in such a time. We have already found the Apostle exhorting Christian subjects not to think lightly of the duty of obedience to heathen rulers, and the like counsel was given to Christian slaves with heathen masters and to Christian wives with heathen husbands. Such persons would often be tempted to step beyond their province with advice, and perhaps remonstrance, and to display a sense of superiority in so doing which would be galling to those who were of another mind. St. Peter's word to describe this fault is his own, but the idea that such fault needed checking is not wanting in the teaching of St. Paul, and may be taken as evidence that such an interfering spirit prevailed. He speaks of those "who work not at all, but are busy-bodies" (2 Thess. iii. 11), and to Timothy of those who are "tattlers and busybodies" (1 Tim. v. 13).

St. Peter has ranged these offences in a descending order, placing the least culpable last; and their compass embraces all that rightly might come under the ban of the law or incur the just odium of society. To suffer for such things would disgrace the Christian name; but there is no shame in suffering as a Christian,

but rather a reason for giving glory to God. That the name was bestowed as a reproach seems probable from Acts xi. 26, and still more from the mocking tone in which it is used by Agrippa (Acts xxvi. 28); and in the earliest apologists we find this confirmed. "The accusation against us," says Justin Martyr, "is that we are Christians"; and in another place, "We ask that the actions of all those who are accused before you should be examined, so that he who is convicted may be punished as a malefactor, but not as a Christian."

"But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name." That is, let him be thankful and show his thankfulness that he has been called to bear the name of Christ and to suffer for it. The Authorised Version, adopting a different reading, has "on this behalf." But the sense is nothing different. He is to rejoice that this lot has befallen him, for it is of God's great mercy that we are purified here by trial; he who has not been tried has not entered on the way of salvation. "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord," was the petition of David; and they are more blessed who feel that hand in their correction than those who are cut away from it. It is a terrible lot to think of, if we be abandoned by Him to worldly prosperity. St. Paul congratulates the Philippians "because to them it had been granted, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer on His behalf" (Phil. i. 29); and to another Church (Eph. iii. 13) he declares that his own tribulations, endured for their sakes, ought to be to them a glory, because they made known how precious those believers were in the sight of their heavenly Father for whose sake He allowed another to be afflicted that they might be drawn more effectually unto Him. And if this be so, how much cause have they to bless and glorify God who may be permitted to think that He is using their afflictions for a like purpose.

"For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God." The time is come. Why does the Apostle speak thus? Because the final era of Divine revelation has begun. God has spoken unto men by His Son, and He by His incarnation and death has brought life and immortality to light. The new and living way is opened. We live in the fulness of time, when the faithful, having the testimony of those who companied with Christ, can love Him, though they see Him not, can rejoice in Him, and can receive, with full assurance, the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. Such souls have their judgment here. With them God's judgment is neither postponed, nor is it penal. It is disciplinary and corrective both for themselves and others. They are the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth, and can be set forth as the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Of such judgment and its purpose St. Paul also speaks to the Corinthians: "When we" (the servants of Christ) "are judged" (by suffering in this life), "we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32). All chastening while it lasts is grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby. And by such chastisement God prepares Him witnesses to the truth and preciousness of Christianity; and so long as this time, which is now come, shall continue, so long will God try, and make judgment of, His servants in every generation.

In St. Peter's words we have an echo of prophecy. When the hand of the Lord carried Ezekiel in vision back from Babylon to Jerusalem, he heard the voice of God commanding the destroyers, "Begin at My sanctuary" (Ezek. ix. 6). Yet in that evil age some were found who had been sighing and crying for all the abominations that were done in the midst of the city. These holy ones, living in a naughty world, were God's witnesses, feeling His judgments, but receiving His mark on their foreheads, that they should not be destroyed with the sinners. Years passed away, and at length the Lord of the Temple has Himself come. He began His judgment at the house of God, casting out all that defiled it. But it then had become a mere "house of merchandise"; nay, at a later day He named it "a den of thieves." At last He left it for ever. Then it ceased to be God's house, and though it was spared some forty years, its fate was fixed when He went forth from it (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2) and said that not one stone of it should be left upon another. Henceforth He will have other temples in the hearts of those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. These are now the house of God. With them He exercises judgment constantly for their instruction and amendment. But it shall turn unto them for a testimony in the end. Not a hair of their head shall perish; in their patience they shall win their souls.

"And if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" The Apostle joins himself with those of the house of God who will feel the pressure of temporal judgment. He is not forgetful of the Lord's saying, "Simon, behold Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat, but I made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not" (Luke xxii. 31). He knows that he will be tried, but the end to him and all the faithful is that they may be brought into the Father's home. To those who obey not the Gospel the doom pronounced against the Temple answers the Apostle's question. They have had their days of probation, and are like to Jerusalem at the time of the Lord's lamentation, "If thou hadst known in this day the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xx. 42). They cannot be said to disobey a law of which they have not heard; the glad tidings have been preached unto them, but have found no welcome. As of the doomed city, so of them, it may be said, "Ye would not." After their hardness and their impenitent heart, they have treasured up for themselves wrath in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

"And if the righteous scarcely is saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" The righteous is he who follows after righteousness, but who feels that, in the midst of his efforts of faith, he needs to cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." It is of God's mercy that He accepts the aim and purpose of our lives, and counts not by their results. All men are beset with temptation; in many things we all offend. Works of righteousness bear the taint; they come many a time from wrong motives. The best of us need both the Father's chastisement, and, like Peter, the Saviour's prayers, and

the Holy Spirit's guidance. This is what the Apostle means by "scarcely saved." By Divine help Christ's servants are brought nearer and nearer to the ideal, "Be ye holy." But though they live not in sin, sin lives in them; and the warfare with evil is not ended till the burden of the flesh is laid aside. And as there are degrees in the progress of the righteous up the hill of faith, so are there in the falling away of the wicked; and St. Peter in his language appears to have had this in mind, for of the ungodly and sinner he uses a verb in the singular (*φανεῖται*). Where shall he appear? The man begins as the ungodly, a negative character: he thinks not of God; has no reverence for His law; puts Him away from all his thoughts. But in this state he will not long remain. There is no standing still in things spiritual He who does not advance goes backward, and the ungodly soon becomes the wilful sinner. So sure is this development that the Apostle combines the two aspects of the wicked man's life, and asks, not, Where shall they, but Where shall he, appear?

For the judgment which for the righteous begins at God's house, and is wrought out in the trials of this life, awaits the disobedient when life is ended. The Apostle leaves his solemn question unanswered; but at that day there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, only a fearful expectation of judgment. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God then. Hence the greater blessedness of those who are taken into God's hand of judgment now. And thus the Apostle comforts the sufferers.

"Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator." Again St. Peter goes back in thought to the words of Christ, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46); and on these he builds his final exhortation, which contains within it consolation in abundance. The test of the faithful is his perfect trust. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15), was the confession which marked Job as more righteous than his advisers. The Revised Version has varied the rendering of the final words in that passage in such wise as to explain how the trust is to be exhibited: "I will wait for Him"—wait, sure that the event will be for my comfort and His glory. This is the spirit which waxes strong in trial. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa. xl. 31), says the prophet. "None that wait on the Lord shall be ashamed," is an oft-repeated testimony of the psalmists (Psalms xxv. 3; xxxvii. 34; lxix. 6); and one whose name is a synonym for suffering tells us, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him" (Lam. iii. 25). To such trust St. Peter here exhorts, bidding specially them that suffer to rest on the Lord. Though they be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality, for the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, a trust which they repose in Him while they live here, a treasure guarded by Him in the world to come. St. Paul knows of the efficacy of this perfect trust, for he writes to Timothy, "We labour and strive," counting bodily suffering as nothing, "because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10).

The Apostle links a holy life most closely with this trust in God. In well-doing commit your souls unto Him. No otherwise can His guardianship and aid be hoped for. But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and with Him to know is to watch over and help. Nor should men sorrow when they suffer according to God's will. Rather it is cause for gladness. For conscience must tell them that they need to be purged from much earthly dross which clings about them. So the fire of trial may be counted among blessings.

And with two words of exceeding comfort St. Peter strengthens the believers in their trust. God is faithful; His compassions fail not: they are new every morning. In moments of despair the sorrowing Christian may feel tempted to cry out, with the Psalmist, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Psalm lxxvii. 10), but as he looks back on the path where God has led him he is convinced of the unwisdom of his questioning, and cries out, "This is my infirmity; I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

And this faithful God is our Creator. In the council of the Godhead it was said in the beginning, "Let us make man in our image." And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, which made of him a living soul. From God's hand he came forth very good, but sin entered, and the Divine image has been blurred and defaced. Yet in mercy the same heavenly conclave planned the scheme for man's restoration to his first estate. The love which spake to Zion of old speaks through Christ to all mankind. "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 15). In the fulness of time God has sent His Son to take hold upon the sons of men, to wear their likeness, to live on earth and die for the souls which He has made. Trust, says the Apostle, in this almighty, unchanging love; trust God, your Father, your Creator. He will succour you against all assaults of evil; He will comfort and support you when it is His desire to prove you; He will crown you, with your Lord, when trials are no more.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW TO TEND THE FLOCK.

1 Peter v. 1-4.

St. Peter's last lesson was full of consolation. He showed that it was from God's hand that judgments were sent upon His people to purify them and prepare them for His appearing. With this thought in their minds, he would have the converts rejoice in their discipline, confident in the faithfulness of Him who was trying them. He follows this general message to the Churches with a solemn charge to their teachers. They are specially responsible for the welfare of the brethren. On them it rests by the holiness of their lives and the spirit in which they labour to win men to the faith. "The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you. Therefore"—because I know that the

blessed purpose of trial is not always manifest, and because the hope of the believer needs to be constantly pointed to the faithfulness of God —I exhort you to tend zealously those over whom you are put in charge. "Elders" was the name given at first to the whole body of Christian teachers. No doubt they were chosen at the beginning from the older members of the community when the Apostles established Churches in their missionary journeys. "They appointed for them elders in every Church" (Acts xiv. 23); and it was the elders of the Church of Ephesus that Paul sent for to Miletus (Acts xx. 17). And St. Peter here contrasts them very pointedly with those of younger years, whom he addresses afterwards. But after it became an official title the sense of seniority would drop away from the word.

It is clear from this passage that in St. Peter's time they were identical with those who were afterwards named bishops. For the word which follows presently in the text and is rendered "exercising the oversight" is literally "doing the work of bishop, or overseer." And in the passage already alluded to (Acts xx. 15-28) those who at first are called elders are subsequently named bishops: "The Holy Ghost hath made you bishops to feed the Church of God" (R. V.). As the Church grew certain places would become prominent as centres of Christian life, and to the elders therein the oversight of other Churches would be given; and thus the overseer or bishop would grow to be distinct from the other presbyters, and his title be assigned to the more important office. This had not come about when St. Peter wrote.

The humility which he is soon about to commend to the whole body the Apostle manifests by placing himself on the level of those to whom he speaks: "I, who am a fellow-elder, exhort you." He has strong claims to be heard, claims which can never be theirs. He has been a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He might have made mention of his apostleship; he might have told of the thrice-repeated commission which soon supplies the matter of his exhortation. He will rather be counted an equal, a fellow-labourer with themselves. Some have thought that even when he calls himself a witness of Christ's sufferings he is not so much referring to what he saw of the life and death of Jesus, as to the testimony which he has borne to his Master since the pentecostal outpouring and the share which he has had of sufferings for Christ's sake. If this be so, he would here too be reckoning himself even as they, as he clearly intends to do in the words which follow, where he calls himself a sharer, as they all are, in the glory to which they look forward. Thus in all things they are his brethren: in the ministry, in their affliction, and in their hope of glory to be revealed.

He opens his solemn charge with words which are the echo of Christ's own: "Feed My sheep"; "Feed My lambs." Every word pictures the responsibility of those to whom the trust is committed. These brethren are God's flock. Psalmists and prophets had been guided of old to use the figure; they speak of God's people as "the sheep of His pasture." But our Lord consecrated it still more when He called Himself "the good Shepherd, that giveth His life for the sheep." The word tells much of the character of those to whom it is applied. How prone they are to wander and stray, how helpless, how ill furnished with means of defence against perils. It tells, too, that they are easy to be led. But that is not all a blessing, for though docile, they are often heedless, ready to follow any leader without thought of consequences.

But they are God's flock. This adds to the dignity of the elder's office, but adds also to the gravity of the trust, a trust to be entered on with fear and trembling. For the flock is precious to Christ, and should be precious to His shepherds. To let them perish for want of tending is treachery to the Master who has sent men to His work. And how much that tending means. To feed them is not all, though that is much. To provide such nurture as will help their growth in grace there is a food store in God's word, but not every lesson there suits every several need. There must be thoughtful choice of lessons. The elders of old were, and God's shepherds now are, called to give much care how they minister, lest by their oversight or neglect—

"The hungry sheep look up, but are not fed."

But tending speaks of watchfulness. The shepherd must yield his account when the chief Shepherd shall appear. Those who are watchmen over God's flock must have an eye to quarters whence dangers may come, must mark the signs of them and be ready with safeguards. And the sheep themselves must be strengthened to endure and conquer when they are assailed; they cannot be kept out of harm's way always. Christ did not pray for His own little flock of disciples that they should be taken out of the world, only kept from the evil. Then all that betokens good must be cherished among them. For even tiny germs of goodness the Spirit will sanctify, and help the watchful elder, by his tending, to rear till they flourish and abound.

To this general precept St. Peter adds three defining clauses, which tell us how the elder's duty may be rightly discharged, and against what perils and temptations he will need to strive: "exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according unto God." How would the oversight of an elder come to be exercised of constraint in the time of St. Peter? Those to whom he writes had been appointed to their office by apostolic authority, it may have been by St. Paul himself; and while an Apostle was present to inspire them enthusiasm for the new teaching would be at its height: many would be drawn to the service of Christ who would appear to the missionaries well fitted to be entrusted with such solemn charge and ministry. But even an Apostle cannot read men's hearts, and it was when the Apostles departed that the Churches would enter on their trial. Then the fitness of the elders would be put to the test. Could they maintain in the Churches the earnestness which had been awakened? Could they in their daily walk sustain the apostolic character, and help forward the cause both by word and life? Christianity would be unlike every other movement whose officers are human if there were not many failures and much weakness here and there; and if the ministrations of elders grew less acceptable and less fruitful, they would be offered with ever-diminishing earnestness, and the services, full of life at the outset, would prove irksome from

disappointment, and in the end be discharged only as a work of necessity.

And every subsequent age of the Church has endorsed the wisdom of St. Paul's caution, "Lay hands hastily on no man." Fervid zeal may grow cool, and inaptitude for the work become apparent. Nor are those in whom it is found always solely responsible for a mistaken vocation. As St. Paul's words should make those vigilant whose office it is to send forth men to sacred ministries, so St. Peter's warning should check any undue urging of men to offer themselves. It is a sight to move men to sorrow, and God to displeasure, when the shepherd's work is perfunctory, not done willingly, according to God.

In some texts the last three words are not represented, nor are they found in our Authorised Version. But they have abundant authority, and so fully declare the spirit in which all pastoral work should be done that they might well be repeated emphatically with each of these three clauses. To labour "according to God," "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye," is so needful that the words may be commended to the elders as a constant motto. And not only as in His sight should the work be done, but with an endeavour after the standard which is set before us in Christ. We are to stoop as He stooped that we may raise those who cannot raise themselves; to be compassionate to the penitent, breaking no bruised reed, quenching no spark in the smoking flax. The pastor's words should be St. Paul's, "We are your servants for Jesus' sake," his action that of the shepherd in the parable: "When he findeth it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." Such joy comes only to willing workers.

"Not yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." We do not usually think of the Church in the apostolic age as offering any temptation to the covetous. The disciples were poor men, and there is little trace of riches in the opening chapters of the Acts. St. Paul, too, constantly declined to be a burden to the flock, as though he felt it right to spare the brethren. The lessons of the New Testament on this subject are very plain. When our Lord sent forth His seventy disciples, He sent them as "labourers worthy of their hire" (Luke x. 7); and St. Paul declares it to be the Lord's ordinance that they which proclaim the Gospel should live of the Gospel (1 Cor. ix. 14). To serve with a ready mind is to seek nothing beyond this. But it is clear both from St. Paul's language (1 Tim. iii. 3; Titus i. 7) and from this verse that there existed temptations to greed, and that some were overcome thereby. It is worthy of note, however, that those who are given up to this covetousness are constantly branded with false teaching. They are thus described by both the Apostles. They teach things which they ought not (Titus i. 11), and with feigned words make merchandise of the flock (2 Peter ii. 3). The spirit of self-seeking and base gain (which is the literal sense of St. Peter's word) is so alien to the spirit of the Gospel that we cannot conceive a faithful and true shepherd using other language than that of St. Paul: "We seek not yours, but you."

"Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock." This, too, is a special peril at all times for those who are called to preside in spiritual offices. The interests committed to their trust are so surpassingly momentous that they must often speak with authority, and the Church's history furnishes examples of men who would make themselves lords where Christ alone should be Lord. Against this temptation He has supplied the safeguard for all who will use it. "My sheep," He says, "hear My voice." And the faithful tenders of His flock must ever ask themselves in their service, Is this the voice of Christ? The question will be in their hearts as they give counsel to those who need and seek it, What would Christ have said to this man or to that? The same sort of question will bring to the test their public ministrations, and will make that most prominent in them which He intended to be so. Thus will be introduced into all they do a due proportion and subordination, and many a subject of disquiet in the Churches will thereby sink almost into insignificance. At the same time the constant reference to their own Lord will keep them in mind that they are His servants for the flock of God.

While he warns the elders against the assumption of lordship over their charges, the Apostle adds a precept which, if it be followed, will abate all tendency to seek such lordship. For it brings to the mind of those set over the flock that they too are but sheep, like the rest, and are appointed not to dominate, but to help their brethren. "Making yourselves ensamples to the flock." Christ's rule for the good shepherd is, "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him" (John x. 4). The weak take in teaching rather from what they see than from what they hear. The teacher must be a living witness to the word, a proof of its truth and power. If he be not this, all his teaching is of little value. The simplest teacher who lives out his lessons in his life becomes a mighty power; he gains the true, the lawful lordship, and—

> "Truth from his lips prevails with double sway."

The Apostles knew well the weight and influence of holy examples. Hence St. Paul appeals continually to the lives of himself and his fellow-workers. We labour, he says, "to make ourselves an ensample unto you that ye should imitate us" (2 Thess. iii. 9); Timothy he exhorts, "Be thou an ensample to them that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 12), and Titus, "In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works" (Titus ii. 7). Nothing can withstand the eloquence of him who can dare to appeal to his brethren, as the Apostle does, "Be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (Phil. iii. 7), and "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). Such pattern shepherds have been the admiration of every age. Chaucer, among his pilgrims, describes the good parson thus:—

> "The lore of Christ and His Apostles twelve
> He taught, and first he followed it himself."

Such are the lives of shepherds who remember that they are even as their flocks: frail and full of evil tendencies, and needing to come continually, in humble supplication, to the source of strength and light, and to be ever watchful over their own lives. These men seek no lordship; there comes to them a nobler power, and the allegiance they win is self-tendered.

"And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away." For their consolation the Apostle sets before the elders their Judge in His self-chosen character. He is the chief Shepherd. Judge He must also be when He is manifested; but while He must pass sentence on their work, He will understand and weigh the many hindrances, both within and without, against which they have had to fight. Of human weakness, error, sin, such as beset us, He had no share; but He knows whereof we are made, and will not ask from any of us a service beyond our powers. Nay, His Spirit chooses for us, would we but mark it, the work in which we can serve Him most fitly. And He has borne the contradiction of sinners against Himself. In judging His servants, then, He will take account of the wilfulness of ears that would not hear and of eyes that would not see, of the waywardness that chose darkness rather than light, ignorance rather than Divine knowledge, death rather than life.

Therefore His feeble but faithful servants may with humble minds welcome His appearing. He comes as Judge. "Ye shall receive." It is a word descriptive of the Divine award at the last. Here it marks the bestowal of a reward, but elsewhere (2 Peter ii. 13) the Apostle uses it for the payment to sinners of the hire of wrong-doing. But the Judge is full of mercy. Of one sinner's feeble efforts He said, "She hath done what she could. Her sins are forgiven." And another who had laboured to be faithful He welcomed to His presence: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." To share that joy, to partake of His glory, to be made like Him by beholding His presence—this will be the faithful servant's prize, a crown of amaranth, unwithering, eternal.

CHAPTER XVII.

BE CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY.

1 Peter v. 5-7.

Having admonished the shepherds, the Apostle now turns to the flock, and his words recall the exhortations which he has given several times before. In ii. 13 he taught Christian subjects the duty of submission, even should it be their lot to live under heathen rulers. A few verses further on in the same chapter he repeated this teaching to Christian slaves with heathen masters, and the third chapter opens with advice of the same character to the wives who were married to heathen husbands. And now once more, with his favourite verb "be subject," he opens his counsel to the Churches on their duty to those set over them. The relation between the elders and their flock will not be as strained, or not strained after the same manner, as between Christians and heathens in the other cases, but the same principle is to govern the behaviour of those who hold the subject position. The duly appointed teachers are to be accepted as powers ordained of God, and their rule and guidance followed with submission.

"Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder." He teaches that as there is a duty of the elders to the younger, so there is a reciprocal duty which, in like manner and with the same thoroughness, must be discharged by the younger to the elders. In those early days the congregation could fitly be spoken of as "the younger." Naturally the teachers would be chosen from those who had been the first converts. The rest of the body would consist not only of those younger in years, but younger in the acceptance of the faith, younger in the knowledge of the doctrines of Christ, younger in Christian experience. And if the Churches were to be a power among their heathen surroundings, it must be by their unity in spirit and faith; and this could only be secured by a loyal and ready following of those who were chosen to instruct them.

But lest there may be any undue straining of the claim to submission, there follows immediately a precept to make it general: "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another." Thus will be realised the true idea of the Christian body, where each member should help all, and be helped of all, the rest, eye and hand, head and feet, each having their office, and each ministering therein as parts of the one body. This idea of general humility was altogether unknown to the world before Christ's coming. The word, therefore, is one coined for Christian use: lowliness of mind, a frame wherein each deems others better than himself. And with it the Apostle has coupled another word for "gird yourselves," which is well fitted to be so placed. It is found nowhere else, and is full of that graphic character of which he is so fond. The noun from which it is derived signifies "an outer garment," mainly used by household servants and slaves, to cover their other clothing and keep it from being spoiled. It appears to have been bound round the waist by a girdle. The word is a complete picture. St. Peter sees in humility a robe which shall encompass the whole life of the believer, keeping off all that might sully or defile it; and into the sense of the word comes the lowly estate of those by whom the garment in question was worn. It was connected entirely with the humblest duties. Hence its appropriateness when joined with "serve one another."

And one cannot in studying this striking word of the Apostle but be carried in thought to that scene described by St. John where Jesus "took a towel and girded Himself" (John xiii. 4) to wash the feet of His disciples. St. Peter gained much instruction from that washing, and he has not forgotten the lesson when he desires to confirm the brethren in Christian humility. "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you," was the Lord's injunction; and this the Apostle delivers to the Churches. And verily Christ spake of Himself more truly than of any other when He described the master's treatment of his watchful servants: "He shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them" (Luke xii. 37). Such has been the Lord's humiliation, who took upon Him our flesh, and now bids us to His banquet, where, through His Spirit, He is ever waiting to bless those who draw near.

How this exhortation to humility in dealing with one another is connected with the verse (Prov. iii. 34) by which the Apostle supports it does not perhaps immediately appear. "For God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." But a little reflection on the char-

acteristics of pride towards men soon makes us conscious that it is very closely united with pride towards God. The Pharisee who despises the publican, and thanks God in words that he is not such a one, feels in his heart no thankfulness nor care for God at all. His own acts have made him the pattern of goodness which he conceives himself to be. And we discover the like in every other exhibition of this spirit. The term (*ὑπερήφανοι*) by which these haughty ones are described indicates a desire to be conspicuous, to stand apart from and above their fellows. They are self-centred, and look down upon the rest of the world, and forget their dependence upon God.

St. Peter in his quotation has followed the Septuagint. In the Hebrew the first half of the verse is, "He scorneth the scorners." And this is the manner of God's dealing. He pays men with their own coin. Jacob's deceit was punished in kind by the frequent deceptions of his children, so that at last he could hardly credit their report that Joseph is still alive. David was scourged for his offences exactly according to his own sin. But the word which the Apostle has drawn from the Septuagint is also of solemn import. It declares a state of war between God and man. God *resisteth* the proud; literally, He setteth Himself in array against them. And their overthrow is sure. They that strive with the Lord shall be broken to pieces. The Psalmist rejoices over the contrary lot: "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear. What can man do unto me?" (Psalm cxviii. 6). He had realised the feebleness of human strength, even for man to rely on, much more if it stand in opposition to God. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in man," be it in ourselves or in others. So out of his distress he called upon the Lord. It is the sense of need which makes men humble; and to humbled souls God's blessing comes: "He answered me, and set me in a large place."

And as though He would mark humility as the chief grace to prepare men for His kingdom, the Lord's first words in His sermon on the mount are a blessing on the lowly-minded: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"—not shall be, but is theirs even now. God's favour to the humble is a present gift. How the sense of this swells the thanksgivings of Hannah and the Virgin Mary! And to teach the lesson to His disciples, when they were far from humility and were anxious only to know which of them should be above the rest in what they still dreamt of as an earthly kingdom, He took a little child and set him before them, as the pattern to which His true followers must conform. This childlike virtue gives admission to the kingdom of heaven; its possessors have the kingdom of God within them.

And St. Peter feeds the flock as he himself was fed. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The Apostle may be referring in these words to the trials which were upon the converts when he wrote to them. These he would have them look upon as God's discipline, as a cause for joy rather than sorrow. Christian humility will not rebel against fatherly, merciful correction. How the good man bows before the hand of God we see in Moses when God refused to let him go over into Canaan: "I besought the Lord, saying, O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand. . . . Let me go over, I pray Thee, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and hearkened not unto me" (Deut. iii. 23). And so the meek prophet, who knew that his withdrawal was for the people's sake, having sung, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, a people saved by the Lord?" (Deut. xxxiii. 29), went up unto Mount Nebo and died there, when his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. Hence his praise: "There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses." Humility was his dying lesson.

But as the Apostle has just been speaking of the duty owed to the elders as teachers, it is perhaps better to apply the words of the exhortation in that sense. Those who were set over the Churches were so set in the Lord. For the time they represented His hand, the hand of care and guidance to those who were submissive. In honouring them, the younger were honouring God. Thus the lesson would be, Bend your hearts to the instruction which He imparts through their words; yield your will to His will, and order your life to be in harmony with His providence; live thus that He may exalt you. For the hand which may seem heavy now will be mighty to raise you in due time. And that time He knows. It is His time, not yours. If it tarry, wait for it. It will surely come; it will not tarry, when the Divine discipline has done its work.

"Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He careth for you." When men do this the due time has come. Till this stage is reached there can be no true humility. But how slow men are in reaching it! We are willing to bring to God a little here and there of our sorrow and our feebleness, but would fain still carry a part of the load ourselves. Human pride it is which cannot stoop to owe everything to God; want of faith, too, both in the Divine power and the Divine love, though our tongues may not confess it. What a powerful homily on this verse is the conduct of the youthful David when he went forth against the Philistine! "The Lord," he says to Saul, "that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." And when the king offered his own coat of mail, though tempted thereby, he put the armour away, saying, "I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." He knew that God had given him skill with the humbler weapons, and it was God's battle in which he was to engage. So with his stones and his sling he went forth, telling the defiant challenger, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts." The action is a comment on the Psalmist's words, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm xxxviii. 5).

But neither the young hero by his example, nor the Apostle in his exhortation, teaches a spirit of careless indifference and neglect of means. David chose him five smooth stones out of the brook. These he could use. With these God had delivered him aforetime. And in every condition men are bound to use the best means they know to ensure success, and the Christian will pour out his prayers for guidance

and foresight in temporal concerns. That done, the counsel of Christ, on which St. Peter's exhortation is grounded, is, "Be not overanxious; your heavenly Father knoweth your needs." And he who has grown humble under the mighty hand of God in trials has learnt that the same hand is mighty to save: "He careth for you." When this perfect trust is placed in God, the load is lifted. It is, as the Psalmist says literally, *rolled* upon the Lord (Psalm xxxviii. 5).

How salutary this teaching for both the elders and the congregations among these Christians of the dispersion, and how full the promise of help and blessing. The teachers had been placed in the midst of difficulties and charged with a mighty responsibility; but robed in the garment of humility, casting aside all self-trust, coming only in the name of the Lord, the burden would be raised by the almighty arms and made convenient to their powers. And to the younger the same lowly spirit, loving thoughts toward those who cared for their souls, would be fruitful in blessing. For the same God who resisteth the proud showers His grace upon the humble. It falls on them as the dew of Hermon, which cometh down upon the mountains of Zion. Unto them Christ has proclaimed His foremost blessing; has promised, and is giving, the kingdom of heaven to humble souls, and will give them life for evermore.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THROUGH PERILS TO VICTORY.

1 Peter v. 8-14.

Not only had these Asian Christians to suffer from the opposition and calumnies of the heathen and from the estrangement of former friends: there were perils within the Churches themselves. There were weak brethren, who fell away when trials came, and infected others with their despondency; there were false brethren, with whom faith was a mere consent of the understanding, and not the spring of a holy, spiritual life. These spake of the liberty of Christ as though it were an emancipation from all moral restraints. Such dangers asked for firmness both in the elders and their hearers. To withstand them there must be a constant growth in Christian experience, whereby the faithful might wax steadfast, and attain to the strength and stature of the fulness of Christ. These dangers became more manifest before St. Peter wrote his second letter, where we find them described in dark colours.

Here to the converts, exposed to the assaults of these temptations, he enjoins the same well-ordered frame of mind which before (i. 13) he commended to them as they looked forward to the hope in store for them, and also (iv. 7) in their prayers, that their petitions might be such as suited with the approaching end of all things. "Be sober," he says again, and combines therewith an exhortation which without sobriety is impossible: "Be watchful." If the mind be unbalanced, there can be no keeping of a true guard against such dangers as were around these struggling believers. And it is impossible not to connect such an exhortation from his lips with those words of Christ, which one Evangelist says were expressly addressed to St. Peter, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mark xiv. 37, 38). He who had received this admonition was conscious that, as in his own case, so with these his converts, the spirit might be willing, but the flesh was weak, and the enemy mighty.

"Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." In the days of Job, when God asked of Satan, "Whence comest thou?" his answer was, "From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it" (Job i. 7). Of this Old Testament language the Apostle here makes partial use in his description of the enemy of mankind. He walketh about in the earth, which is his province, for he is called the prince of this world (John xii. 31) and the god of this world (2 Cor. iv. 4). And the Greek word ἀντίδικος, "adversary," which St. Peter uses as a translation of the Hebrew "Satan," is well chosen, for it describes not an ordinary enemy, but one who acts as an opponent would in a court of law. Such was Satan from the first, an accuser. In Job's case he accused the Patriarch to his God: "Doth Job serve God for naught?" "Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, or touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." In earlier days he appears as the accuser of God Himself: "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii. 4, 5). And with such-like suggestions he assails the faithful continually, speaking either to their unguarded hearts, or by the words of his servants, of whom he has no lack. St. Paul dreaded his power for the Thessalonian converts: "I sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour should be in vain" (1 Thess. iii. 5). And St. Peter's words are dictated by the same fear; he has the same wish to keep the flock steadfast in their faith. To them Satan's whisperings would be after this sort: "You are forgotten of God"; "Love could never leave you so long in trial." Or his agents would say in scorn, "How can you talk of freedom, when your life is one long torment? What is the profit of faith, when it gives you no liberty?" And such questions are perilous to feeble minds. The Apostle marks the great danger by a comparison which Ezekiel (xxii. 25) had used before him, speaking of the tempter as a roaring lion, ever hungry for his prey. There is but one weapon which can vanquish him. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4). St. Peter's lesson is the same as St. John's.

"Whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world." The steadfast faith must be the firm foundation of God; and the same thoughts, which St. Paul commends as a correction of those who have erred concerning the truth, are those most fit to be urged upon St. Peter's converts to render them steadfast. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. ii. 19), and with the Lord to know is to care for and to save. And "let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." This is the perfect law, the law of true liberty, and he who continueth therein, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, shall be blessed

in his doing. Thus resting on God and thus ruling himself, he shall be kept from the snares of the enemy, and having withstood in the evil day, shall still be made able to stand.

And to such steadfastness the brethren are to be moved by the knowledge that others are in the same affliction. How shall such knowledge minister support? The mere knowledge that others bear a like burden does not strengthen our own shoulders; to hear of others' pains will not relieve our own. Not so. But just as it is a power in warfare when men see their leader before them, facing the same perils, hear his voice cheering them by his courage, inspiring them with his hope; just as it is a support to brave men to find brave brethren at their side in the conflict, animated by the same spirit, marching forward to the same victory, so is it in the Christian struggle. All Christians are to be steadfast, the elders like the leaders of an army, the younger like the soldiers who follow, that, moving with one spirit against the foe, feeling that each is like-minded with all the rest, while all are equally conscious of the importance of victory, they may grasp hands as they go forward, and be heartened thereby, being sure that in the danger they will have helpers at their side.

And that he may give the more emphasis to this idea of unity, in which, though the suffering is common to all, yet the hope is also common, and the victory is promised to all, the Apostle does not speak of the converts as a multitude of brethren, but uses a noun in the singular number, naming them (as the margin of the Revised Version indicates) "a brotherhood" (*ἀδελφότης*). And when they regarded themselves as "a brotherhood in the world," the thought would have its comforting as well as its painful aspect. The world, as Scripture speaks of it, is void of faith. Hence the believer, while he lives in it, is amid jarring surroundings, and is sure to suffer. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But it is not to last for ever, nor for long. "The world passeth away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." And though the brotherhood in the world must suffer, yet there is that other brotherhood beyond; and there the suffering will not be remembered for the glory that shall be revealed in us.

"And the God of all grace, who called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, stablish, strengthen you." Being now about to sum up the great work of Christian advancement, in which from first to last the power is bestowed by God, St. Peter finds no title more fitting to express the Divine love than "the God of *all* grace." The invitation to become partakers of the glory which Christ has won by His sufferings, won that He may bestow it upon men, was God's free call. Our sufferings, the discipline which the Father employs to purge and purify us, are to last but a little while. Then those whom He has called He will also justify, and those whom He justifies He will in the end glorify. Thus St. Paul (Rom. viii. 30) describes the operations of Divine grace. St. Peter, with the same lesson, uses words more after his own graphic manner. He gives us a picture of God's work in its several stages. First God will complete in all its parts the work which He has begun. He will make it so that He can pronounce it very good, as He did when the worlds were perfected in the first creation (Heb. xi. 3), making His people to be so perfected that they may be as their Master (Luke vi. 40). Then He will sustain and support that which He has brought to its best estate. There shall not be, as in the first creation, any falling away. New gifts shall be bestowed by the Holy Spirit, through the ministration of the word. It was for such a purpose that St. Paul longed to visit the Roman Church, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end that they might be established. And what has been perfected and established shall also by the same grace be made strong, that it may endure and withstand all assaults.

In many ancient texts a fourth verb is given, which the Authorised Version renders "settle." It signifies "to set on a firm foundation," and it is of the figurative character which marks St. Peter's language, and, besides this, is not uncommon in the New Testament (Matt. vii. 25); Luke vi. 48; Heb. i. 10, etc.). But the verbs immediately preceding have no direct reference to a building, and the addition arises probably from a marginal note, made to illustrate the text and by some later scribe incorporated with it. The whole passage brings to mind Christ's injunction to the Apostle, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

"To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." A fitting doxology to follow the Apostle's enumeration of the riches of Divine grace. He who feels that every gift he has is from above will with ready thankfulness welcome God's rule, and seek to submit himself thereto, making it the law of his life here, as he hopes it will be hereafter.

"By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly." Silvanus was that Silas who accompanied St. Paul in his second missionary journey through the districts of Phrygia and Galatia (Acts xvi. 6), to which St. Peter addresses his letter. To send it by the hand of one known and esteemed among these Churches for his former labours and for his friendship with the great Apostle of the Gentiles would secure acceptance for it, while the bearer would testify to the unity of the doctrine preached by the two Apostles. He who had been a faithful brother to St. Paul was so also to St. Peter, and was by him commended to the Churches. For the expression, "I account him," implies no doubt or question in the Apostle's own mind. It is the utterance of a matured opinion. The verb (*λογίζομαι*) is that which St. Paul uses: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). To St. Paul something of the future glory had been shown, and he had felt abundance of present suffering. He had taken account of both sides, and could speak with certainty. The brevity of St. Peter's letter could be supplemented by the words of his messenger. For Silas himself was a prophet (Acts xv. 32), and fitted to exhort and confirm the brethren.

"Exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God: stand ye fast therein." The grace in its several stages has just been summarised: the calling, the perfecting, stablishing, strengthening; and the whole letter is occupied in showing that at every advance God puts His servants to the test. But the Apostle knows

that the agents of the adversary are busily scattering the tares of doubt and disbelief where God had sown His good seed. The wrestling is not against flesh and blood alone, but against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual host of wickedness. Hence the form of his exhortation: "Stand fast."

"She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Mark my son. Salute one another with a kiss of love." It is most natural to refer these words to a Church, and not to any individual. Some have interpreted them as an allusion to St. Peter's wife, whom, as we know from St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. 5), he sometimes had as a companion in his travels. But there is a degree of inappropriateness in speaking of a single person as elect along with these various Churches of Asia, whereas the Church in Babylon might fitly have such a distinction. It is unnecessary, too, to explain Babylon (as some have done) as intended for Rome. There was no conceivable reason in St. Peter's day why, when he was writing to lands under Roman dominion, if he meant to speak of the city in Italy, he should not call it by its real name. The Mark here named was most probably the John whose surname was Mark (Acts xii. 12), whose mother was a friend of St. Peter's from the earliest days of his apostolic labours. He, too, had been a companion of St. Paul for a time, and made another link between the two great Apostles. St. Peter calls him "son" because it is likely that both the mother and her son were won to the new teaching by him, and he employs the term of affection just as St. Paul does of Timothy, his convert (1 Tim. i. 2, 18; 2 Tim. i. 2). The salutation by a kiss is frequently mentioned. It is called "a holy kiss" (Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v. 26) in St. Paul's language. We find from Justin Martyr* that it had come to be used in his day as part of the ceremonial preceding the Holy Communion. It was to be a token of perfect love, according to the name which St. Peter here gives it. An evil construction was soon put upon it by the enemies of the faith; and after a long history it fell into disuse, even in the East, where such manner of salutation is more common than in the West. In his final words the Apostle has embodied the benediction of which the kiss was meant to be the symbol.

"Peace be unto you all that are in Christ." This is the bond which unites believers into one fellowship. To be in Christ is to be of the brotherhood which has been so significantly marked just before for its unity. And in these last clauses we have examples of the force of the tie. Individuals are brought by it into close communion, as Peter himself with Silas and with Mark, whom he speaks of in terms of family love. To the Churches Silas is commended as a brother in the faith, which faith establishes a bond of strength between the distant Churches which have been called into it together. Well might the heathen, wonderstruck, exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another!" And the Apostle's own words mark the all-embracing character of the love: "all that are in Christ." They are all brethren, children of the common Father, inheritors of the same promises, pilgrims on the same journey, sustained by the same hope, servants of the same Lord, and strengthened, guided, and enlightened by the one Spirit, who is promised to abide with Christ's Church for ever.

* "Apol.," i. 65.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

2 Peter i. 1-4.

In the salutation of this second letter the Apostle describes himself in fuller form than in the first: "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Some have seen in this description a testamentary character, as though the Epistle contained his parting counsels. The words form an epitome of his whole life. As Simon, son of Jonas, he lived his life in Judaism until Christ's call summoned him to be a fisher of men. "Peter" is the Christ-given name, which marked an advance in spiritual illumination, an advance that fitted him to be one of the chief heralds of God manifest in the flesh. As a servant (or rather, bondservant) of Jesus Christ, he stands on the same level with those to whom he writes, though the service to which he has been called may be in character different from theirs. Jesus had said to the Twelve, and through them to the whole body of believers, "One is your Master, even the Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xxiii. 10). And here comes forward that other aspect of Christian service. The servants of Christ are, for His sake, servants to all the brotherhood (2 Cor. iv. 5). As an apostle he speaks with authority, an authority greater than can be possessed by any future age. The solemn character of the office is stamped by Christ's words, "As My Father sent Me, even so send I you"; and the Churches are reminded, as they think of the apostolic office, that the Lord who commissioned the Twelve to be His servants said, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and He that despiseth you despiseth Me."

St. Peter does not, as in his former letter, name the Churches to which he is writing; but afterwards (iii. 1) he states that this is his second letter to them. We may therefore conclude that the same persons are addressed as before. Here he speaks of them as "them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." Some have thought that here the Apostle's words are specially addressed to those among the converts who had been won from heathendom, and now were made partakers of the same faith with himself and others who, like him, had been born Jews, and so heirs in part to God's precious promises. But, as he has just made mention of his apostolic office, it seems easier to refer "us" to the Apostles. If this be the sense, then—though in the allusion to his office and authority they must have recognised the points wherein his communing with Christ had made him to differ from them—these words set forward that aspect of the Christian life wherein all the faithful are equal. The graces, gifts, and opportunities which God be-

stows are according to men's power to improve them; but faith, in its saving efficacy and preciousness, is the same for every believer. And when he speaks of this faith as being in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see that he is thinking of righteousness in that sense in which he uses the word afterwards in this Epistle (iii. 13): as that perfect righteousness which belongs to the new heavens and the new earth, and hence to God Himself.

To this righteousness each "stranger and sojourner" in the world is striving to attain by faith, and by each exercise thereof he is raised nearer to his lofty aim. His faith, like the patriarch's of old, is counted unto him for righteousness. The fruit of each man's faith will be ἰσότιμος —"alike precious"—when the journey is ended. For it will be salvation in the presence of the perfect righteousness. As in the Saviour's parable the welcome was the same to him who had rightly used his two talents as to him who had done the like with five, so each faithful servant of Christ, working righteousness according to his power here, shall be called up into the joy of his Lord. For the joys of heaven all will not have the same capacity; but for each, according to his power to receive it, there will be fulness of joy. Nor should the word "obtained" pass unnoticed. It is the word used of Judas (Acts i. 17), who obtained part of the apostolic ministry on the call of Jesus. So here, too, the call into the faith is of God; and it is when men obey it that they progress in Divine graces and go forward unto righteousness.

"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." The first words are the same with the Apostle's prayer in the opening of the First Epistle. And to no stage of the Christian life can such a wish be inappropriate. To grow in grace, and so in peace, is the Christian's daily bread; and the thought of this seems to be uppermost in St. Peter's mind in this letter, that thus the falling away, to which he sees the converts are likely to be exposed, may be counteracted. The danger was arising from the boastful parade of a knowledge (γνῶσις) falsely so called (1 Tim. vi. 20). Before this letter was written teachers had risen within the Church who professed to have a deeper and more mysterious interpretation of the doctrines of the Gospel. This esoteric enlightenment they specially named "knowledge," and led men astray by profitless inquiries concerning the absolute nature of God and the manner of His communication with the world. To this teaching St. Paul is referring when he speaks of "foolish questions" and "endless genealogies," and it is this which St. Peter rebukes so vehemently in the next chapter of this letter. As an antidote for the poison, he urges the converts to seek after a true and full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the Father and the Son. No single word can adequately represent this term, which became the watchword of all the Christian teachers. It is that knowledge of the truth which St. Paul so often commends to Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 7) and speaks of as that acknowledging of the truth, allowing it to be effective on the life, which follows repentance (2 Tim. ii. 25); it is specially the knowledge of God and of things Divine; it is that knowledge which must temper religious zeal (Rom. x. 2) that it may be effective; it is the knowledge against which if a man sin (Heb. x. 26) he is verily reprobate. And this true knowledge can only come of faithful service. He shall know the Lord who loves to do His will. Do the works, and ye shall know of the doctrine.

"Seeing that His Divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." The work, though great, becomes not impossible; the dangers and difficulties, though abundant, are not insurmountable. For it is not on us that the victory depends. God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through Christ's resurrection; and Christ has promised to be with His servants all the days, even unto the end of the world. There is a free gift of Divine power for all our needs, everything to foster the spiritual life and to guide into the way of holiness. Wisdom will be given that we may understand God's will and choose aright, strength to persevere in the midst of trial, boldness to make confession of the Lord before men, and watchfulness lest we, as did the teachers of error, wax overconfident. All things are granted; all things may be ours.

"Through the knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue." Here the same full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of which the Apostle has just been speaking is to become the channel of all our blessings: to know God, who has made Himself to be known through Christ Jesus. God's glory and virtue—that is, His Divine power—have been manifested in Him. The disciples beheld them in Christ's miracles. "This beginning of His signs did Jesus, . . . and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (John ii. 11), and of His whole life St. John says, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father. He dwelt among us full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). This is what St. Peter means by "virtue." And still in the hearts of men through the Spirit the same manifestation is given. He illumines them, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"Whereby He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises." In Christ God has offered men all the blessings of the new covenant: repentance; faith; justification; eternal life. He, with the Son and the Spirit, comes unto the faithful and makes His abode with them. Thus they are made members of Christ's mystical body. He dwells in their hearts by faith; He gives them power to become sons of God; they are adopted of God, who sent His only-begotten Son into the world that they might live through Him. These are the precious promises granted, but not forced upon men, set forth in all their greatness in the life and love of Jesus; and men are invited to choose them. And the choice is made by patiently doing the will of God so far as it is revealed to each man; after that we shall receive the promises (Heb. x. 36).

"That through these ye may become partakers of the Divine nature." This is the Divine scheme for man's restoration; this is the change of which St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians (2 Cor. ii. 18), and which he illustrates by the glorified face of Moses. The prophet was called up into Mount Horeb, and drew near to the presence of Jehovah; the Lord spake with him face to face out of the midst of the fire, and his countenance was illumined by the

eternal glory. But the radiance was bestowed on Moses alone; the people might not draw near; and the glory shed on him was transient, so that he veiled his face lest the people should mark its passing away. But since the manifestation of God in Christ all men may draw near, and be made partakers of unfading glory. It is not with Zion as with Sinai. The way is open to all, nor will the glory pass away from those who have been blessed with it. For now we all, with unveiled face, reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord, and, with progress in holiness, are transformed into the same image, as from the Lord the Spirit. Thus men become—for it is a gradual process—partakers of the Divine nature, and being drawn more near to God while they live here, are fitted through His mercy, when the last call comes, to go up higher and sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, their life having been a constant putting on of the wedding garment.

"Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." This is the victory that overcometh the world, but it is a conquest which men cannot win unaided, nay, where the truest bravery, the surest hope, is in speedy flight. Like Lot from Sodom must the Christian hasten away from the lusts of the world, casting no look behind him, nor tarrying to dally with them for a moment. For the flesh is weak, and the prince of this world is mighty in his evil domain, and, that he may lead men astray, will ofttimes transform himself into an angel of light; and within the soul of man he has his confederate powers, the cravings of this human nature, which thinks the baits of the enemy are pleasant to the eyes, and it may be they look fit to make one wise. And so in the eyes of the tempted ones, as in the eyes of the senseless bird of the Proverbs, the net seems spread in vain; in their own fancy they seem able to go on without being entangled, and Satan encourages the delusion. After that the stages are easy, but they are all down hill. Men first walk after their own lusts; then they are led by them, then obey them, and at last become their slaves. This is the corruption, the ruin, from which the Christian is aided to flee through seeking the glory of God as it is set before him in the Saviour's works and words. Drawn by these, he turns away his gaze from the world and its lusts; his eyes no longer behold vanity to love it. He has begun to learn of Jesus, and every new lesson makes him stronger in the faith; and by degrees he is enabled to bring forth into light, and bear witness to, the knowledge which he has gained of the glory of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. So not he alone, but those who behold his escape and mark his growth in grace, may give God the praise, saying, "This hath God wrought," for they shall perceive that it is His work.

CHAPTER XX.

WHO SHALL ASCEND INTO THE HILL OF THE LORD?

2 Peter i. 5-11.

The Apostle has just set forth in all their fulness the riches of Divine grace: the precious faith, followed by the bestowal of all helps toward life and godliness, and with the large promises of God to rely on for the future, promises whereby those who seek to renounce the things which are not of the Father, but of the world, may become partakers of the Divine nature. These blessings are assured, are in store, but only for those who manifest a desire to receive them. How this desire shall be shown, how it shall constantly grow stronger and be ever fulfilling, until it attain perfect fruition in Christ's eternal kingdom, is the next instruction. "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue." The plenteousness of the Divine bounty is proclaimed that it may evoke an earnest response from all who receive it. What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits which He hath done, and is doing, unto me? is to be the heart's cry of the feeblest of God's saints. For the boundless ocean of grace asks that there should be mingled with it some drops of human duty. God will heal the bite of the serpents in the wilderness, but to gain the blessing the wounded ones, even in their suffering, must turn their eyes to the appointed symbol of healing. Christ's power will cure ten lepers, but He first sends them away to do their little in the path of obedience: "Go, show yourselves to the priest." Thus the Apostle's exhortation here, "Adding on your part all diligence." The diligence of which he speaks is that sort of endeavour which springs from a sense of duty: an earnest zeal and will to accomplish whatever it finds to do; that does not linger till some great work offers, but hastens to labour in the immediate present. This is the spirit in which Christian advance will be made. And the lines on which such progress will go he now describes as though each new step were evolved from, and were a natural development of, that which preceded it. The faith which the Christian holds fast is the gift of God, and it contains the germs of every grace that can follow. These the believer is to foster with diligence.

St. Peter begins his scale of graces thus: "In your faith supply virtue." Here virtue means the best development of such power as a man possesses. It may be little or great, but in its kind it is to be made excellent. And here it is that the Christian workers in every sphere must surpass others. They work from a higher motive. What they do is a constant attestation of their faith, is done as in God's sight, and in the confidence that in every act it is possible to give Him glory. There can be no carelessness in such lives, for they are filled with a sense of responsibility, which is the first fruit of a living faith. And in St. Peter's figurative word the believer is said to supply each grace in turn because he contributes by his careful walk to wake it into life, to make it active, and let it shine as a light before men. "And in your virtue knowledge," he continues. For, with duty rightly done, there comes illumination over the path of life: men understand more of God's dealings, and hence bring their lives into closer harmony with His will. And we have Christ's own assurance, "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching" (John vii. 17). And the same is true not only of the Lord's own lessons, but of all the promptings of the Spirit in men's hearts. If they hearken to the voice which whispers, "This is the way," it will become at every stage plainer, and there

will be shown to them not only the how, but the wherefore.

"And in your knowledge temperance." There is a knowledge which puffeth up, giving not humility, which is the fruit of true knowledge, but self-conceit. Of the evil effects thereof the Apostle knew much. Out of it grew extravagance in thought, and word, and action; and its mischief was threatening the infant Churches. Against it the temperance which he commends is to be the safeguard, and it is a virtue which can be manifested in all things. He who possesses it has conquered himself, and has won his way thus to stability of mind and consistency of conduct. "His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," and so he can go forward to the Apostle's next stage of the heavenward journey: "And in your temperance patience." This is the true sequence of spiritual self-control. Life is sure to supply for the godly man trials in abundance. But he is daily striving to die unto the world. The effort fixes his mind firmly on the Divine purposes, and lifts him above the circumstances of time. He is a pilgrim and sojourner amidst them, but is in no bondage to them, nor will he be moved, even by great afflictions, to waver in his trust. He can look on, as seeing Him that is invisible, and can persevere without being unduly cast down.

"And in your patience godliness." The mystery of godliness—that is, Godlikeness—was made known by the Incarnation. The Son of God became man, that men might through Him be made sons of God. And godliness in the present world is Christ made manifest in the lives of His servants. Toward this imitation of Christ the believer will aspire through his patience. He takes up the cross and bears it after his Master, and thus begins his discipleship, of which the communion with Christ waxes more intimate day by day. Such was the godliness of St. Paul. It was because he had followed the Lord in all that He would have him to do that the Apostle was bold to exhort the Corinthians, "Be ye imitators of me"; but he adds at once, "as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). And when he sends Timothy to recall his teaching to their minds he says, "He shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ." By such a walk with Christ His servants are helped forward towards the fulfilment of the two tables of the moral law, to which St. Peter alludes in his next words: "And in your godliness love of the brethren; and in your love of the brethren love." The last-named love (ἀγάπη) is that highest love, the love of God to men, which is set up as the grand ideal towards which His servants are constantly to press forward; but from this the love of the brethren cannot be severed; nay, it must be made the stepping-stone unto it. For, as another Apostle says, "he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, cannot love God, whom he hath not seen" (1 John iv. 20). But love of the brethren is not to be narrowed, in the verse before us, or elsewhere, to love of those who are already known to the Churches as brethren in the Lord. The Gospel of Christ knows no such limits. The commission of the Master was, "Go ye forth into all the world." All mankind are to be won for Him; all are embraced in the name of brethren. For if they be not so now, it is our bounden duty to endeavour that they shall be so. And in thus interpreting we have the mind of Christ with us, who came to seek and to save them that were lost, to die for the sins of the whole world, and who found His brethren among every class who would hear His words and obey them. We have with us, too, the acts of God Himself, who would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth, and who, with impartial love, maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth His rain upon the just and the unjust, that thus even the evil and unjust may be won to own His Fatherhood. Such Divine love is the end of the commandment (1 Tim. i. 5), and terminates the list of those graces the steps whereto St. Paul has more briefly indicated when he says the love which is most like God's springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. In this way shall men be borne upward into the hill of the Lord.

The knowledge of Christ is a lesson in which we cannot be perfected till we behold Him as He is, but yet through it from the first we receive the earnest and pledge of all that is meant by life and godliness, and the culture of the Divine gifts will yield a rich increase of the same knowledge. "For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Men in this life can draw nearer unto this full knowledge, and the bliss of each new gain prompts to more zealous exertion. There can be no relaxation of effort, no remissness, in such a quest. For hope is fostered by the constant experience of a deepening knowledge, and receives continual pledges that the glory to be revealed is far above what is already known. The enlightened vision grows wider and ampler; and the path, which began in faith, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The world offers other lights to its votaries, but they lead only into darkness. "For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins." He who has taken no heed to foster within him the light which is kindled by faith, and which can only be kept alive by the grace of the Divine Spirit, is blind—yea, blind indeed, for he is self-blinded. He has quenched the inward light which was of God's free gift, and made the light within him to be darkness, a darkness, like Egypt's, which may be felt. Such a man has no insight into the glories of the celestial vision, no joy of the widening prospect which captivates the gaze of the spiritual man. He can see only things close at hand, and is as one bowed downward to the earth, groping a dreary way, with neither hope nor exaltation at the end. For he has forgotten—nay, St. Peter's words are stronger and very striking—λήθην λαβών—he has taken hold upon forgetfulness, made a deliberate choice of that course which obliterates all remembrance of God's initial gift of grace to cleanse him from his old sins. Unmindful of this purification, he has admitted into the dwelling where the Spirit of God would have made a home other spirits more wicked than those first cast out. They have entered in, and dwell there. There is a marked contrast between this expression and the word used for God's gift of faith (ver. 1). That a man receives (λαχών) as the bounty of his Lord's love; and if treasured and used, it proves itself the light of life for this world and the next. The wrong path he chooses for him-

self (λαβὼν), and its close is the blackness of the dark.

"Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." "Wherefore, brethren"—because such terrible bindness as this has fallen upon some, who left their first grace unimproved and allowed even the memory of it to fade away—do you give the more diligence in your religious life. The true way to banish evil is to multiply good, leaving neither room nor time for bad things to spread themselves. When the peril of such things is round about you, it is no time for relaxed effort. Your enemy never relaxes his. He is always active, seeking whom he may devour, and employs not the day only, but the night, when men sleep, to sow his tares. Let him find you ever watchful, ever diligent to hold fast and make abundant the gifts which God has already bestowed upon you. In the foreknowledge of the Father, you are elect from the foundation of the world; and your call is attested by the injunction laid upon you, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." Your inheritance is in store where nothing can assail it. God only asks that you should manifest a wish, a longing, for His blessings; and He will pour them richly upon you. He has made you of a loftier mould than the inanimate and irrational creation. The flower turns to the sun by a law which it cannot resist. From the Sun of righteousness men can turn away. But the Father's will is that your eyes should be set on the hope which He offers. Then of a certainty it will be realised. Lift up your eyes to the eternal hills, for from thence your help will come. The promise is sure. Strive to keep your hope equally steadfast. For now you belong to the household of Christ; now you are through Him children of the heavenly Father: to this sonship you are elect and have been called, and to it you shall attain if you hold fast your boldness and the glorying of your hope unto the end.

"For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble." The way will be hard, and may be long, the obstacles in your path many and rugged, heaped up by the prince of this world to bar you from advancing and make you faint-hearted; but down into the midst of the danger there shall shine from the Father of lights a ray which shall illumine the darkness and make clear for you the steps in which you ought to tread, and the rod and staff of God's might will support and comfort you.

"For thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." In his first words in this passage the Apostle exhorted the believers to supply something, as it were, of their own towards their spiritual advancement; but when the demand was fully understood, behold God had made ready the means for doing everything which was asked for! Within the precious faith which He bestowed was enfolded the potentiality of every other grace. There they lay, as seeds in a seed-plot. All that men were bidden to do was to give them culture. Then God's Spirit would operate as the generous sunshine, and cause each hidden power to unfold itself in its time and bloom into beauty and strength. In this verse the Divine assistance is more clearly promised. What men bestow shall be returned unto them manifold. Do your diligence, says the Apostle, and there shall be supplied unto you from the rich stores of God all that can help you forward in your heavenward journey. The kingdom of God shall begin for you while you are passing through this present life. For it can be set up within you. It has been prepared from all eternity in heaven, and will be enjoyed in full fruition when this life is ended. But it is a state, and not a place. The entrance thereto is opened here. The believer is beckoned into it; and with enraptured soul he enjoys through faith a foretaste of the things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. Over those joys Christ is King, but He is also the door; and those who enter through Him shall go in and out, and shall surely find pasture, even life for evermore.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VOICE HEARD IN THE HOLY MOUNT.

2 Peter i. 12-18.

Up to this point the Apostle has spoken of God's abundant grace and the consequent duties of believers. And he has set forth these duties in the most encouraging language. He has pictured first the gift of Divine power, and the precious promises of God, whereby men may be helped to walk onward and upward; and when the labour is ended he has pointed to the door of Christ's eternal kingdom, open to admit the saint to His everlasting rest. Now he turns to describe the duty which he feels to be laid upon himself, and faithful is he in the discharge thereof. "Strengthen thy brethren," is constantly ringing in his ears. "Wherefore," he says, "I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things." He dreads that taking hold of forgetfulness—that λήθην λαβὼν—of which he has spoken before, and against which constant diligence is needed. So far as in him lies, the perilous condition shall come upon none of them. The verb in the best texts expresses far more than that which is rendered in the Authorised Version, "I will not be negligent." It implies a sense of duty and the intention of fulfilling it; it bears within it, too, the thought (which is strengthened by the word "always") that there may be need for such reminding, if not from internal weakness, yet by reason of external dangers. And to bring to the mind of the Churches the gracious bounty of God in Christ, and to set down the steps whereby the graces bestowed should be fostered and increased, is a subject worthy of an Apostle, a theme which no amount of exhortation can exhaust, and one which ought to prompt the hearers to gratitude and obedience.

"Though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you." Knowledge of things that pertain unto godliness is barren unless it be wrought out in the life. Yet knowledge and practice do not always go hand in hand. This was one of the lessons taught by Jesus as He washed the disciples' feet: "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them" (John xiii. 17). St. Peter longs that the converts should make this blessedness their

own. His life's work is to watch for them, that they be not remiss in doing. To none can such a duty more peculiarly belong than to him who holds Christ's special commission to feed the flock. By "the truth which is with you" the Apostle appears to be alluding to the varying degrees of advancement which there must be among the members of the Churches. All have travelled some way along the road which he has shown them; all have some of the truth within their grasp. They have set their feet on the path, though they be planted with different degrees of firmness. What is needed for each and all is to press forward, not to rest in the present, but to hasten to what lies beyond. For the truth of God is inexhaustible.

Perhaps, too, he thought, as he spake of the truth present with them, that he was of necessity absent and would soon be removed altogether, and the only way by which he could serve them was by his epistle. He could never forget that among those to whom he was writing were the Galatians, over whose falling back from the truth St. Paul had so greatly lamented: who had run well, but had fainted ere the course was over; who had received some truth to be present with them, even the faith of the crucified Jesus, but had been beguiled into letting it slip. Thought of these things shapes his words as he writes, "I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance." He rejoices that they are "established," but yet sends them an admonition. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

"And I think it right." The word marks the solemn estimate which the Apostle takes of his duty. It is a just and righteous work. Danger is abroad, and he has been made one of Christ's shepherds. Many motives prompt him to write his words of counsel and warning. First, his love for them as his brethren, some of them, perhaps, his children in Christ. Like St. Paul, he has them in his heart. Then, he will fulfil to the utmost the charge which the Lord gave him. He is conscious, too, that opportunities for the fulfilment of his trust will soon come to an end. "As long as I am in this tabernacle," he says. It is but a frail home, the body; and with St. Peter age was drawing on. He saw that the time of his departure could not be far off, and this left no excuse for remitting his admonitions. He must be urgent so long as he can. "To stir you up by putting you in remembrance." The work of the Apostle will be thoroughly done (*διεγείρειν*), and be of that nature for which the Holy Ghost was promised to himself and his fellows. "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John xiv. 26). Thus would St. Peter, like St. Paul, impart unto the converts some spiritual gift, that he, with them, may be comforted, strengthened, each by the other's faith. So he proceeds to dwell on that Divine manifestation by which his own belief had been confirmed. And there would be memories of St. Paul's lessons also to call to their minds, and many of these would be awakened by an appeal like this. The falling away of the Galatians had been from a different cause, but the memory of the past would warn, and might strengthen, them all in the future against their new dangers.

"Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle cometh swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ signified unto me." Such a motive makes the appeal most touching. He will soon be removed. To this he looks forward without alarm. His concern is for them, not for himself. He regards his death as the stripping off of a dress: when its use is past it is parted with without regret. To him, as to his brother Apostle, to die would be gain. But he must have had constantly in mind the Master's prophecy, "When thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John xxi. 18). And in the word "swiftly" he no doubt alludes, not only to the old age in which the end would naturally come, but also to some sharp stroke by which his departure would be brought to pass. The stretching out of his hands would be a preliminary to the prison and the cross. In the Gospel it is said that Christ's words give the sign (*σημαίνων*) the indication, by what death he should die. The Apostle employs a stronger word (*ἐδήλωσε*) here: "made it evident." The English version renders both verbs by "signify," but St. Peter's own expression marks how growing age had made clearer to him the manner in which his death should be accomplished. And the mention of Jesus brings vividly before him the thought of the scene he is about to describe, so vividly that some of the language of the Transfiguration scene is reproduced by him.

"Yea, I will give diligence that at every time ye may be able after my decease to call these things to remembrance." Jesus is related (Luke ix. 31) to have conversed with Moses and Elias of His decease (*ἔξοδος*) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. The word is rare in this sense, being commonly used, as in Heb. xi. 22, of the departing of the children of Israel from Egypt. But it is deeply printed in St. Peter's mind; and he, who looks forward to drinking of his Master's cup and dying somewhere as He died, employs the same word concerning his own end. And the word is another indication of the calm with which he can look forward to his death. As with Christ, there is no reluctance, no shrinking. The change will be but a departure, a passing from one stage to another, the putting off the worn garment of mortality to be clothed upon by the robe which is from heaven.

His letters are the only means whereby he can speak after he has been taken from them. Hence his earnestness in writing. "I will give diligence." I have urged diligence on you; I will apply the lesson to myself, and make it possible that afterwards on every occasion you may have it before you. When dead, he will yet speak to them; so that in each new trial, in each time of need, they may strengthen their faith or be warned of their danger. "At every time," he says; and thus his strengthening words of admonition are a legacy through the ages to the Church for evermore.

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables." Here the Apostle speaks in the plural number, and it may well be that he means to include St. Paul with himself and James and John. For the evidence which converted that Apostle, though not the same as that vouchsafed to St. Peter, was of the same kind. The Lord had appeared unto him in the way, had made His glory seen and felt, and fixed for ever in the Apostle's heart the reality of His power and presence. His cry, "Lord, what wilt Thou

have me to do?" came from a heart conquered and convinced. He too followed no cunningly devised fable.

By the word (σεσοφισμένοι), which is rendered "cunningly devised" we are reminded of the (σοφία) wisdom which St. Paul so earnestly disclaims in his first letter to the Corinthians. "I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," he says; "my preaching was not in persuasive words of wisdom, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." The wisdom which he speaks is not of this world, but God's wisdom in a mystery (1 Cor. ii. 1-7). St. Paul also warns against giving "heed to fables, which minister questionings rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith" (1 Tim. i. 4; *cf.* also iv. 7 and 2 Tim. iv. 4). In another place (Titus i. 14) he calls them "Jewish fables," a name which is of the same import as the "Jewish vanities" of Ignatius,* a name by which he intimates that they darken and confuse the mind. The legends of the Talmud, the subtleties of the rabbinical teaching, and the allegorising interpretations of Philo are the delusions to which both the Apostles refer. The evidence on which they ask credence for their teaching is of another kind. "That which was from the beginning," is the testimony of another Apostle, "that which we heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life, . . . that declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John i. 1-3). St. Peter had seen, and so had St. Paul; and they constantly appealed to, and rested their teaching on, facts and the historic reality of Christ's life and work.

"When we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the contrast to that mythic and allegorical teaching to which he has just alluded. From it men could derive neither help in the present, nor hope for the future. It generated superstition, and its followers believed a lie. Often it denied the continuity of revelation, and cast aside all the records thereof. Like theosophic dreams in every age, it was always unprofitable, nearly always pernicious. On the other hand, the teaching of Christ's Apostles proclaimed a power which could save men from their sins, and imparted a hope that stretched out beyond the present, looking for the time when the Lord would reappear. All power is given unto Christ. He is made Redeemer and Lord, and is to be at last the Judge of men. The assurance of His coming had been proclaimed by St. Peter in his former letter as a consolation under affliction. Faith, tried by suffering, will be found unto praise, and glory, and honour, at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter i. 7). This is the climax of the glad tidings of the Gospel. But Christ comes to His people through all the days; and they are conscious of His coming, and inspired thereby and enabled for their work.

"But we were eye-witnesses of His majesty." He has already (1 Peter iii. 22) spoken of the fact of Christ's ascension; he is now about to describe what was seen on the holy mount. These things are facts and verities, and not fables. But yet there was more revealed in them than either eye could grasp, or tongue could tell. They were God's truth in a mystery, which supplied new thought for a whole lifetime. So for "eye-witnesses" the Apostle uses a word akin to that which twice over he employs in the former Epistle (ii. 12; iii. 2) to describe the effect which Christian lives, when fully scanned, shall have upon the unbeliever. They shall have power to stop the mouths of opponents and to win them to the faith which before they maligned. Such deep insight into the power, and work, and glory of Jesus was imparted to the Apostles at the Transfiguration. They were initiated into the wisdom of God, and henceforth became prophets of the Incarnation; they were convinced that the Jesus with whom they companied was very God manifest in the flesh. The voice from heaven proclaimed it; it was attested by the glorified presence of Moses and Elijah, and by the majesty which for a moment broke through the veil of Christ's flesh. Later on they saw Him risen from the dead, beheld His ascension into glory, and heard from the angels the promise of His return. Not without much meaning does the Apostle use a special pronoun (ἐκείνου) as he dwells on this scene of His majesty. For he would impress on his converts the identity of that Jesus whom he had known in the flesh with the very Son of God sent down from heaven.

"For He received from God the Father honour and glory." For the bright cloud which overshadowed them on the mountain-top was the visible token of the presence of God, as of old the cloud of glory had been, where God dwelt above the cherubim; while the honour and glory of Jesus were manifested when He was proclaimed to be the very Son of God. "When there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." To express the magnificence of the glory which he beheld, the Apostle uses a word not found elsewhere in the New Testament. The Septuagint has it to describe the splendour of Jeshurun's God, who rideth in His "excellency" on the skies (Deut. xxxiii. 26). And it is this outward brightness of the shroud of the Godhead which tells all that human powers can receive of the majesty which it hides, just as His palace, the heavens, declares constantly the glory of God.

The words spoken by the heavenly voice vary here from the records of each of the three Gospels. In one case the variation is slight, but there is no precise agreement. Had the Epistle been the work of some forger of a later age than St. Peter's, we may rest assured that there would have been complete accord with one Evangelist or the other. There is a like diversity in the records of the words of the inscription above Christ's cross. Substantial truth, not verbal preciseness, is what the Evangelists sought to leave to the Church; and their fidelity is proved by nothing more powerfully than by the diverse features of the Gospel narratives.

"And this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount." We learn here why the Apostles were taken with Jesus to witness His transfiguration. Just before that event we find (Matt. xvi. 21; Mark viii. 31; Luke ix. 22) it recorded by each of the Synoptists that Jesus had begun to show unto His disciples how He must suffer and die at Jerusalem. To Peter, who, as at other times, was the mouthpiece of the rest, such a

* "Ep. ad Magn.," 8.

declaration was unacceptable; but at his expression of displeasure he met the rebuke, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." He, and the rest with him, felt no doubt that such a death as Jesus had spoken of would be, humanly speaking, the ruin of their hopes. What these hopes were they did not formulate, but we can learn their character from some of their questionings. Now, on the top of Tabor, these three representatives of the apostolic band behold Moses and Elias appearing in glory, and Christ glorified more than they; and the subject of which they spake was the very death of which they had so disliked to hear: the decease which He was about to accomplish (πληροῦν) in Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31). The verb which the Evangelist uses tells of the fulfilment of a prescribed course, and thus St. Peter was taught, and the rest with him, to speak of that death afterwards as he does in his former letter. "Christ was verily foreordained" to this redeeming work "before the foundation of the world." They heard that He who was to die was the very Son of God. The voice came from the glory of heaven; and from henceforth their hearts were still, even Peter's voice being less heard than before. Down from the mountain they brought much illumination, much solemn pondering. We can feel why it was that "they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of the things which they had seen"; we can feel, too, that from henceforth the scene of this vision would be the holy mount. God's voice had been heard there attesting the Divinity of their Lord and Master; the place whereon they had thus stood was for evermore holy ground.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAMP SHINING IN A DARK PLACE.

2 Peter i. 19-21.

The rendering of the first words in this passage must be reckoned among the distinct improvements of the Revised Version. As the translation stands in the Authorised Version, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy," it conveys a sense which many must have found perplexing. The Apostle had just dwelt on the confirmation of faith, both for himself and those to whom he preached, which was ministered by the vision of the glory of Jesus and by the proclamation of His Divinity by God's voice from heaven. Could any prophetic message vie in his estimate with the assurance of such a revelation? Now what St. Peter meant is made clear. "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure"—more sure because we have received the confirmation of all that the prophets spake dimly and in figure. The Apostle and the rest of the Jewish people had been trained in the ancient Scriptures, and gathered from them, some more and some less, light concerning God's scheme of salvation. There were, however, but few who had attained a true insight into what was revealed. They had dwelt, as a rule, too exclusively on all that spake of the glory of the promised Redeemer and of His coming to reign and to conquer. That there should be suffering in His life, they had put out of sight, though the prophets had foretold it; and so when Christ spake of His crucifixion, soon to come to pass in Jerusalem St. Peter exclaimed—and he had the feelings of his nation with him—"That be far from Thee." The voice on the holy mount and the words of Moses and Elias had opened their eyes to the full drift of prophetic revelation and by the illumination of that scene of glory where yet the lot of suffering was contemplated as near at hand, there had been given to them a grasp of the whole scope of prophecy, and their partial and distorted conception of the work of Christ was banished for ever.

"Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." The idea of a volume of New Testament Scriptures had not entered St. Peter's mind. He knows that St. Paul's letters (iii. 15, 16) are read by some, who do not all profit by the privilege; and his own letters he intends to be an abiding admonition to the Churches. The need, too, of a record of Christ's life and works, a gospel, must have begun to be felt. But yet he points the converts to the ancient records of Israel as a guide to direct their lives. They had heard the Gospel story from the lips of himself and others. Thus they had the key to unlock what hitherto had seemed hard to understand, and could study their prophetic volume with a new and perfect light. This he means by "ye do well." Ye go to the true source of guidance, drink of the fountain of true wisdom, and gain strength and refreshment when it is much needed. Duly to take heed of these records is to search out their lessons and labour after that deeper sense which is enshrined beneath the word. Given as they were at various times and in various fashions, and given to point on to God's purposes in the future, these Scriptures must needs have been dark to those who first received them, nor could the men whom God chose to deliver them have been fully conscious of all they were meant to declare as the ages rolled on and brought their fulfilment nearer. Nor are they all luminous even yet, but they grow ever more so to those who take heed.

"As unto a lamp shining in a dark place." Spite of all the light we can compass, the world will always be in one sense a dark place. It is a world of beauty, full of the tokens of God's handiwork, the indications of His love. But evil has also made an entrance; and the trail of the serpent is evident in the sorrow, the disease, the wickedness, that abound on every side. And problems continually present themselves which even to the saints are hard to be solved. Many a psalm records the conflict which has to be passed through ere God's ways can be reconciled to men. We must go into His house, draw near to Him, feel to the full His Fatherhood, ere our hearts can be contented. Nay, the disquiet breaks out again and again. So God, in His mercy, has provided His lamp for those who will use it; and to those who take heed it furnishes ever new light. The history, the prophecy, the devotion, the allegory, of the holy volume are all full of illustrations of the firm purpose of redemption, of the eternal, unchanging love of Jehovah, thwarted only by the perverseness of those whom He is longing to save from their sins. And to call God's revelation in His word a lamp is a striking and instructive figure. It is something which you can take with you, and carry into the dark places whither your lot may send you, and use its light just where and when you need it. But its light

must be fed by the constant oil of diligent study, or its usefulness will not be found to the full.

And the truth is the same if we apply the lesson to nations and Churches as it is for individuals. The records were given to a nation chosen to keep the knowledge of God alive in the world. The word spoken did not profit, as it was meant to do, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. And there is the same faith needed still. The light of a lamp in a dark place shines but a little way; but by the rays of the Divine lamp men are to walk, in faith that the steps beyond will become clear in their turn. And thus alone will the problems of life be really solved, the religious contentions, the social difficulties, the trials of family life, the individual doubts and fears: all are elements of darkness; all need to be illumined by the lamp which God has provided. Oh that men would burnish it by diligent heed, and keep its radiance at the full by constant seeking thereunto!

"Until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." They day has begun to dawn for those who will lift up their heads to its breaking. The day-star from on high hath visited the earth in the person of Christ, but the full day will not be till He returns again. Yet His coming into the world was meant to lighten every man, and to win all men to walk in His light. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," is His own promise. And in that decease of which He spake with Moses and Elijah He has been lifted up. But He has left it to them that love Him to lift Him up constantly before the eyes of men, to exalt Him by their lives; and our lax performances make the progress of His drawing all men, to halt. We fail to make due use of the lamp which He has put ready to our hand, and which only needs to be grasped. The perfect day will not come to us in this life, but He gives to His faithful ones glimpses of the dawn. They learn the presence of the Sun of righteousness, though as yet they see Him only through the mists and darkness of life; and they are cheered with the certainty of the coming day. And the day-star of the Spirit is kindled in the hearts of those who ask Him to dwell there; and they are led forward into greater and greater truth, into richer and fuller light. And for the same end the Spirit is promised to the Church of Christ: that she may be enabled, having used the lamp first given with all faithfulness, to open to men the ways of God more fully, and, amid the changes of times and varying vicissitudes and needs of men and nations, to prove that the only satisfaction to the soul is the increasing knowledge of the oneness of God's purpose and eternity of His love. To such a power she will be helped by giving heed to the lamp in every dark place and seeking in its light the elucidation of all hard questions.

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." The Greek words need to be taken account of before we can gather the true meaning of this clause. That which is translated "is" is much more frequently rendered "comes to pass," and bears the sense of "arises," "has its origin." "Interpretation" is the translation of a word which occurs here only in the New Testament, and implies the "loosing" of what is complicated, the "clearing" of what is obscure. The lesson which the Apostle would give relates to the right appreciation of the Old Testament Scriptures, which contain the prophecy which he has called above "the lamp in a dark place." He intends to say something which may incline men to follow its guidance. The prophetic writings furnish us with illustrations how the problems which arose in the lives of the men of old time, both about events around them and also about the dispensations of Divine providence, found their solution. Thus they furnish rules and principles for time to come; and that men may be induced to confide in their guidance is the object of St. Peter's words. He bids the converts know that these unravellings and clearings of the ways of God are not men's private interpretation of what they beheld. This was not the manner in which they came to be known. They are not evolved out of human consciousness, pondering on the facts of life and the ways of God, nor are they the individual exposition of those whom God employed as His prophets. They are messages and lessons which came from one and the same impelling power, from one and the same illuminating influence, even from God Himself, and so are uniform in spirit and teaching from first to last; and He from whom and through whom they are given can say by the mouth of the last of the prophetic body, "I am Jehovah; I change not" (Mal. iii. 6).

Although the Apostle uses in this Epistle the word "Scriptures" (iii. 16) for the writings of New Testament teachers, it is not likely that he in mind included them among the prophetic Scriptures of which he here speaks. We, knowing the flood of light which the Gospels and Epistles pour upon the Old Testament, can now apply his words to them, fully perceiving that they are a true continuation of the Divine enlightenment, another spring from the same heavenly fountain.

Those who would explain "interpretation" as the judgment which men now exercise in the study and application of the words of Scripture forget the force of the verb (*γίνεται*) "comes to pass," and that the Apostle is exalting the source and origin of the words of prophecy, that he may the more enforce his lesson, "Ye do well to take heed to them."

"For no prophecy ever came by the will of man." Prophecy makes known what never could have entered into the mind or understanding of men, nor were the prophetic words that have come down to us written because men wished to publish views and imaginations of their own. Man is not the source of prophecy. That lay above and beyond the human penmen. Nay, men could not, had they so willed, have spoken of the things there written for the enlightenment of the ages. These are deep things, belonging to the foreknowledge of God alone, by whom His Son was foreknown as the Lamb without spot before the foundation of the world. Of this the book of prophecy tells from first to last: of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head; of the family from which a seed should come in whom all the earth should be blessed; of the rod to spring from the stem of Jesse; of the king who was to rule in righteousness; of the time when the kingdom of the Lord's house should be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations should flow into it; of the day when all men should know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, when

the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Such tidings came not into the thoughts of men except as they were put there from the Lord; and they tell of things yet to come that are beyond the grasp of men unless they be spiritually-minded and enlightened. For not only are the prophetic Scriptures God's special gift: the insight into their full meaning comes also from Him. Beyond the physical sense it is true, "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord is the Maker of them both" (Prov. xx. 12).

"But men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The Authorised Version translates a text which had, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And this repetition of an adjective is after St. Peter's manner, though the oldest manuscripts do not support it here. Compare the thrice-repeated "righteous" in the notice of Lot in the next chapter (ii. 7, 8). And the Authorised Version describes most truly the agents whom God chooses. He will have none but holy men to be the heralds of His truth. A Caiaphas may be constrained to utter His counsels, but as His prophets God takes the holy among men. These can grasp more of His teaching, and we receive more than we should through other channels. By their zeal for holiness they are brought nearer unto God, and made more receptive of the teaching of the Spirit, who Himself is holy. But "men spake from God" conveys a true idea of prophecy. Even one who was not holy could feel that the power given to him was not his own, nor could he speak after his own will. "What the Lord saith unto me, that must I speak," was the confession of Balaam, though his greed for gain prompted him to the opposite. And there are many expressions in the Old Testament which bear witness to the effective operation of God's power, as when we read of the Spirit of the Lord coming mightily upon those whom He had chosen to do His bidding. And the same lesson is to be found in St. Peter's words here. "Being moved" is literally "being carried." An impulse was given to them, and a power which was above their own. This is betokened, too, when the Old Testament prophets tell how the Spirit of the Lord carried them to this place or that, where a revelation was to be imparted which they should publish in His name. Thus were they moved by the Holy Ghost, and thus were they able to speak from God.

Such is St. Peter's lesson on the nature and office of prophecy. It is an illumination to which men could not have attained by any wisdom of their own, nay, could not have framed the wish to attain unto it. For it lay hid among God's mysteries. It is imparted from the holy God to holy men, as His mediators to the less spiritual in the world; it has received abundant confirmation through the incarnation of the Son of God, but yet it has many a lesson for mankind to ponder and seek to comprehend. It is their wisdom who follow its guidance and bear it with them as a lamp amid the dispensations of Providence, which still are not all clear, and amid the darkness which will often surround them while they live here. That men may be prompted to its use, God is a God that hideth Himself, yet through it He will lead those who follow its light along the road to immortality.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LORD KNOWETH HOW TO DELIVER.

2 Peter ii. 1-9.

This second chapter contains much more of a direct description of the heretical teaching and practices from which the converts were in danger, and is full of warning and comfort, both alike drawn from that Old Testament prophecy to the light of which St. Peter has just been urging them to take heed. The chapter has many features and much of its language in common with the Epistle of St. Jude. But the opening of the chapter seems a suitable place to call attention to a difference of motive which is manifested in this Epistle and in that. They resemble one another greatly in the illustrations which they have in common, but St. Peter makes a twofold use of them: while showing that the ungodly will assuredly be punished, he comforts the righteous with the lesson that, be they ever so few, even as the eight who were saved at the Deluge, or as Lot, with his diminished family, at the overthrow of Sodom, the Lord knows how to deliver His servants out of trials. Of this latter side of the prophetic picture St. Jude shows us nothing. The evil-doings of the tempters must have waxed grosser in his day, and he is only concerned to preach the certainty of their condemnation. The unbelievers in the wilderness, the angels who sinned, the Cities of the Plain, the error of Balaam, and the overthrow of Korah are all cited in proof that the wicked shall not escape; but he has no word about the deliverance of those whose souls are tortured by the wicked doings of the sinners among whom it is their lot to live.

"But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." It is as though the Apostle would say, Be not unduly dismayed. The lamp of Old Testament prophecy shows that yours is a lot which has befallen others. As Israel of old was God's people, so the Church of Christ is now. And among them again and again false prophets arose, not only those of Baal and Asherah, not only those who served the calves at Dan and Bethel, but those who called themselves by Jehovah's name, and of whom He says to Jeremiah, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake I unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of naught, and the deceit of their heart" (Jer. xiv. 14). The picture is exactly repeated for these Asian Churches. False teaching had attached itself to the true, used its language, and professed to be at one with it, except in so far as it was superior. For the history of corruptions in the faith repeats itself, and—

> "Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
> The devil always builds a chapel there."

It is the most perilous aspect of error when it parades itself as the truest truth. Hence the name by which St. Peter calls this dangerous teaching: "destructive heresies." They beguile

unstable souls to their ruin. Their exponents choose the name of Christ to call themselves by, but cast aside the doctrine of the Cross both in its discipline for their lives, and as the altar of human redemption. And the men to whom St. Peter alludes were either among the teachers, or put themselves forward to teach; and there was a danger lest their authority should be recognised. They accepted Christ, but not as He loves to be accepted. He has called Himself Lord and Master, and has paid the price which makes Him so; but by their interpretations both of His nature and His office these men in very deed renounced and deserted His service, ignored their relation as His bondservants, and in this way denied the Master that bought them. Soon they chose other masters and became the slaves of the world and the flesh. Thus they entered on the path that leads to destruction, and soon it will come upon them. They who destroyed others shall themselves be destroyed. The lords whom they serve have all their empire in this life; and when the end thereof comes, it comes all too soon, and is a dread overthrow of everything they have set store by. On their lot the lamp of prophecy sheds its light: "How suddenly do they perish and come to a fearful end."

"And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of." St. Jude, who had seen the results of such teaching, says these men turned the very grace of God into lasciviousness; they perverted the teachings of the Gospel concerning the freedom which is in Christ, and their phraseology they made to have a Pauline ring about it. Did he not teach how Christ had made men free? Had they not heard from him that men should cast off trust in the bondage of the Law? In this wise they taught a doctrine of lawless self-indulgence, which they extolled as the token of entire emancipation and of a loftier nature on which the taint of sins could leave no defilement. In the blindness of their hearts, self-chosen blindness, of which they boasted as knowledge, they gave themselves over to the flesh, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

St. Peter knows that baits of this sort appeal to the natural man; that there is within the citadel of the heart a traitorous weakness which is ready to betray it to the enemy. So, with prophetic foresight, he laments, Many shall follow after them. And such sinners do not sin unto themselves: their falling away brings calamity on the whole Church of Christ. It did so then; it does so still. The faithful cannot escape from the obloquy which is due to the faithless; and the world, which cares little for Christ, will readily point to the evil lives which it sees in the renegade brethren, and draw the conclusion that in secret the rest run to the same excess of riot. Evil-speaking of this kind became abundantly common in the first Christian centuries, and furnishes the object of many Christian apologies.

"And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you." St. Paul in writing to Timothy gives a comment which throws much light on these words. He tells of men who consent not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus denying the Master that bought them. He speaks of them as bereft of the truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain; and he adds, "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. vi. 3-10). From the first days of the Church's history we see, from the instances of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Simon, with his offer of money to the Apostles, that both among the disciples and the would-be teachers covetousness made itself very apparent. The communistic basis on which the society was constituted lent itself to the schemes of those who desired to make a gain of their Christian profession. In the time when St. Peter wrote the evil had spread. Teachers were discovering that, by a modification or adaptation of the Christian language and doctrines, they could draw after them many followers. These were the feigned words to which the Apostle alludes, and the contributions of their satisfied hearers were proving a gainful merchandise. The Gnostic teachers were of various sorts, but of all alike the language was boastful as coming of superior insight; great, swelling words they spake, having men's persons in regard because of the prospects of advantage. The evil was a sore one, and is so wherever it finds entry. And later ages have also known somewhat of its mischief. It is the wisdom of all Christian communities so to order themselves that their teachers and guides may be safe from this temptation. For such teachers do not stop at small beginnings of error, but prophesy smooth things, and close their eyes at evil; nay, in this case they seem to have encouraged sensual living, as though it were an indication of the freedom of which they boasted.

"Whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." In thought the Apostle reads the book of prophecy. It is as if he said, "It is written in the prophetic word." And when the overthrow of the sinners comes to pass, those who behold it may say, "Thus is the prophecy fulfilled." The doom of such sinners is sure. They may seem to live their lives with impunity for a while, as though God's eternal law were inoperative; but the issue is certain. None such escape. God's mills grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small. And the lot of such men is destruction. Of illustrations the Apostle chooses three, applying each to a different vice of these teachers of error. These men were proud; so were the angels that sinned, but their pride was only a prelude to their fall. These men were disobedient; so were the antediluvian sinners, and would neither hearken nor turn, and so the Flood came and swept them all away. These men were sensual; so were the dwellers in the Cities of the Plain, and their overthrow remains still a memorial of God's wrath against such sinners. Verily the sentence of all such men is written from of old.

"For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." To each of the three instances St. Peter adduces the reader is left to supply the unmistakable conclusion, "Neither will He spare the sinners of to-day." The sentences are all the more solemn from their incompleteness.

Some have thought that the reference in this verse is to the narrative found in Gen. vi. 3; but that account is very full of difficulties, and there is no mention of a judgment upon those who offended. It seems more sound exposition to take the Apostle's words as spoken of him concerning whom Christ has told us (John viii. 44) that he was a murderer from the beginning and stood not in the truth, and of the condemnation of whose pride St. Paul speaks to Timothy (1 Tim. iii. 6). For him and for his fellow-sinners the Gospel teaches us (Matt. xxv. 41) that eternal fire was prepared, and an apostle (James ii. 19) says that "the devils believe and shudder," it must be in apprehension of a coming judgment. All that St. Peter here says is implied in these Scriptural allusions to Satan and his fall; and it is more prudent to apply to them the highly figurative language of the Apostle here, which is exactly after his manner, than to seek for fanciful interpretations of the Mosaic story. We may rest assured by the way in which these things are spoken of, though but dimly, by Christ and His Apostles, that they formed a portion of Jewish religious teaching and constituted part of the faith of St. Peter and his contemporaries, though there is but little mention of the fallen angels in the Old Testament.

"And spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly." Here the Apostle points to a consolation for the converts amid their trials. The ungodly do not escape, be their multitude ever so great. A world full of sinners is involved in one common overthrow. Nor are the righteous forgotten, though their number be but few. The lamp of prophecy sheds much light here. Amid all God's dispensations toward Israel, His faithful ones were the remnant only; but these were saved by the grace of the Lord, they were brought out from the destruction, and not forsaken, and had a promise that they should take root downward and bear fruit upward. The words in which St. Peter describes the chief person of the few saved in the Deluge appear intended to point out that feature in Noah's history which most resembled the lot of the Asian Churches. They were now, as he was of old, God's heralds in the midst of a naughty world; and to bring to their minds the thought of his long-sustained opposition and mockery could hardly fail to nerve them to stand fast. What lot could be more desperate than the Patriarch's? For a hundred and twenty years by action and by word he published his message, and it fell on deaf ears; yet God was guarding him (ἐφύλαξεν) through it all, and words could not express more complete safety than when the early record tells us, ere the Flood came, "The Lord shut him in."

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly." These cities stood in a land fair enough to be likened to the garden of the Lord. To Lot himself their fertile fields had been a temptation, and by yielding thereto he brought on himself a plenitude of sorrow; and the sacred record counts his deliverance rather to the faith and righteousness of Abraham than to himself. God remembered Abraham, and brought Lot out of the overthrow. One of the fairest parts of His world God condemned for the wickedness of them that inhabited it. Nature was defaced for man's sin, and still lies desolate as a perpetual homily against such ungodly living as often comes of wealth and fulness of bread. After such a state were these false teachers seeking while they made their gain of their disciples; and in the later times of which St. Jude speaks, having fostered all that was carnal within and around them, in those things which they understood naturally, there they cast themselves away.

"And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)." The thrice-named righteousness of Lot is perhaps thus set down because of the struggle which it must have been to maintain the fear of Abraham's God among such sinful surroundings. Lot was in the land of the enemy, and his deliverance is pictured as a very rescue: he was saved, yet so as by fire. He had gone down into the plain with thoughts of a life of abundance, and it may be of ease, a contrast to the wandering life which he had hitherto shared with Abraham. Instead of this he found anguish and distress of mind, which no amount of temporal prosperity could alleviate; and to this would be added self-reproach. It was of his own choice that he was dwelling among them. The Apostle points his misery in the strongest terms. He was distressed; and of the sights and sounds on every side, and never ceasing, he made a torture to his soul. It was no mere offence to him that these things were so: it was very anguish to see men setting at defiance every law human and Divine. To behold the evils of a lascivious life waxing rampant in the midst of the Christian Churches, and countenanced by those who assumed the office of teachers, must have been an agony to the faithful akin to that with which Lot tortured himself. St. Peter would strengthen the drooping hearts of the brethren; and no greater comfort could there be found than this which he offers, taking the lamp of prophecy and shedding its rays of hope into the dark places of their lives.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." Already he has given the lesson (i. 6) that true godliness must have its root in patience. It is a perfect trust, which rests securely on the Father's love, and willingly waits His time. The hearts of the faithful ones must have found solace in the thought which he here joins to his former teaching. The trials they endure are grievous, but "The Lord knows" is an unfailing support. The floods of ungodliness make His servants many a time afraid; but when they feel that there, as amid the raging ocean, the Lord ruleth, they are not overwhelmed. They are protected by Omnipotence; and the tiny grains of sand, which check the fierce tide, are an emblem of how out of weakness He can ordain strength. Hence there comes a knowledge to the struggling saint which makes him full of courage, whatever trials threaten. The world has its wrathful Nebuchadnezzars, whose threats at times are as a fiery furnace; but he is proof against them all who can say and feel, "The Lord knows." I

am not careful nor disturbed; my God, in whom I trust, is able to deliver me, and He will deliver me. The Lord knoweth the way of the godly, and His knowledge means safety and eternal deliverance.

"And to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment." The unrighteous—yes, over them too God keeps ward. They cannot hide themselves from Him, and through their conscience He makes life a continuous chastisement. They may seem to men to walk on heedlessly, but they have hidden tortures of which their fellows can take no count. Even the offender against human laws, who dreads that his sin will be found out, carries in his bosom a constant scourge. Fear hath torment (κόλασιν ἔχει), and this it is of which the Apostle speaks. And if the dread of man's judgment can work terror, how much sorer must their alarm be who have the fiery indignation of the wrath of God in their thoughts and stinging their soul. Such men are kept all their life long under punishment. Yet in this constant anguish we trace God's mercy: He sends it that men may turn in time. His blows on the sinful heart are meant to be remedial; and those who disregard His chastisements to the last will go away, self-condemned, self-destroyed, despisers of Divine love, to a doom prepared, not for them, but for the devil and his angels.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM."

2 Peter ii. 10-16.

The Apostle now pictures in the darkest colours the evil-doing and evil character of those who are bringing into the Churches their "sects of perdition," those wolves in sheep's clothing who are mixing themselves, and are likely to make havoc, among the flock of Christ. He hopes that thus the brethren, being forewarned, will also be forearmed. And not only does he describe these bold offenders: he also reiterates in many forms the certainty of their evil fate. They aim at destroying others, and shall themselves meet destruction; their wrong-doing shall bring a recompense in kind upon their own heads. They are a curse among the people, but the curse will also fall on themselves; they are agents of ruin, and shall perish in the overthrow which they are devising.

"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement, and despise dominion." These chiefly—that is, above other sinners—does God keep under punishment. It cannot be otherwise, for on them His chastisements have little effect. They have entered on a road from which return is rare, neither do they take hold on the paths of life; their whole bent is for that which defileth, not only defiling them, but spreading defilement on every side. They are renegades, too, from the service of Christ; and having cast off their allegiance to Him, they make their lust their law. The verse describes the same character in two aspects: those who walk after the flesh follow no prompting but appetite, have no lord but self.

"Daring, self-willed, they tremble not to rail at dignities." The Apostle passes on to describe another and more terrible manifestation of the lawlessness of these false teachers. They have so sunk themselves in the grossness of material self-indulgence that they revile and set at naught the spiritual world and the powers that exist therein. In the term "dignities" the Apostle's thoughts are of the angels, against whom these sinners scruple not to utter their blasphemies. The good angels, the messengers from heaven to earth, the ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, they are bold to deny; while concerning the evil angels, to whose temptations they have surrendered themselves, they scoff, representing their lives as free and self-chosen, and at their own disposal. The two terms "daring," "self-willed," seem to point respectively to these two forms of blasphemy. They tremble not, they dare to deny the existence of the good, and they shrink not to mock at the influence of the powers of evil. Thus in mind and thought they are as debased as in their bodies, and by their lessons they corrupt as much as by their acts.

"Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, bring not a railing judgment against them before the Lord." The explanation of this passage is not without difficulty, because of the indefiniteness of the words "against them." To whom is reference here made? It can hardly be questioned that by δόξαι, "dignities," literally "glories," in the previous verse the Apostle meant angels, the dignities of the spirit-world, in contradistinction to κυριότης, "dominion," in which he before referred to those earthly authorities whom these false teachers set at naught. The verbs used in the two clauses support this view. The dominion they venture to despise, at the dignities they rail, whereas they ought to be afraid of them. Now even to the fallen angels there attaches a dignity by reason of their first estate. In the New Testament the chief of them is called by Christ Himself "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30), and by St. Paul "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii. 2); and he has a sovereignty over those who shared his rebellion and his fall. Having described the railing of the false teachers in the previous verse as directed alike against the evil angels and the good, it seems preferable here to take "against them" as applying to the evil angels. Even against them, though they must be conscious of their sin and rebellion against God, the good angels, who still abide in the presence of the Lord, bring no railing judgment, utter no reproach or upbraiding.

There may have been in St. Peter's thought that solemn scene depicted in Zech. iii., where, in the presence of the angel of the Lord, that highest angel who is Jehovah's special representative, Joshua the high-priest appears, and at his right hand Satan standing to be his adversary, and to charge him, and the nation through him, with their remissness in the work of the restoration of God's temple. There the angel of the Lord, full of mercy, as Satan was full of hate, checked the adversary's accusation, saying, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan." The same application of the words "against them" is suggested by the apocryphal illustration in St. Jude (ver. 9), where in the contention about the body of Moses no greater rebuke is administered to the devil by the archangel Michael.

This exposition does not remove all difficulty. For as the angels in the verse appear to be spoken of as superior in might and power to these corrupt teachers, it seems natural at first sight to refer to them the indefinite expression, and to explain that the angels, though they be so exalted, bring no railing judgment before God against these teachers and their evil doings. But from what Scripture tells us of the angels, it is not easy to understand how or why they should bring such a judgment. Nowhere is such an office assigned to, or exercised by, these spiritual beings, nor are we anywhere told that the observance of the deeds of the wicked is in their province. They rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; they stand in God's presence as the representatives of spotless innocence; they are sent forth by God as His messengers of judgment and of love; but we never find them as accusers of the wicked. That office Satan has taken for his own.

But the words which the Apostle uses seem hardly to make it necessary that the comparison should be between angels and these teachers of destruction. In the passage of Zechariah which we judge to have been in St. Peter's mind when he wrote, the angel is that mightiest spirit among the angelic host who is identified in the language of the prophet with Jehovah Himself; and the angel in St. Jude's illustration is the archangel Michael. Conceiving that by "angels" St. Peter intends these chief members of the celestial powers, the sentence may be taken to mean that the most glorious beings among the angelic throng, those who are greater in might and power than the "dignities" of whom he has spoken, bring no railing judgment even against the fallen angels, whereas these men presume to blaspheme beings of an order far above themselves. Such a conception of subordination in the spirit-world as is here suggested is not foreign to New Testament thought. St. Paul speaks of the angels in heaven as representing "principality, power, might, and dominion" (Eph. i. 21); and in the same Epistle the evil angels are mentioned in like terms: "The principalities, the powers, the world-rulers of this darkness" (vi. 12). Similar language is found also in Col. i. 16. Taking this view of St. Peter's meaning, the daring and presumption of these false teachers are set in a stronger contrast. Whereas the highest angels, those who stand first among the heavenly host and dwell in the immediate presence of the Lord, though they might accuse Satan and his angels of rebellion, yet refrain; these bold transgressors among the race of men cast forth their blasphemy against the whole spiritual world.

"But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed." The glory of man in creation is his reason. It is bestowed that he may freely, and not by constraint, consent unto the will of God, and also may by it discipline the body and hinder it from becoming his master. For the soul tabernacling in the flesh there is ever this peril, and by it these false teachers in the Asian Churches had been ensnared. Thus they were degraded, and were frustrating the end for which the light of reason was given. They were become like the horse and mule, which have no understanding. When the serpent tempted Eve, he set before her his own elevation through the fruit which to her was forbidden.

> "I of brute human, ye of human gods,"

was his tempting speech. These men had given themselves up for a less noble bribe. The bait of sensual indulgence was offered, and their acceptance of it had brought them down to the level of creatures without reason. Their conduct and their lessons merited such a comparison, and showed how their nobler part had been warped by excess. To blaspheme against the powers of the spirit-world is conduct which can only be paralleled by that of the senseless animals, which, with utter ignorance of consequences, will rush upon objects whose strength they know not, and perish in their blind onslaught. But the beasts were born to be taken and destroyed; no higher fate was in their power.

Men were meant for a nobler end, and it is only when the rein is given to appetite that they become from human brutish in their knowledge, more brutish than to know. Thus in their ignorance they rail at all loftier thought, and of their railing make a show of knowledge. Here they are more noxious than the unreasoning brutes. Their blinding lessons gain a hearing; and those who listen are drawn on by the same lust, and willingly follow after ignorance. But the work of all carries condemnation with it. Man, whose gaze was meant ever to be upward, is bowed down to earth like the beasts of the field, which are meant only for capture and destruction. On such perversion God will surely visit. They shall reap the fruit of their bold self-will, and in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

"Suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing." The Authorised Version translates a somewhat different text (*κομιούμενοι*), "and shall receive the reward of wrong-doing." This is the easier sentence, and connects itself well with what precedes; but it has not the strongest support. By the text which the Revised Version has adopted (*ἀδικούμενοι*), the Apostle does not mean that these sinners meet a punishment which they have not deserved, and in that sense suffer wrong; but that they are themselves brought under the penalties of the wrong into which they are leading others. As the Psalmist says, their wickedness comes down on their own pate, and in the net which they hid privily is their own foot taken. They differ from Balaam, whose example St. Peter is soon about to instance. These men secure the reward they seek, larger resources to squander on their lust; yet this, their success, as they would call it, proves their overthrow.

"Men that count it pleasure to revel in the daytime." They that are drunken are drunken in the night, and the same holds ordinarily of other excesses. They come not to the light because their deeds are evil. But these men have cast aside all such timorousness. They find a zest in outrage and in going beyond others, so as to add the daytime to the night for their indulgences. The sense of "luxury that lasts but for a day," that is ephemeral, and perishes in the using, is hardly to be extracted from the Greek; but with St. James (v. 5) in mind, where the verb is connected with the noun of this verse, "Ye have lived delicately on the earth and taken your pleasure," it may perhaps be

allowable, as some have done, to interpret ἐν ἡμέρᾳ as signifying "the time of this present life." The men live as though life were bestowed for no other object than their revelry.

"Spots and blemishes." St. Peter must have had in his thought the epithets which he applied to Christ: "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter i. 9). Utterly alien to the spirit and life of Jesus is these men's wantonness. They belong rather to him who is described as a roaring lion, walking about to find whom he may devour.

"Revelling in their lovefeasts while they feast with you." Here also the Revised Version accepts a text different from that rendered by the Authorised, which for the first clause has "sporting themselves with their own deceivings" (ἀπάταις). This refers to "the feigned words" with which they have been pictured as making a gain of the unstable souls whom they lead astray. They find a sport in their delusion, a pleasure, which is devilish, in the evil they are working. The other reading, ἀγάπαις, which is also found in Jude 12, refers to those gatherings of the faithful in the earliest period of the Church's history where the brethren by partaking in common of a simple meal gave a symbol of Christian equality and love. It may be that this in its origin was the assembling of the congregation for "the breaking of bread," but we soon find the social meal had become a distinct observance. And we know from St. Paul's letter to the Church of Corinth that disorder was introduced into these meetings, and that luxury and disparity ofttimes took the place of simplicity and equality. "In your eating," says the Apostle, "each one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken. . . . When ye come together tarry one for another" (1 Cor. xi. 21). In these Asian congregations the evil had gone to a greater length. Instead of a sober assembly, where friendly converse might form a fitting accompaniment to the more solemn breaking of bread in remembrance of their Lord, these lovefeasts were converted into a revel by the luxurious additions which the false teachers took care to have supplied. The Apostle calls them *their* lovefeasts, because it was from their conduct that the gathering took its character. The members of the Church were indeed invited, but these men made themselves leaders of the meal, and turned what was meant to be a simple repast into a scene of riot and indulgence. But such excess only opens the floodgates for more.

"Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." These preachers of freedom from the restraints of the Law must make their evil liberty known, and so they shamelessly parade it even in the meetings of the brethren. They cast about them their licentious glances, and their lustful gaze is unchecked. Nay, they have so given it rein that now it is beyond their control. Their eyes cannot cease from sin. The original speaks of "eyes full of an adulteress." By this unusual expression the Apostle seems to point to the danger that such conduct would meet with a response, that the sisters in the Church would be beguiled and led to join hands with these teachers of license. With this we may compare the language addressed to the Church of Thyatira concerning "the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, and teacheth and seduceth My servants to commit fornification" (Rev. ii. 20).

"Enticing unsteadfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing." A very pestilence must such men have been to the Churches. For there are always many to be found who are not established in the truth, though it be present with them, men whom the bait of a promised freedom, with its assumption of superiority, will always catch. There is in it a witchery worse even than that which, in another direction, had once before led the Galatians astray. Satan himself offers the temptation, and finds allies within men's hearts to help his cause. It is only by those steadfast in the faith that he can be withstood (1 Peter v. 9). They look beyond to-day, and to a brighter, purer joy than any which he can offer. So they are safe. But, alas! in the Churches such men are often but the remnant, and the trade of the beguiler makes its gain in every age. And it was for material gain these men were laying themselves out; and, that they might be perfect in their craft, they had put themselves, as it were, to school, gone through a training. As was said of Israel in old time (Jer. xxii. 17), their eyes and their heart are but for their covetousness, greed of defilement, and greed of gain. Children of cursing are they in a double sense: they are a curse to those whom they lead astray; and in spite of the popularity which for a time they will seem to enjoy, there is no blessing upon them. Their doom is foretold from of old. The lamp of God's prophecy makes it clear that such men are the children of Cain.

"Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing." It is an aggravation of wrong-doing when those who know the good willingly choose the evil. Of such men there is little hope. To wander is their choice; and as wrong paths are many, and the right but one, they become wanderers to the end. That the closing of their eyes was in these teachers a self-chosen course we see from the example which St. Peter has chosen to illustrate their character. Balaam, however he gained his knowledge and however unworthy he was to possess it, certainly knew much of Jehovah, and had been used to keep alive the knowledge of God among the heathen round about him; but his heart was not whole with God. To be known as the prophet of the Lord was a reputation which he prized, but mainly, as it seems, for the credit it gave him among his fellows. When the chance came, he would fain endeavour to serve two masters. It has been for ever true, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon"; but Balaam resolved to try. He thought by importunity to prevail with God for so much liberty of speech as would gain Balak's silver and gold. When his intention was thwarted, and his mouth was filled with blessings instead of curses, he still hankered after Balak's honours and money, and wrought for Israel by his counsel the curse which his lips were hindered from uttering.

And these teachers of license in the name of freedom moved among the Christian Churches as though they were true brethren. They used Christian phrases in their "feigned words," yet were ready to lead their followers in a way as dissolute as that which the son of Beor sug-

gested to the Midianites (Num. xxxi. 16) that the children of Israel might trespass against the Lord. For these men's hearts were set on the hire of wrong-doing. Yet their offence was even fouler than Balaam's, for to their lust and covetousness they added hypocrisy.

"But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spake with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet." The word which St. Peter here uses for "rebuke," and which is found nowhere else in the New Testament, implies a rebuke administered by argument, a refutation such as reasonable persons will yield to. The dumb ass (St. Peter's word is literally "beast of burden") appealed to her conduct all her life through. Was I ever wont to do this unto thee? Should I do so now without good reason? The reason was made plain at the sight of the angel. That presence made the rider bow his head and fall on his face. But what excuse was there for his lawlessness? For that is the sense which the Apostle puts on Balaam's transgression. And the word which he adds makes the rebuke more strong. It was his own transgression. The swerving of the dumb beast was not of herself. She would have held to the right way had it been possible, but her master's lawlessness was very madness; and he was the prophet, she the speechless brute. It has been said, "Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat." But the proverb is not true. The destruction is not of God's will; the madness comes of a self-chosen course of rebellion. Ever God's voice is, as it was of old, "It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against Me, against thy help" (Hos. xiii. 9). The ruin is self-destruction, an infatuation which will accept no remonstrance, brook no check. For the warning voice of the dumb beast only hindered Balaam's evil project for a brief moment; and though the Divine power which loosed the tongue of the ass kept her master's in check, the maddening greed for Balak's gold was in his heart and at all costs would be satisfied, and led him to destruction. Such is the penalty of those who willingly desert the right way through love of the hire of wrong-doing. In forsaking God, they forsake the fountain of wisdom. Then their lawlessness degrades their human endowments to the level of the brutish, and the obedient drudging of the dumb beasts of burden speaks loud—for God gives it a tongue—against the mad errors of rebellious men.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALTOGETHER BECOME ABOMINABLE.

2 Peter ii. 17-22.

The Apostle now describes these traitors to the cause of Christ under another aspect. They proffer themselves as guides and teachers. As such they should be sources of refreshment and help. But in every respect they belie the character which they have assumed. "These are springs without water." The blessing of a spring is only known to the full in Eastern lands. Hence it is that in Bible language wells and fountains are constantly used as emblematic of happiness. When Israel is brought out of Egypt, their destination is described as "a land of fountains." Mental and spiritual blessings are pictured by this figure: "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (Prov. x. 11); "The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook" (Prov. xviii. 4). The invitation which the prophet publishes in God's name runs, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isa. lv. 1); and the gracious promise is, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. xii. 3). To those who had been accustomed to language of this sort St. Peter's words convey a picture of utter disappointment. Where men had a right to expect that they would find brightness and refreshment, where they were promised an oasis in the world's desert, there proved to be only a delusive mirage; and for this the brethren were beguiled to forsake the living waters which Christ has promised to His faithful ones. "And mists driven by a storm." Here the same thought is put into another shape. Mists, resting above the ground, play a part like that of the watersprings beneath. They protect from scorching heat, and drop down blessing on the thirsty land. But when they are chased away by the whirlwind, they can furnish neither protection nor nourishment. And so helpless for those who followed them were these apostles of license. Like mists they were, it is true, but only in their blinding influence. They brought with them blasts of vain doctrine, in their craftiness, after the wiles of error, and so created a desolation for those who sought unto them. We cannot help comparing this description with the ever-increasing illumination that flows from the lamp of prophecy, making the world's dark places light.

"For whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved." Yes, for these also God has a destiny in store. It is reserved, as is the incorruptible inheritance (1 Peter i. 4) which awaits His faithful ones. But it is in those pits of darkness to which the rebellious angels were committed. Yet even in the Apostle's language there shines out somewhat of God's mercy. The sinner's doom is certain, but the blow has not yet fallen; the blackness of darkness is prepared, but was not prepared for men. Only those fall into it who persist in their rebellion. For them, in the words of Christ, it will be the outer darkness, where is the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

"For, uttering great swelling words of vanity they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error." St. Peter's words are here very aptly chosen to contrast the boastful pretensions of these corrupters with the hollowness and delusion of all they promise. St. Jude (16) tells of the great swelling words, but does not add that further touch which proclaims their emptiness; St. Paul (1 Tim. i. 6) says that such men fall to their vain and boastful talking because they have swerved from purity of heart, from a good conscience, and from faith unfeigned. From such there is nothing to be expected but falseness and unreality; they arrogate to themselves a penetration which others have not. Theirs it is to have found a deeper meaning in revelation, to have worked their way to a freedom beyond the rest, a freedom in the midst of sin, which imparts to those who attain to it a freedom to sin with impunity. Thus do they entice in the lusts of the flesh by lascivious-

ness. Such a liberty suits the natural man; such guides find many to follow them.

True Christian freedom, the freedom of St. Paul, calls for constant watchfulness, earnest anxiety at every step, for life is full of treacherous roads. But forethought and carefulness are lacking for the most part in those who have just escaped from the entanglements of error. "I buffet my body," was the Apostle's rule, "and bring it into bondage" (1 Cor. ix. 27). This was the discipline to free the soul. And to others he preaches in his letter to Timothy that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (2 Tim. ii. 11). But mark the pathway which leads to this life: "Instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Such precepts these men mocked at. There was a nobler knowledge, they said, a higher initiation. To this they had attained; to this they beguiled their followers.

Such men are unspeakably dangerous to those who have made but little progress in spiritual life. It is only those who, like Nehemiah of old, have become firm of purpose through prayer to the God of heaven, and know the dangers that everywhere beset them, that can withstand such temptation. As he laboured amid the ruins of Jerusalem, which he was so zealous to restore, there came to him the invitation of the Samaritans, "Come, let us meet together; . . . let us take counsel together" (Neh. vi.). No doubt the village in the plain of Ono, to which they asked him to come, was a pleasanter place just then than the bare hill-top of Zion, with its desolation and ruins. But his heart misgave him at the words of such counsellors. "They thought to do me mischief." And his sturdy answer to the tempters is a pattern and a lesson for all time: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." For it is always to come down that such counsellors invite us, not to be afraid of putting ourselves on their level. They may cloke it under the name of elevation, as these Asian tempters did. They talk of this as liberty and power, just as the archfiend himself spake to the Saviour, tempting Him to a boastful display of His trust in His Father: "Cast Thyself down." Those who fall fall in this way, by a too ready yielding to some acceptable bait; and then they find themselves, not free, but prisoners. And the weak in the faith, those who are only just escaped from error, are those from among whom the deluders seek and find their victims.

"Promising them liberty, while they themselves are bond-servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage." Here we have two views of the same persons. First their own picture. They proclaim their superiority in lofty terms. Satan and his servants have always been liberal with promises. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me," are sample speeches of the arch-tempter. And these men follow their master; but, says the Apostle, they are themselves in the grossest slavery. He personifies Destruction as a power who holds them in her chains. And the idea sets sin before us in a terrible light. It begins in the single act, over which men fancy they have entire control; but the acts become a habit, and this, like a mighty, living power within men, but beyond their sway, overmasters their whole being, and drives them at its will. In the case of these men, no faculty was free; their very eyes could not cease from sin.

"For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first." "Corruptio optimi pessima" is a well-known and very true dictum, and the Apostle sets these false teachers before us as a notable illustration of it. The backsliders, the renegades who desert a cause, are sure to exhibit intense hostility to the position from which they have fallen away. They are constrained to do so that men may think they have a warrant for their conduct; and often they have an uneasy conscience, which they must try to silence by large assertion of the rectitude and wisdom of what they do. Satan himself is the great instance. The state from which by rebellion he fell was unspeakably glorious, a life in the presence of perfect holiness. Now he takes his pleasure in marring everything that is holy, in defiling God's world and filling it with pollution through the sin which he has introduced.

These Asian backsliders had tasted the good grace of God. The Apostle speaks of their knowledge of Christ as that true comprehension of His love and mercy which draws men away from the world and its allurements. They had escaped and found a camp of refuge. But to take service under Christ means to bear the cross, and to bear it patiently. Jesus puts His servants to the proof, and not all who have set their hands to the plough continue steadfast in their work till the harvest comes. They halt in the process of that growth of grace which St. Peter describes in the first chapter of this letter. In their temperance they should provide patience, endurance in well-doing. Many, however, persevere but for a little time; and the world seizes the opportunity of their doubt and hesitation, comes forward with its allurements, and captures the weak in faith. And such were these men, and their capture was fatal. They were now in the toils of a net from which there was little chance of escape; they were overcome and made very slaves. In their first efforts to walk with Christ they had been enabled to wrest themselves away from their evil life; but now they were sunk down, overpowered, and blind, with a blindness the more terrible because they had known what it was to have sight. Their last state was unspeakably worse than the first.

St. Peter has in mind the parable of his Master (Matt. xii.; Luke xi.) which was spoken prophetically of the Jewish people. There Christ tells of the evil spirit which has been cast out, but no attempt made to fill his place with a better tenant. Soon finding no rest, he returns, and beholds his former home swept, and garnished, and unoccupied. Then he goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself, who enter with him and dwell there. With what solemn meaning come those words which follow the parable, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it"! (Luke xi. 28). To have heard, and not to have kept, indeed makes the last state worse than the first.

"For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after

knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them." These words of the Apostle point out the fear and care which should possess the hearts of those whom God blesses with large opportunities: fear lest they receive them amiss and fail to value them; care lest they pervert them to a wrong use. Our Lord's own words form the mightiest homily thereon when He spake to those cities of Galilee upon which a great light was shining as He dwelt in their midst, but He could not do His mighty works there because of their unbelief. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Hence the solemn denunciations of woe upon them: "It shall be more tolerable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for them"; "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment against them and condemn." And more sorrowfully still He speaks to Jerusalem: "If thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes."

Christ went away unto the Father, but He left the Apostles their commission to teach the way of righteousness as He had taught it. "Teach them," He says, "to observe all things whatsoever I have told you; and lo, I am with you always." By the ministrations of St. Paul and his fellow-labourers the feet of these Asian converts had been set in the right way. They had made a profession of faith in Christ's sacrifice, and thus had been reckoned among the righteous, among those called to be saints. But the journey unto righteousness is made by daily steps in keeping God's law; and if these be not taken, the road may lie open, the traveller may see it, but he comes no nearer to the goal. Nay, in this road there is no standing still. They who fail to press forward inevitably slide back. It was here that these false teachers had failed. The command of God checked their evil appetites and greed; and so they set it at defiance and turned aside, and taught their deluded followers that God's freedom in its highest sense meant a license to sin.

Here one of the Apostle's words is very significant. He says, not holy commandments, but holy commandment, telling us thus that the Divine law is all comprehended in the right ordering of the heart. In principle all God's laws are one. If that inward source of all our right and wrong be kept pure, from it are the issues of life; and every action flowing from it will then have a righteous aim. Thus men lead holy lives; thus they keep God's commandments in every relation. They do not in this life become free from offence; they stumble, because they are compassed by infirmity. But they act from a right motive; and this, and not the sum-total of results, is what the loving Father of men regards. Thus the Divine law is the law of true freedom, supplying a principle, but leaving the particular actions to develop according to the circumstances of each man's life. This is the freedom of which the Psalmist sings: "I walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts" (Psalm cxix. 45); and one of our own poets extols a life so ordered by Divine law as the truest, grandest freedom:—

"Obedience is greater than freedom. What's free?
The vexed straw on the wind, the tossed foam on the sea;
The great ocean itself, as it rolls and it swells,
In the bonds of a boundless obedience dwells."

"It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire." To describe in all its horror the abysmal depth to which these false teachers have sunk, the Apostle makes use of two proverbs, one of which he adapts from the Old Testament (Prov. xxvi. 11), while the other is one which would impress the Jewish mind with a feeling of utter abomination. The dogs of the East are the pariahs of the animal world, while everything pertaining to swine was detestable in the eyes of the Israelite. But all the loathing which attached to these outcasts of the brute creation did not suffice to portray the defilement of these teachers of lies and their apostate lives. It needed those other grosser features—the return to the disgorged meal; the greed for filth, where a temporary cleansing serves, as it were, to give a relish for fresh wallowing—these traits were needed ere the full vileness of those sinners could be expressed.

Solomon spake his proverb of the fool who goes back to his folly; but of how much grosser lapse is he guilty who, having known the mercy of Christ, having tasted the Father's grace, having been illumined by the Holy Spirit, turns again to the world and its pollutions, goes back into the far country, far away from God, and chooses again for his food the husks that the swine did eat!

CHAPTER XXVI.

AS WERE THE DAYS OF NOAH.

2 Peter iii. 1-4.

In the previous chapter the Apostle showed how the renegade false teachers had published among the brethren their seductive doctrine declaring that God's fatherly discipline was something which they need not undergo, that the trials which He sent them might be escaped, and the natural bent of man's heart indulged as fully as they pleased. The foul results of such lessons, both to the flock, and to the teachers, he also depicted in such wise as to render them abhorrent. Now he tells of a further lessson which these guides on the downward road added to the former. Those who do not accept God's judgments here soon go on to deny the coming of judgment hereafter. It could hardly be otherwise. The wish is father to the thought as truly in matters of faith as of practice. Men whose lives are all centred on this world must try and convince themselves, if possible, that the day of the Lord, of which God's word speaks so often, is a delusion, and may be cast out of their thoughts. This these men did, and it is against this scoffing of theirs that St. Peter directs his exhortation in this chapter.

"This is now, beloved, the Second Epistle that I write unto you." Judging from the adverb which he uses (ἤδη, now, already), we should conclude that no long time had elapsed between the Apostle's first letter and the second. And by calling this the second, he shows that it is intended for the same congregations as the former, though he has not named them in the salutation with which the letter opens. Aforetime they had been tried by inward questionings, and he sent them his exhortation and testimony

that, spite of all their trials, this was the true grace of God which they had received, and therein they should stand fast (1 Peter v. 12). Now the danger is from without: false doctrine and evil living as its consequence. So, though he may have written but a little while ago, he will neither spare himself nor neglect them. For the danger is of the utmost gravity. It threatens the overthrow of all true Christian life.

"And in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance." Mark how trustfully he appeals to the sincerity of the minds of the brethren, just as before (i. 12) he said they knew the things of which he was putting them in remembrance, and were established in the truth which they had received. And what he means by the "mind" we may see from 1 Peter i. 13, where he uses the same word: "Gird up the loins of your mind"—do not indulge vain, lax, and speculative opinions, as though these would forward you in your travel through the world—"be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you." A mind so braced looks onward to the revelation of Jesus Christ, looks for every token of its drawing nigh. And because it is sincere, the man dare look into its inmost recesses, and by self-examination and discipline maintain its purity. He can think soberly of the Lord's coming because he is preparing for it. But he whose mind is dark, within whom the light has been turned into darkness, dare not think on these things, but with all his might endeavours to forget, ignore, and deny them. All that St. Peter thinks needful for these Asian brethren is that he should remind them. He knows that men's minds are prone to slumber, especially about the things unseen as yet; and his aim is to rouse them to thorough vigilance. But he has no new lesson to give them.

"That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets." On few themes do the prophets dwell more earnestly than on those visitations of Jehovah which they publish as the coming of the day of the Lord. With Joel (ii. 11, 32) it is to be a time great and terrible, the prospect of which is to move men to repentance, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered. And Israel were taught in many ways that this great day was constantly at hand. They were pointed to it by Isaiah (xiii. 6) when the overthrow of Babylon was foretold. For that nation the day of the Lord was coming as destruction from the Almighty. Jeremiah (xlvi. 10) and Ezekiel (xxx. 3) preach the same lesson with the ruin of Egypt for their text. It is a day of vengeance, when the Lord God of hosts will avenge Him of His adversaries; a day of clouds, in which a sword shall come upon Egypt, and her foundations shall be broken down. By what they beheld around them God's people were to learn that a like day would come upon them also, upon everything that was high and lifted up against God; and for those who were unprepared another prophet (Amos v. 18) declared that it would be darkness, and not light. Before its coming, therefore, they were urged (Zeph. ii. 3) to turn to the Lord, that they might be hid in the day of His anger. For God designed by it to make Himself King of all the earth (Zech. xiv. 9), wherefore it would be great and terrible. For though Elijah should first be sent (Mal. iv. 5) to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, in its manifestation that day should still be like a refiner's fire to purge the evil from among the good.

Not without solemn purpose were all these words written aforetime, and the Christian preachers who felt that God was faithful were sure that such a day would come upon all the earth. How it would be manifested was for God, and not for them. Some of those who lived when St. Peter wrote beheld part of its accomplishment in the overthrow of the Holy City. But they felt—and their lesson is one for all time—that it is presumptuous in men to compute God's days, and that it is rebellious blindness not to acknowledge the coming of His day continually in the great crises of history. How many a time since St. Peter spoke has the Lord proclaimed by partial judgments the certainty of that which shall come at the last. The day of the Lord is attested when empires fall, when hordes of barbarians break in upon the civilised world that has grown careless of God, when convulsions rage like those which preceded the Reformation and which shook Europe at the French revolution, and we may add to these the troubles which harass our own land to-day. All these things preach the same doctrine; all proclaim that verily there is a God that judgeth the earth. Not yet is the voice of prophecy silent. Oh, that men would but remember how long and how surely it has been speaking!

"And the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles." In connection with the subject on which he is writing, the commandment of Jesus to which St. Peter alludes can hardly be other than that which occurs in the address of our Lord to His disciples after His last visit to the Temple: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh; . . . therefore be ready, for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. xxiv. 42). And with the last judgment in his thoughts, we cannot fail to be struck with the frequency with which the Apostle in this letter repeats as the title of Christ "the Lord and Saviour" (i. 11; ii. 20; iii. 2, 18). This precise form occurs in no other part of the New Testament. And it seems from the Apostle's use of it as though, while speaking of the certainty of the coming of the day of the Lord, he desired to give special prominence to the thought that to such as were looking for Him He would manifest Himself as the Saviour and Redeemer.

The words "your apostles" also appear to be used with design. They contain a direct acknowledgment of the mission of St. Paul as an apostle. By him more than by any other had these regions been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and we may rest confident that the gospel which he preached elsewhere he preached to them also. The lesson of watchfulness is oft repeated in his letters. To the Corinthians he writes, "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong" (1 Cor. xvi. 13), while, in connection with this subject of the day of the Lord, his words to the Thessalonians are, "Ye yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. . . . But ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. v. 2-6). St. Peter's letter was to be read in those Galatian Churches whose members in past days had doubted about the apostolate of St.

Paul. Its warnings would sink the deeper because enforced by the authority of him who even in his rebukes had spoken to them as his "little children" (Gal. iv. 19).

"Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery." St. Peter says the mockers will come; Polycarp * says in his day they had come. He terms them the first-born of Satan, and tells how they pervert the oracles of the Lord to their own lusts and deny that there is either resurrection or judgment. The signs of the times were not difficult to read; and the Apostle would have the brethren know what to look for, know in such wise that they should not be shaken in mind by what they saw or heard. For this the first need was Christian sobriety. Thus settled, they could ponder on the words of ancient prophecy and recall the lessons of those who had spoken to them in the name of Christ; and therewith their hearts might take comfort, and their heads be lifted up with expectation, knowing the last days were bringing their redemption nearer. The mockery of the sinners would keep no bounds. This he expresses by his emphatic words, just as largeness of blessing is described: "In blessing I will bless thee."

"Walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" They would be a law unto themselves, and so they followed an evil law. As sinners before them had said, "Our lips are our own" (Psalm xii. 4), so these men by act and word alike proclaimed, "Our lives are our own, to use as we please. We have no account to give." Thus they made themselves bondslaves to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and, with these fetters heavy about them, boasted of their liberty. They strengthened themselves in their evil way by jeering at the thought of Christ's return to judgment. "We have heard of the promise," they said, "but we see no signs of its fulfilment. The angels, you say, spake of His return when He was taken away from you. Let Him make speed and hasten His coming, that we may see it. You are for ever speaking of it as sure and pointing us back to the ancient Scriptures, as though they were a warrant for what you preach. 'Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now'" (Jer. xvii. 15).

"For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Here the mockers pass from the promise of Christ's return, and fall back upon the more distant records as supplying a stronger argument. "The fathers" of whom they speak cannot be the Christian preachers. Not many of them could as yet have fallen asleep in death. But the ancient prophets of the Jewish Scriptures had long ago passed away, and against them the scorners direct their shafts. "Centuries ago," they urge, "the prophetic record was closed; and its final utterance was of the day of the Lord, which has not yet come." Their word "fell asleep" may have also been used as part of their mockery, classing the words of prophecy among baseless dreams. It may be they intended a special allusion to that one among the prophets who dates the time of the Lord's coming. Daniel (xii. 12) speaks of a waiting which shall last a thousand three hundred and five-and-thirty days. But say these scorners, "When his word was complete, he was bidden, 'Go thou thy way till the end be. For thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' He has fallen asleep, and the other fathers also. They all are at rest, and the end of the days is no nearer. The world stands fast, and will stand. It has seen no change since it was brought into existence."

Those who in faith clung to Christ could not fail, as they heard these scorners, to think of the Master's question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith in the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8), and of those other words of His which told them that the last days should be a parallel to the days of the Deluge: "As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall be the coming of the Son of man" (Matt. xxiv. 37-39). The strong earth was under the feet of those antediluvian mockers, the firmament above their heads. So in ignorance they jeered at what they would call the folly of Noah. But the Flood came, and then they knew. Yet the last days have seen, and will see, men as blind and as full of satire and scoffing as they.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JUDGMENT TO COME.

2 PETER iii. 5-7.

"THE world lasts on" (*διαμένει*) "through all time," say the scoffers, "just as it was at the Creation. There has been no change; there will be none." But out of their own mouth their folly is rebuked. How can these men speak of a creation? If there is to be no judge, why believe that there has been a Creator? That must be included in the general denial. "For this they wilfully forget." Yes, here is the reason of their conduct, the root of all the evil. They forget because they wish to forget; they speak of the fathers, but of set purpose ignore the history of Noah; they are casting God out of all their thoughts: and so even to the things that are made, and by which He testifies to all men alike His eternal power and Godhead, they close their eyes, and refuse to read His wide-open lesson-book. And still less do they regard all that His written word records of the world's past history and God's discipline for men therein.

"That there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God." They close their ears as well as their eyes. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." As the study of nature progresses men are learning to comprehend more of the vastness of that phrase "in the beginning," and in the light of science to read a larger meaning into St. Peter's words, "There were heavens from of old." But even in that generation to which the Apostle soon alludes the unchanging character of the skies spake of duration and permanence. The antediluvian world had run a long course; from Adam to Noah men had beheld the sun rise and set daily in the skies, just as it rose on the morning of the Deluge. And the mockers then living could say, and doubtless did say, to the preacher in their midst,

* "Ad Phil.," vii.

"These things have always been as they are, and will be so for evermore." The later scorners had their prototypes of old, who pointed to the existence of an eternal law, and wilfully forgot that law implies a lawgiver, and that He who made must have the power to unmake.

St. Peter takes their text, but reads from it a very different lesson. There were heavens from of old, yea, long before there was an earth fit for man to dwell in. This world in that old time was formless and void, and the waters covered its face like a garment. The word of the Lord went forth, and the waters were gathered together as a heap, and the depth was laid up in God's storehouses. Then the dry land appeared; then there was an earth. The streams took their appointed place down the mountain-sides and in the valleys, and rivers began to roll onward to the sea; the waters of ocean learnt their bounds, neither turned again to cover the earth. The Divine word clothed in all the glory of vegetation the hitherto barren land, making it a fit home for man, who was not yet; and the water ministered sustenance to everything that grew out of the ground. Birds, beasts, and fishes were made, and the waters were the birthplace of most of these. For God said, "Let the water bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life," not its own tenants only, but fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. So there was an earth, not the bare ground only, but the whole wealth of vegetable and animal life; and this was all existent, compacted, supported out of water and by means of water (*δι' ὕδατος*). For without it nothing could have flourished. God had laid up water above the firmament and water below the earth, and by means of watery vapour refreshed and blessed everything that grew. This was the reign of God's law, and ere the Flood came men could point to it and say, "What mean you to talk of a deluge? The sand is made the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; the earth is set high above the waters, and has been so from old time." But that long duration did not hinder the same productive, nurturing water being turned, by the word of the Lord, into an agency of destruction.

"By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Every word in the Apostle's sentence is meant to tell. God employed as means of overthrow the very powers which at first He ordained for blessing. His word makes things what they are. The reign of law endures until He, who is before all law and the source of all law, gives another direction to those forces which his law has always been controlling. In this way the world that then was, the world which had endured and been steadfast from the Creation to the Flood, perished. The world was full of order, full of glory. The name (*κόσμος*) expresses all this. Yet, for the sin of man, it repented God that He had made this glorious order; and this it was which perished. The earth was not destroyed; it only received again that covering of primeval waters which, at God's word, had retired and let the dry land appear. At the same word both earth and heaven combined to destroy the goodliness with which creation was adorned. For, on the day of the Deluge (Gen. vii. 11), all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters came again to cover the earth. They prevailed exceedingly, and all flesh died that moved upon the earth; even the fowls and the moving creatures, which had been brought forth from the teeming waters, perished, and all things were destroyed from off the earth. Thus does St. Peter lay bare the unwisdom of those who will not listen to, who are wilfully forgetful of, the parables of God's word; who close their eyes to His judgments, sent that by them men may learn righteousness.

"But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire." The Apostle now turns away from what the Old Testament Scriptures relate as history of the past to what the same records teach us concerning the future; and he deals partly with promise, partly with prophecy. The earth will not be destroyed again by a deluge. God hath made His covenant: "I will establish My covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. ix. 11). But there will be a judgment; and then not, as in the days of Noah, will the *κόσμος*, the beautiful order of nature, alone be destroyed, but heaven and earth alike shall be involved in the common overthrow. Here the Apostle is but the expositor of the words of psalmists and prophets of the older times. He who sang, "Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," was inspired to add, "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed" (Psalm cii. 25). Isaiah, the evangelist among the prophets, saw more, and connects this mighty change with the day of the Lord's vengeance: "Then shall all the host of heaven be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll" (Isa. xxxiv. 4); and in another place he foresees how "the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, . . . for Mine arms shall judge the people" (Isa. li. 6); and yet again in more solemn wise, "The Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury and His rebuke with flames of fire, for by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh" (Isa. lxvi. 15). And this He proclaims as the preparation for "the new heavens and the new earth which He will make." Daniel also tells us of God's "throne of judgment to be set, which is like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire" (Dan. vii. 9).

With such light from the lamp of prophecy, the Apostle in his exegesis proclaims the nature of the final judgment. Like other New Testament writers, he has attained, since the day of Pentecost, a deeper insight and a firmer grasp of the purport of what Moses in the Law and the prophets did write. We can see how on that very day thoughts like these which he expresses in his letter were borne in upon his mind. For not only does he apply the prophecy of Joel to the events which then struck the multitude with wonder, but he carries on the lesson further to the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord, and reminds his hearers that then God "will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapour of smoke, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood" (Acts ii. 19). And the like

illumination had been bestowed on St. Paul. For he too tells (1 Cor. iii. 13) of a day when each man's work shall be proved by fire; and more definitely he assures the Thessalonians, to whom he wrote much concerning the day of the Lord, that there will come a "revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i. 8).

In such wise did the Apostles read the utterances of prophecy; and thus did they apply them as lessons for their own and all future times. They felt that not unto themselves, but unto us, did the prophets minister. And St. Peter does but put their message into his own words when in his bold figure he says that the heavens that now are and the earth are stored up for fire.

The Revised Version on its margin renders the last words "stored with fire." And when we reflect on the storing of the waters at the Creation, afterwards to be let forth to destroy the world which hitherto they had made fruitful and lovely, the parallelism is very suggestive. God has stored the earth within with fire, which from time to time makes its mighty presence and power for destruction known. The visitations of earthquakes may therefore well remind us that He who used the treasures of waters in the Deluge for His ministers may in like manner hereafter employ this treasury of fire.

"Being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." When God no longer waits for sinners to repent, then will come the judgment and destruction of the ungodly. At that day the heavens that now are and the earth shall be exchanged or transformed. God will prepare a new heaven and a new earth wherein the righteous may find a congenial home with their Lord. Here they can never be other than pilgrims and sojourners, seeking to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven. What the destruction of the ungodly shall be we can only judge and speak of in the terms of Scripture. The language of St. Paul to the Thessalonians seems to teach us that the very advent of the Judge shall bring their penalty: "They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction" (the word is not the same which St. Peter uses) "from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might" (2 Thess. i. 9), in the presence of which nothing that is defiled can dwell. So God, of His mercy, still reserves the heavens and the earth, and thus to every new generation offers His mercy, saying continually through their silent witness, in the spirit in which he spake to Israel at the close of the volume of prophecy, "I am Jehovah"—that is, the merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin—"I change not; therefore ye sinners are not destroyed."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LORD IS NOT SLACK.

2 Peter iii. 8, 9.

"All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," said the mockers. It was foolish, therefore, to believe in, or to think of, a judgment to come. In the words before us the Apostle not only supplies an answer to the scorners, but gives a precious lesson to Christians for all time on the nature of God and His government of the world. It is but a single thought, but when the mind of the believer has grasped its significance, he will look out upon the world untroubled. No mockery will disturb his faith.

"But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Here the Apostle quotes some words from that psalm (xc.) which is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God." In it the Psalmist is contrasting God's eternity with the frailty of man and the shortness of human life. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past." But St. Peter not only adopts, but adapts, the words for his own purpose. He wants to teach the Christians in their trials that, while what is long in man's estimation may in God's providence be counted but little, yet through God's decree what to man appears little may be big with mightiest consequences. He therefore first inverts the words of the Psalmist. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, while a thousand years may be as one day. One day of His deluge swept a whole generation out of the world, while His day of Pentecost remains potent in the history of His grace for all the ages which are yet to come. Through a mistaken literalness, men have sometimes expounded the lesson as if Jehovah's dealings were a question of arithmetic. Nothing could be farther from the Apostle's thought, who would have us know that of great and little God's work makes no account. With Him there is no short or long in time. What he does is not to be measured by the petty standards of humanity.

Men must take note of time, for they feel its lapse and its loss. They are ever conscious that a period is coming after which what is undone must continue undone. Again, the length of time is known to them by the recurrence of the various acts of life, and by the weariness which comes of continued labour, and by the grief of protracted waiting. These things force them to speak of short and long, but with God it is not so. For Him all time is one. He knows nothing of toil. Whatsoever He pleaseth, that doeth He in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in all deep places (Psalm cxxxv. 6). The Psalmist had attained a true conception. The whole world and all worlds were in His control, and their order the working of His eternal will. He needs no rest; He slumbereth not, nor sleepeth. To Him there is no waiting, no weariness. Hence the past, the present, and the future are for Him one unbroken now.

This is the one thing which the Apostle offers to the Christian brethren for their support and consolation against the scoffers. And the knowledge is mighty for those who grasp it. It helps them to cast themselves securely upon the almighty arms, convinced that God's working is not to be estimated according to man's days and years, but is certain in its effect. One generation passeth away, and another cometh; but death, they learn, does not take men out of the knowledge or the hand of God, be it for mercy they are reserved, or for judgment. God does not defer His action because He lacks power to perform, neither does He tarry because He is unmindful of His servants or insensible to what they endure.

Such thoughts can minister to the faithful abundant consolation, and this was the desire of the Apostle. But they raise for all time large questions which can find no answer here, questions concerning the lot of those who pass from this brief day of life into the eternal world and have not known God's will, that they might do it; questions concerning a discipline which may yet be reserved for some who have not bent themselves to it here, perhaps from want of light; questions of how far hope may extend itself beyond the veil which divides this world from the next. Such questions rise within many earnest souls, often rather for the sake of others than themselves; but God has vouchsafed us no answer, lest men should wax presumptuous.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness." Many things conspire to make the doings of men to tarry. At one time pledges are given beyond what foresight would warrant; and when the day of performance arrives, they are forced to plead that events have falsified their expectation, and they cannot do the things that they would. Again, men, with the most earnest zeal, attempt a work beyond their powers, and of necessity have to delay the fulfilment of their promises; while some are taken away untimely from the midst of their fellows, ere life has enabled them to achieve what they counted on once as certain. Want of knowledge, of time, and of power is the heritage of the sons of men; and therewith conspires not seldom a change of mind and consequent want of will. But He with whom is no variableness, the omnipotent, omniscient, eternal Lord of all, is subject to no hindrance. Whether events appear to men to linger or to be sudden, all move under the control of the same unchanging will. He is not slack, as men are slack, either to rescue the righteous or to punish the ungodly. Of this the son of Sirach spake: "The Lord will not be slack, neither will the Almighty be patient, . . . till He have taken away the multitude of the proud and broken the sceptre of the unrighteous, . . . till He have judged the cause of His people and made them to rejoice in His mercy" (Ecclus. xxxv. 18).

Here is a medicine for fainting souls, of whom there must have been many among these Asian Christians. And it is a solace furnished, too, by the teachings of prophecy. "The vision," says one, "is yet for an appointed time" (Hab. iii. 3). God's will has ordered when and how it shall be accomplished; all moves by His decree. "At the end it shall speak, and not lie." There is no disappointment to those who wait upon the purposes of God. "Though it tarry, wait for it," even though the waiting may last beyond this life, "because it will surely come; it will not tarry. The just shall live by his faith."

The order of the words in the original (*ὁ κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας*) and the unwonted construction of the verb, of which no other example is forthcoming, have suggested to some to render thus: "The Lord of the promise is not slack." Even so the words give a powerful sense. God, who makes the promise to men, is supreme over all on which its faithfulness depends, supreme both as Maker and Fulfiller of His word. He sees and controls the end from the beginning. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

"But is long-suffering to youward." The Authorised Version reads "to usward." And some have thought it more in accord with the Apostle's manner and humility to include himself with the brethren. The other reading is better supported, and none will doubt on that account St. Peter's sense of God's long-suffering towards himself. The term which he here employs to describe the Divine character implies the holding back of wrath. God might justly punish, but He stays His blow. Men have sinned, and still sin; but His love prevails above His anger. The word is formed by the LXX. translators to render one expression in that passage (Exod. xxxiv. 6) where God proclaims unto Moses the attributes by which He would be known unto men. Through all the list mercy is the dominant feature. Term upon term seems devised to magnify the tenderness of Jehovah towards His people, though at last, if the continual offers of mercy are despised, He "will by no means clear the guilty." No other language furnishes such a word, for no other people had such a knowledge of the God of all grace.

"Not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." We are wont to connect statements like this with the gracious messages of the New Testament. Yet some saints of earlier time felt all that St. Peter here teaches. The writer of Ecclesiasticus has some striking words. He is connecting God's mercy with the shortness of man's life, and his language anticipates in the main this teaching of the Apostle: "The number of a man's days at the most are a hundred years. As a drop of water unto the sea, so are a thousand years to the days of eternity. Therefore is God patient with them, and poureth forth His mercy upon them. The mercy of man is toward his neighbour, but the mercy of God is upon all flesh; He reproveth, and nurtureth, and teacheth, and bringeth again as a shepherd his flock" (Ecclus. xviii. 9-14). In such wise had some who waited for the consolation of Israel grasped God's promises by anticipation, seeing them afar off, and being persuaded of them. Such men owned themselves, equally with the Apostle, to be strangers and pilgrims, and sought for that inheritance which Christ sent him to preach.

The word "wishing" (*βουλόμενος*) implies deliberate consent. This God does not give to the death of any sinner. If any perish it is not because God so desired or designed. But some will ask, "Why, then, should any perish?" St. Peter in this sentence, full of grace, supplies the answer. They continue in sin, and repent not. Even offers of mercy are of no avail. But why does not the Almighty Father drive them to repentance by His judgments? Because He has made His children free, and asks from them a willing service. They are to *come* to repentance. The invitation is full and free. Christ says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour." Nay, God makes at times a less demand: "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." Could words breathe more of mercy? To come, to look—that is the sole demand. God bestows all besides. Let men but manifest a desire, and His grace is poured forth. He wisheth not that any should perish.

And Christ, too, when He speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has the same lesson. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all conspire to further the work of man's salvation. "All things," said our Lord, "whatsoever the Father hath, are Mine. Therefore said I, He shall take of Mine, and shall show" (R. V. declare) "it

unto you." But the eye to see what He shows, the ear to hear His declarations—these He asks from men. He willeth that they should come to repentance, and through that gate should come to Him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YE TO BE?"

2 PETER iii. 10-13.

THE Apostle, ever earnest to put the brethren in mind of the things they had heard or read, never fails to follow his own precept. His thoughts perpetually go back to the words of Jesus, of which the passage before us is but one example out of many. "If the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched" (Luke xii. 39). So spake Christ unto the disciples when urging them to be like unto servants that look for the coming of their lord. To the Master's parable St. Peter now gives its application: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief." He means first to mark the unexpected advent, which steals upon men when they least think of it. Sinners will have lulled themselves into security, and the thought farthest from their minds will be the all-important preparation. St. Paul uses the same figure in speaking of the same subject (1 Thess. v. 2), from which passage the words "in the night" have found their way into the text of St. Peter, to which, as the Revised Version indicates, they do not belong. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostle has defined the preparation which, joined with patience, should keep men in readiness for the certain advent: "Exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. x. 25).

St. Peter passes on to tell of the terrors which shall attend on that day. Here also he has in mind the words of his Master, who, after a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, spake of that greater coming of the Son of man of which the overthrow of the Holy City was to be but a partial type: "There shall be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows, men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things that are coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Luke xxi. 25; Matt. xxiv. 29). With the Lord's language for his warrant, he paints, largely in the words of the prophets of old, the things which shall befall the world in that great and notable day: "In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Isaiah had used like words of old: "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll" (Isa. xxxiv. 4); and in another place he speaks (xxiv. 19) of the earth as utterly broken, clean dissolved, moved exceedingly; Micah has to proclaim the coming of the Lord, and he pictures it thus: "The mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire" (Micah i. 4); and Nahum, describing the day of the Lord which he foresaw was coming upon Nineveh, says, "The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwelt therein." It is St. Peter's, by the light of the words of Jesus, to read their full purport into these prophetic messages, and to teach those upon whom the ends of the ages are come that all these things will have their consummation in that coming of the Lord which shall be the close of these latter days.

When thus considered his description contains many striking details. "The heavens will pass away." Christ Himself had so spoken, not of heaven only, but of the earth also. His word was the same which Peter employs, but He used it in the same sentence thus: "My word will not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). That is the one thing to which we may trust. All else will be destroyed or changed. Only those who are in Christ will be fit for the new order. For them old things are passed away; behold they are become new (2 Cor. v. 17). They have been purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and so can abide the day of Christ's coming.

To describe the dread process he has a striking word, which, like so many of the Apostle's expressions, is used nowhere else in the New Testament: "With a great noise" (ῥοιζηδόν). It is applied to many sounds of terror: to the hurtling of weapons as they fly through the air; to the sound of a lash as it is brought down for the blow; to the rushing of waters; to the hissing of serpents. He has chosen it as if by it he would unite many horrors in one.

Then the thought of nature's dissolution. All that was bound together at the Creation, and then received a law of cohesion which sustained it thenceforth, will be cast loose, the compacted world dissolved. These things have been thought of as emblems of stability. God hath made the round world so fast that it cannot be moved (Psalm civ. 5), but He who made can also unmake. How foolish then must they be who bound their thoughts and aims by what the world can give, making themselves thereby of the earth, earthy, and so sure to fail when that is destroyed. And what are those works that are in the earth of which the Apostle speaks? Do the words mean no more than "the world and all that therein is," a phrase so common in Scripture? At first sight it appears so. But some most ancient manuscripts, instead of "shall be burned up," read "shall be discovered." Of this the Revised Version takes note on its margin. From this reading the mind goes to the words of the Preacher, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Eccles. xii. 14). The sense is thus bound closer with the coming of the day of the Lord.

"Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" The Apostle says more than "are to be dissolved." His word signifies "are being dissolved." The event is so sure, and the interests involved so weighty, that he speaks of it as present, that thus he may more forcibly urge his lesson of preparation. "What manner of persons ought ye to be?" Christ had supplied the answer, and so St. Peter gives none: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord" (Luke xii. 25). The figures imply readiness for any service, most of all, to an Eastern mind, readiness to set forth on a journey. Such should ever be the attitude

of those who are but sojourners and pilgrims. And by his words the Apostle intimates how this preparedness should enter into every relation of the Christian life. The translation says, "in *all* holy living and godliness"; but in the Greek there is no word for *all*. Literally the words are "in holy conversations and godlinesses." In English we could not use words thus. Hence the device of the translators to come as near to the sense as is possible. But if we carry with us the thought contained in these plural words, we see how St. Peter teaches by them that in our daily life and work as well as in our religious exercises we should be ever watchful, ever ready. Our life with men and with God should be stamped as "Holiness unto the Lord." By such a walk we shall keep ourselves apart from sinners, and be helped thus far to keep away from sin. And the godliness of which he speaks springs, as he has already taught (i. 6) in this Epistle, from a patient waiting on the Lord. Thus the whole attitude of the Christian becomes one of wakeful readiness. He is of those of whom it is said, "Blessed are those servants whom their lord when He cometh shall find watching."

"Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." The question of the mockers, "Where is the promise of His coming?" will not disturb those whose lives are thus made ready. That coming fills their every thought, moulds every desire, controls and chastens every action. For not only do they look for it: they long for it, and earnestly desire it. For to be with Christ is far better. Hence they hear of the melting elements and the fires of heaven without alarm. With them it is as with the Hebrew children in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. The fires which others dread, and by reason of which the heavens dissolve and the elements melt, will have no power over them save to loose their bonds, to free them from the burden of the flesh, to further that change from the natural to the spiritual which St. Paul teaches we must all undergo; while with them there will be the Son of God. And thus they will attain to their desire, and become partakers of the Divine nature.

But the translation "earnestly desiring" by no means exhausts the significance and solemnity of St. Peter's word. The Authorised Version rendered it "hasting unto the coming of the day of God"; but the word "unto" is not in the Greek, though the verb means "hastening." The word is found in the LXX. of Isa. xvi. 5, where the Authorised Version translates the Hebrew by "hasting righteousness" and the Revised by "swift to do righteousness." But though a king, as in that passage, may be said to hasten righteousness by being swift to do it, is there any sense in which men could be said to hasten the coming of the day of God? It seems as though Christ intended to set such an aim before His servants. Before He was crucified He spake that prophetic promise, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." When He had been lifted up on the cross and as a testimony to His Godhead, lifted up from the grave, He gave His commission to the Apostles: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations. . . . Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He promised His Spirit also to be their Guide into all truth.

Thus were they sent to be heralds of and labourers for His kingdom; and one of them has testified to the abundance of the aid bestowed: "I can do all things through Christ that giveth me power." But he who thus spake could say to his converts, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). In this way men can lift up Christ; in this way can they draw men to Him. And to do this by examples of holy living and godliness is the work which He has committed to His Church, to let the light of Christian lives shine before men in such wise that they may be won for Him. And when we see His kingdom's slow advance, St. Peter's question is turned into a reproach, "What manner of men ought ye to be?"

"But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." All creation was marred at the Fall. It groaneth and travaileth until now in pain along with the sons of men. It was made subject unto vanity, but that was by reason of God, who made it thus subject in hope that it shall be delivered, along with man, from the bondage of corruption. And that victory was promised from the first. The seed of the woman shall not always be the spoil of the serpent. The world was in many ways kept alive to this thought. A race was promised from whom all nations should be blessed. God established a kingdom to represent His rule in the world, and at length Isaiah was inspired to tell of new heavens and a new earth (Isa. lxv. 17). He too foresaw that this was for a reign of righteousness, that it pointed to a time when the wickedness of the wicked had come to an end: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither the moon by night; for the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and as for thy people, they shall all be righteous." And Christ while on earth endorsed the prophetic word: "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there shall My servant be."

Hence St. Peter says, "According to His promise we look forward." And by using the same he identifies the new heavens and the new earth with the coming of the day of God. The believer heeds no more the mockers who ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" He can look and lift up his head, assured that his redemption draweth nigh. For his expectation has been fostered through a life of holy conversation and godliness, and the assurance of the day of God is firm, for the kingdom of God is set up within him.

And the consolation of the promise consists largely in the thought that in the new creation righteousness will dwell, will make its home. First, there will be Christ the righteous, who is also our righteousness; and all the hindrances and stumbling-blocks of this life will be removed. Here the sojourners and pilgrims abide for the time amid many foes and countless perils; then they will be delivered even from their own frailties. As their home is new-created, so they shall become new creatures. So their thought, their prayer, their struggle, is ever, *Sursum corda*; and day by day they are bound less to earth and realise more of heaven.

"The distant landscape draws not nigh
For all our gazing, but the soul
That upward looks may still descry
Nearer each day the brightening goal."

CHAPTER XXX.

"BE YE STEADFAST, UNMOVABLE."

2 Peter iii. 14-18.

In these solemn closing words the Apostle sums up his exhortations and warnings. His admonition is of a twofold character. First, he urges the brethren to strive after steadfastness, but to beware of sinking into a careless security which may make them an easy prey to false guides. "Stand fast," he would say, "and be ever watchful against falling." Then, let your Christian life be one of steady, constant, temperate progress; let it imitate God's works in nature, which wax, man sees not how or when, by drawing constantly from the hidden sources which minister life and increase. Let believers seek thus that in their lives there may grow from God's seed of faith, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, to yield some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold, to the praise and glory of the Lord of the harvest.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight." The whole passage runs over with Christian affection; a very working out it is in a believer's life of Christ's teaching, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another." Love to the brethren, love to his fellow-Apostle, breathes in every line of these final sentences. Beloved are the Churches, beloved his fellow-labourer. And he is never weary of repeating that word "looking for," which marks the true attitude of the Christian pilgrim: Seeing that ye look for the coming of the day of God. Before he had said, We look for it; now he brings the lesson nearer home to every one of them: Ye are looking for these things. Be ye therefore ready. Give diligence that ye may be found in peace by Christ when He appears.

Peace is the bond which clasps together the brotherhood of Christ. But things which need a bond are prone to break asunder, and St. Paul marks the care which is needed in this matter by using the same word (σπουδάζοντες) which St. Peter employs here. And his list of the virtues which make for peace shows how much anxiety is needed: "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering forbearing one another in love, giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 2). Such are the graces to be fostered by those who look for the Lord's coming. The Hebrew knew no nobler word to use for blessing than "Peace be with you." Christ at His parting says to His disciples, "My peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you." It embraces reconciliation with God and union with the brethren; it is a treasure worthy of all striving for, and when attained it passeth all understanding.

They who are looking for Christ will strive to become like Him. Christ came down from heaven and assumed humanity that His brethren might take courage for this lofty aim. The Apostle (1 Peter i. 19) has spoken of Him as a lamb without spot and blemish, and this ideal purity he now sets before the brethren. For he knows that to strive after it will sunder them from the corruptions of those false teachers whom he has called "spots and blemishes" (ii. 13) in the Christian society. Instead of denying the Master that bought them, they will be hearkening constantly for His voice. Thus will they become clean through the word which He speaks unto them (John xv. 3). For His voice is ever helpful; and abiding in Him they will bring forth much fruit.

"And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." The mockers had made the delay of God's day the subject of their scoffing. "It tarries," said they, "because it is never coming." Their speech was, in fact, a challenge: "If it is to come, let it come now." The Christian is of another mind. His heart is full of thankfulness for the mercy which allows time for that diligence which his preparation demands. St. Paul expresses this feeling concerning God's dealings with himself: "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all His long-suffering, for an example of them which should hereafter believe on Him unto eternal life" (1 Tim. i. 16). And the opportunity thus granted him that Apostle used to the full; yet ever mindful was he not only from whom was the mercy, but also from whom came the power which was with him in his diligence: "I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." And in another place (Phil. i. 22), though he longs to be released from life and to be with Christ, he recognises that there may be a Divine purpose in delaying that day of God also, that to live in the flesh may be the fruit of his labour; and if this be so, he is content.

For the believer thinks not only of his own salvation and his own opportunities. The Christian's faith is not selfish. He beholds how large a part of the world is not yet subject unto Christ, and owns in the delay of the day of the Lord a wealth of abundant grace, offering salvation still to all who will accept it.

"Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you." Some, who have restricted the allusion of St. Peter here to the "long-suffering" of God, have thought that the Epistle to the Romans is intended. That letter is the only one in which St. Paul speaks generally on this subject. In ii. 4 he asks, "Despisest thou the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" and, again, asks another question: "What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy?" (ix. 22). Others, considering the great subject of the day of God to be specially present to St. Peter's mind, have found parallels in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. It has also been pointed out that Silvanus was with St. Paul when these letters were written, and that through him (1 Peter v. 12) their import might have been brought to the knowledge of the Asiatic congregations. But we know too little of the intercommunication of the Churches of Europe and Asia to arrive at a conclusion, while the definite statement "wrote unto you" seems certainly to refer to some letter addressed to the Churches of Asia. Among these, beside the Galatians, were the Ephesians and the Colossians. Reference has already been made to the way in which St. Paul speaks in his First Epistle to Timothy of the

long-suffering of God towards himself. Would the letter to the bishop of Ephesus be held too personal for its contents in some form to be imparted to the whole Church? Then in the Ephesian epistle such a passage as ii. 4-7 may well have been in St. Peter's thoughts: "God, being rich in mercy, . . . quickened us together with Christ, . . . that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Jesus Christ," or Col. i. 19, 20: "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross." But there is no reason from St. Peter's words to assume that he is referring to an extant epistle. He may have known of a letter to the brethren in Asia of which we have no trace. Of one thing we may be sure: that his words had a definite sense for those to whom they were written.

But his reference to St. Paul has much interest for other reasons. Among these brethren there would be current many memories of the great Apostle to whose labour the formation of these Churches was chiefly due. His name would for them add weight to St. Peter's admonitions. The mention of the wisdom divinely given to him would remind the Galatians at least how foolish had been their doubts and waverings in bygone days. While, as they knew how one apostle had withstood the other when he saw that he was to be blamed, such words as these from St. Peter would come with double force. Most of all, while the teachers of error were perverting St. Paul's language for an occasion to the flesh, it was good that the Churches should be reminded that he ever taught men to strive after lives without spot and blemish and had given no license to the excesses for which his words were offered as a warrant.

"As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things." From this it appears that it is the whole drift of St. Peter's letter, its warnings as well as its counsels, which is in harmony with the words of St. Paul. But we need not assume that St. Peter's readers were acquainted with all the fellow-Apostle's writings. He is telling them what his own experience has proved.

"Wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." This passage is noteworthy as the only place in the New Testament in which the writings of the Apostles are regarded as ranking with the Scriptures of the old Covenant. Everywhere else "Scripture" means the Old Testament. Yet, as the Apostles were passing away, it must have begun to be felt that a time was coming when great authority would attach to their words, as of persons who had seen the Lord. St. Peter has just spoken of the wisdom which was given to St. Paul. That wisdom came from the same source as the illumination of the prophets; and it is not unnatural, after such an allusion, that his writings should be classed with those of old time. Both were subjected to the same treatment. So perversely had the Old Testament been read that when He came of whom it spake—came to those who held the volume in their hands, and who regarded it with much show of reverence—He was not recognised. His people had blinded their eyes. Just so was it faring with that "freedom" of which St. Paul had said so much to the Galatian Church. Wrested from its true meaning, it was put forward as if it gave warranty and encouragement for the life of the libertine.

That many things in the writings of St. Paul are difficult to comprehend is beyond question. He more than any of the New Testament writers works out the principles of Christ's teaching in their consequences. He deals most fully with the great questions which circle round the doctrine of redemption; with election and justification; with the casting off of God's ancient people and the certainty of their restoration; with the objects of faith, the things hoped for, but as yet unseen; with the resurrection of the body and the changes which shall pass upon it; and with the nature of the life to come. He of all men realised to the full the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of God, and spake in his letters of much which passeth knowledge.

But in St. Peter's word (*δυσνόητα*) "hard to be understood" there appears to be the thought that men's difficulties arise in part because they look on these subjects as studies for the intellect (*νοῦς*) alone, and fail for this reason to attain to the best knowledge that is given to man. It is of God's order that for the lessons which come from Him He also imparts the power of true discernment. Those who approach the study of Christian truth as a cold intellectual exercise, in the comprehension of which heart and soul bear no part, will go away empty, and as dark almost as they come.

The "wresting" of which St. Peter here speaks may come either of the misuse of single terms, just as the apostles of license put a wrong sense, for their own ends, on St. Paul's "liberty," or it may be the effect of severing a lesson from its occasion and its context. Such perversion also happened to St. Paul's doctrine. To those who, like the Galatians, had been drawn back to an undue estimate of the legal ordinances of Judaism, the Apostle, as a corrective, had exalted faith far above outward observances; and there soon arose those who under his language sheltered themselves in a dissolute Antinomianism. The same befell in later days when Agricola and the Solifidians perverted Luther's teaching of justification by faith. And when such misleading guides find hearers who are "ignorant and unsteadfast," the false lessons, which always have the frailties of humanity to back them, gain many adherents. To the thoughtless such teaching is seductive, and is unsuspected because it puts on a semblance of affinity with truth. Hence grow those ruptures of the Christian body, those heresies which lead to destruction (ii. 1).

"Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness." In the first chapter the Apostle has already (ver. 12) addressed the converts as those who knew the things of which he wrote and needed only to be put in mind, who were established in the truth, and not to be classed with the ignorant and unsteadfast. Yet for all there is need of watchfulness. The lies which are abroad clothe themselves in the garb of truth, wresting the Scriptures. "Therefore," says he, "guard yourselves" (*φυλάσσεσθε*). The word is not only a notice against dangers from without, but an admonition to watchfulness within. The wandering of the lawless may beguile; to many it has attractions. But if they join that company

and follow with them, the end will be a shipwreck of the whole Christian life. The verb (ἐκπίπτειν) is that which we find (Acts xxvii. 26, 29) in the description of the wreck at Melita, when the sailors feared lest they should be cast ashore on rocky ground. It is against a moral peril of even more terrible character that St. Peter warns the Churches; and the contrast is most instructive which is pictured in the two words by which he defines error and steadfastness. The former (πλάνη) betokens a ceaseless wandering, a life without a plan, a voyage without rudder or compass, every stage made in doubt, uncertainty, and peril; the other word (στηριγμὸς) tells of a firmness, fixity, and strength, and comes fitly into the exhortation of that Apostle whose charge was, "When thou art converted, strengthen" (στήριξον) "thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32). "This steadfastness," he says, "is now your own" (ἰδίον); "barter it not away for any illusions of wayward error."

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." As if to attest his own steadfastness, he ends as he had begun. "Grace unto you and peace be multiplied," was the opening greeting of his first letter, to which in his second he adds, "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." But there is great significance in the way in which St. Peter's words hang together in this verse. The structure of the sentence shows that he intends to say not only that grace is the gift of Jesus Christ, but that from Him comes also all knowledge that is worthy of the name, a lesson most fitting and most necessary in those days, when teachers who claimed to be possessors of a special higher knowledge, were denying Jesus altogether both as Master and as Judge. "Root yourselves in Christ," is the Apostolic charge; "seek His help; walk by His light. Thus only can your power increase; thus only can your way be safe."

"To Him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen." This is the end of the Apostle's labour that Christ may be glorified in His servants; that they may know Him here as the Way, the Truth and the Life, hereafter as the High-priest of His people, but deigning to become the Firstborn among many brethren. For those who find Him here and there also eternity will be too short to show forth all His praise.

THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN

PREFACE.

It is now many years ago since I entered upon a study of the Epistles of St. John, as serious and prolonged as was consistent with the often distracting cares of an Irish Bishop. Such fruit as my labours produced enjoyed the advantage of appearing in the last volume of the "Speaker's Commentary" in 1881.

Since that period I have frequently turned again to these Epistles—subsequent reflection or study not seldom filling in gaps in my knowledge, or leading me to modify former interpretations. When invited last year to resume my old work, I therefore embraced willingly the opportunity which was presented to me.

Let me briefly state the method pursued in this book.

I. The First Part contains four Discourses.

(1) In the first Discourse I have tried to place the reader in the historical surroundings from which (unless all early Church history is unreal, a past that never was present) these Epistles emanated.

(2) In the second Discourse I compared the Epistle with the Gospel. This is the true point of orientation for the commentator. Call the connection between the two documents what we may; be the Epistle the Hieronymian interpretation precisely as it stood, not preface, appendix, moral and devotional commentary, or accompanying encyclical address to the Churches, which were "the nurslings of John"; that connection is constant and pervasive. Unless this principle is firmly grasped, we not only lose a defence and confirmation of the Gospel, but dissolve the whole consistency of the Epistle, and leave it floating—the thinnest cloud in the whole cloudland of mystic idealism.

(3) The third Discourse deals with the polemical element in these Epistles. Some commentators indeed, like the excellent Henry Hammond, "spy out Gnostics where there are none." They confuse us with uncouth names, and conjure up the ghosts of long-forgotten errors until we seem to hear a theological bedlam, or to see theological scarecrows. Yet Gnosticism, Doketism, Cerinthianism, certainly sprang from the teeming soil of Ephesian thought; and without a recognition of this fact we shall never understand the Epistle. Undoubtedly, if the Apostle had addressed himself only to contemporary error, his great Epistle would have become completely obsolete for us. To subsequent ages an antiquated polemical treatise is like a fossil scorpion with a sting of stone. But a divinely taught polemic under transitory forms of error finds principles as lasting as human nature.

(4) The object of the fourth Discourse is to bring out the image of St. John's soul—the essentials of the spiritual life to be found in those precious chapters which still continue to be an element of the life of the Church.

Such a view, if at all accurate, will enable the reader to contemplate the whole of the Epistle with the sense of completeness, of remoteness, and of unity which arises from a general survey apart from particular difficulties. An ancient legend insisted that St. John exercised miraculous power in blending again into one the

broken pieces of a precious stone. We may try in an humble way to bring these fragmentary particles of spiritual gem-dust together, and fuse them into one.

II. The plan pursued in the second part is this. The First Epistle (of which only I need now speak) is divided into ten sections.

The sections are thus arranged—

(1) The *text* is given in Greek. In this matter I make no pretence to original research; and have simply adopted Tischendorf's text, with occasional amendments from Dr. Scrivener or Professor Westcott. At one time I might have been tempted to follow Lachmann; but experience taught me that he is "audacior quam limatior," and I held my hand. The advantage to every studious reader of having the divine original close by him for comparison is too obvious to need a word more.

With the Greek I have placed in parallel columns the translations most useful for ordinary readers—the Latin, the English A. V. and R. V. The Latin text is that of the "Codex Amiatinus," after Tischendorf's splendid edition of 1854. In this the reader will find, more than a hundred and twenty years after the death of St. Jerome, an interpretation more diligent and more accurate than that which is supplied by the ordinary Vulgate text. The saint felt "the peril of presuming to judge others where he himself would be judged by all; of changing the tongue of the old, and carrying back a world which was growing hoary to the initial essay of infancy." The Latin is of that form to which ancient Latin Church writers gave the name of "rusticitas." But it is a happy—I had almost said a divine—rusticity. In translating from the Hebrew of the Old Testament, St. Jerome has given a new life, a strange tenderness or awful cadence, to prophets and psalmists. The voice of the fields is the voice of Heaven also. The tongue of the people is for once the tongue of God. This Hebraistic Latin or Latinised Hebrew forms the strongest link in that mysterious yet most real spell wherewith the Latin of the Church enthrals the soul of the world. But to return to our immediate subject. The student can seldom go wrong by more than a hair's breadth when he has before him three such translations. In the first column stands St. Jerome's vigorous Latin. The second contains the English A. V., of which each clause seems to be guarded by the spirits of the holy dead, as well as by the love of the living Church; and to tell the innovator that he "does wrong to show it violence, being so majestical." The third column offers to view the scholarlike—if sometimes just a little pedantic and provoking—accuracy of the R. V. To this comparison of versions I attach much significance. Every translation is an additional commentary, every good translation the best of commentaries.

I have ventured with much hesitation to add upon another column in each section a translation drawn up by myself for my own private use; the greater portion of which was made a year or two before the publication of the R. V. Its right to be here is this, that it affords the best key to my meaning in any place where the exposition may be imperfectly expressed.

(2) One or more Discourses are attached to most of the sections. In these I may have seemed sometimes to have given myself a wide scope, but I have tried to make a sound and careful exegesis the basis of each. And I have throughout considered myself bound to draw out some great leading idea of St. John with conscientious care.

(3) The Discourses (or if there be no Discourse in the section, the text and

versions) are followed by short notes, chiefly exegetical, in which I have not willingly passed by any real difficulty.

I have not wished to cumber my pages with constant quotations. But in former years I have read, in some cases with much care, the following commentators—St. Augustine's "Tractatus," St. John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Gospel (full of hints upon the Epistles), Cornelius à Lapide; of older post-Reformation commentators, the excellent Henry Hammond, the eloquent Dean Hardy, the precious fragments in Pole's "Synopsis"—above all, the inimitable Bengel; of moderns, Düsterdieck, Huther, Ebrard, Neander; more recently, Professor Westcott, whose subtle and exquisite scholarship deserves the gratitude of every student of St. John. Of Haupt I know nothing, with the exception of an analysis of the Epistle, which is stamped with the highest praise of so refined and competent a judge as Archdeacon Farrar. But having read this list fairly in past years, I am now content to have before me nothing but a Greek Testament, the Grammars of Winer and Donaldson, the New Testament lexicons of Bretschneider, Grimm, and Mintert, with Tromm's "Concordantia LXX." For, on the whole, I really prefer St. John to his commentators. And I hope I am not ungrateful for help which I have received from them, when I say that I now seem to myself to understand him better without the dissonance of their many voices. "Johannem nisi ex Johanne ipso non intellexeris."

III. It only remains to commend this book, such as it is, not only to theological students, but to general readers, who I hope will not be alarmed by a few Greek words here and there.

I began my fuller study of St. John's Epistle in the noonday of life; I am closing it with the sunset in my eyes. I pray God to sanctify this poor attempt to the edification of souls, and the good of the Church. And I ask all who may find it useful, to offer their intercessions for a blessing upon the book, and upon its author.

WILLIAM DERRY AND RAPHOE.

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THE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN.

BY THE RT. REV. WILLIAM ALEXANDER, D. D., D. C. L.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

1 JOHN v. 21.

AFTER the example of a writer of genius, preachers and essayists for the last forty years have constantly applied—or misapplied—some lines from one of the greatest of Christian poems. Dante writes of St. John—

> "As he, who looks intent,
> And strives with searching ken, how he may see
> The sun in his eclipse, and, through decline
> Of seeing, loseth power of sight: so I
> Gazed on that last resplendence."

The poet meant to be understood of the Apostle's spiritual splendour of soul, of the absorption of his intellect and heart in his conception of the Person of Christ and of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. By these expositors of Dante the image is transferred to the style and structure of his writings. But confusion of thought is not magnificence, and mere obscurity is never sunlike. A blurred sphere and undecided outline is not characteristic of the sun even in eclipse. Dante never intended us to understand that St. John as a writer was distinguished by a beautiful vagueness of sentiment, by bright but tremulously drawn lines of dogmatic creed. It is indeed certain that round St. John himself, at the time when he wrote, there were many minds affected by this vague mysticism. For them, beyond the scanty region of the known, there was a world of darkness whose shadows they desired to penetrate. For them this little island of life was surrounded by waters into whose depths they affected to gaze. They were drawn by a mystic attraction to things which they themselves called the "shadows," the "depths," the "silences." But for St. John these shadows were a negation of the message which he delivered that "God is light, and darkness in Him is none." These silences were the contradiction of the Word who has once for all interpreted God. These depths were "depths of Satan." For the men who were thus enamoured of indefiniteness, of shifting sentiments and flexible creeds, were Gnostic heretics. Now St. John's style, as such, has not the artful variety, the perfect balance in the masses of composition, the finished logical cohesion of the Greek classical writers. Yet it can be loftily or pathetically impressive. It can touch the problems and processes of the moral and spiritual world with a pencil-tip of deathless light, or compress them into symbols which are solemnly or awfully picturesque. Above all St. John has the faculty of enshrining dogma in forms of statement which are firm and precise—accurate enough to be envied by philosophers, subtle enough to defy the passage of heresy through their finely drawn yet powerful lines. Thus in the beginning of his Gospel all false thought upon the Person of Him who is the living theology of His Church is refuted by anticipation—that which in itself or in its certain consequences unhumanises or undeifies the God Man; that which denies the singularity of the One Person who was Incarnate, or the reality and entireness of the manhood of Him who fixed His Tabernacle of humanity in us.

It is therefore a mistake to look upon the First Epistle of St. John as a creedless composite of miscellaneous sweetnesses, a disconnected rhapsody upon philanthropy. And it will be well to enter upon a serious perusal of it, with the conviction that it did not drop from the sky upon an unknown place, at an unknown time, with an unknown purpose. We can arrive at some definite conclusions as to the circumstances from which it arose, and the sphere in which it was written—at least if we are entitled to say that we have done so in the case of almost any other ancient document of the same nature.

Our simplest plan will be, in the first instance, to trace in the briefest outline the career of St. John after the Ascension of our Lord, so far as it can be followed certainly by Scripture, or with the highest probability from early Church history. We shall then be better able to estimate the degree in which the Epistle fits into the framework of local thought and circumstances in which we desire to place it.

Much of this biography can best be drawn out by tracing the contrast between St. John and St. Peter, which is conveyed with such subtle and exquisite beauty in the closing chapter of the fourth Gospel.

The contrast between the two Apostles is one of history and of character.

Historically, the work done by each of them for the Church differs in a remarkable way from the other.

We might have anticipated for one so dear to our Lord a distinguished part in spreading the Gospel among the nations of the world. The tone of thought revealed in parts of his Gospel might even have seemed to indicate a remarkable aptitude for such a task. St. John's peculiar appreciation of the visit of the Greeks to Jesus, and his preservation of words which show such deep insight into Greek religious ideas, would apparently promise a great missionary, at least to men of lofty speculative thought. But in the Acts of the Apostles St. John is first overshadowed, then effaced, by the heroes of the missionary epic, St. Peter and St. Paul. After the close of the Gospels he is mentioned five times only. Once his name occurs in a list of the Apostles. Thrice he passes before us with Peter. Once again (the first and last time when we hear of St. John in personal relation with St. Paul) he appears in the Epistle to the Galatians with two others, James and Cephas, as reputed to be pillars of the Church. But whilst we read in the Acts of his taking a certain part in miracles, in preaching, in confirmation; while his boldness is

acknowledged by adversaries of the faith; not a line of his individual teaching is recorded. He walks in silence by the side of the Apostle who was more fitted to be a missionary pioneer.

With the materials at our command, it is difficult to say how St. John was employed whilst the first great advance of the cross was in progress. We know for certain that he was at Jerusalem during the second visit of St. Paul. But there is no reason for conjecturing that he was in that city when it was visited by St. Paul on his last voyage (A. D. 60); while we shall presently have occasion to show how markedly the Church tradition connects St. John with Ephesus.

We have next to point out that this contrast in the history of the Apostles is the result of a contrast in their characters. This contrast is brought out with a marvellous prophetic symbolism in the miraculous draught of fishes after the Resurrection.

First as regards St. Peter.

"When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea." His was the warm energy, the forward impulse of young life, the free bold plunge of an impetuous and chivalrous nature into the waters which are nations and peoples. *In* he must; *on* he will. The prophecy which follows the thrice renewed restitution of the fallen Apostle is as follows: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee where thou wouldest not. This spake He, signifying by what death He should glorify God, and when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." This, we are told, is obscure; but it is obscure only as to details. To St. Peter it could have conveyed no other impression than that it foretold his martyrdom. "When thou wast young," points to the tract of years up to old age. It has been said that forty is the old age of youth, fifty the youth of old age. But our Lord does not actually define old age by any precise date. He takes what has occurred as a type of Peter's youthfulness of heart and frame—"girding himself," with rapid action, as he had done shortly before; "walking," as he had walked on the white beach of the lake in the early dawn; "whither thou wouldest," as when he had cried with impetuous, half-defiant independence, "I go a-fishing," invited by the auguries of the morning, and of the water. The form of expression seems to indicate that Simon Peter was not to go far into the dark and frozen land; that he was to be growing old, rather than absolutely old. Then should he stretch forth his hands, with the dignified resignation of one who yields manfully to that from which nature would willingly escape. "This spake He," adds the evangelist, "signifying by what death He shall glorify God." What fatal temptation leads so many commentators to minimise such a prediction as this? If the prophecy were the product of a later hand, added after the martyrdom of St. Peter, it certainly would have wanted its present inimitable impress of distance and reserve.

It is in the context of this passage that we read most fully and truly the contrast of our Apostle's nature with that of St. Peter. St. John, as Chrysostom has told us in deathless words, was loftier, saw more deeply, pierced right into and through spiritual truths, was more the lover of Jesus than of Christ, as Peter was more the lover of Christ than of Jesus. Below the different work of the two men, and determining it, was this essential difference of nature, which they carried with them into the region of grace. St. John was not so much the great missionary with his sacred restlessness; not so much the oratorical expositor of prophecy with his pointed proofs of correspondence between prediction and fulfilment, and his passionate declamation driving in the conviction of guilt like a sting that pricked the conscience. He was the theologian; the quiet master of the secrets of the spiritual life; the calm, strong controversialist who excludes error by constructing truth. The work of such a spirit as his was rather like the finest product of venerable and long established Churches. One gentle word of Jesus sums up the biography of long years which apparently were without the crowded vicissitudes to which other Apostles were exposed. If the old Church history is true, St. John was either not called upon to die for Jesus, or escaped from that death by a miracle. That one word of the Lord was to become a sort of motto of St. John. It occurs some twenty-six times in the brief pages of these Epistles. "If I will that he abide"—abide in the bark, in the Church, in one spot, in life, in spiritual communion with Me. It is to be remembered finally, that not only spiritual, but ecclesiastical consolidation is attributed to St. John by the voice of history. He occupied himself with the visitation of his Churches and the development of Episcopacy. So in the sunset of the Apostolic age stands before us the mitred form of John the Divine. Early Christianity had three successive capitals—Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus. Surely, so long as St. John lived, men looked for a Primate of Christendom not at Rome but at Ephesus.

How different were the two deaths! It was as if in His words our Lord allowed His two Apostles to look into a magic glass, wherein one saw dimly the hurrying feet, the prelude to execution which even the saint wills not; the other the calm life, the gathered disciples, the quiet sinking to rest. In the clear obscure of that prophecy we may discern the outline of Peter's cross, the bowed figure of the saintly old man. Let us be thankful that John "tarried." He has left the Churches three pictures that can never fade—in the gospel the picture of Christ, in the Epistles the picture of his own soul, in the Apocalypse the picture of Heaven.

So far we have relied almost exclusively upon indications supplied by Scripture. We now turn to Church history to fill in some particulars of interest.

Ancient tradition unhesitatingly believed that the latter years of St. John's prolonged life were spent in the city of Ephesus, or province of Asia Minor, with the Virgin Mother, the sacred legacy from the cross, under his fostering care for a longer or shorter portion of those years. Manifestly he would not have gone to Ephesus during the lifetime of St. Paul. Various circumstances point to the period of his abode there as beginning a little after the fall of Jerusalem (A. D. 67). He lived on until towards the close of the first century of the Christian era, possibly two years later (A. D. 102). With the date of the Apocalypse we are not directly concerned, though we refer it to a very late period in St.

John's career, believing that the Apostle did not return from Patmos until just after Domitian's death. The date of the Gospel may be placed between A. D. 80 and 90. And the First Epistle accompanied the Gospel, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter.

The Epistle then, like the Gospel, and contemporaneously with it, saw the light in Ephesus, or in its vicinity. This is proved by three pieces of evidence of the most unquestionable solidity.

(1) The opening chapters of the Apocalypse contain an argument which cannot be explained away for the connection of St. John with Asia Minor and with Ephesus. And the argument is independent of the authorship of that wonderful book. Whoever wrote the Book of the Revelation must have felt the most absolute conviction of St. John's abode in Ephesus and temporary exile to Patmos. To have written with a special view of acquiring a hold upon the Churches of Asia Minor, while assuming from the very first as fact what they, more than any other Churches in the world, must have known to be fiction, would have been to invite immediate and contemptuous rejection. The three earliest chapters of the Revelation are unintelligible, except as the real or assumed utterance of a Primate (in later language) of the Churches of Asia Minor. To the inhabitants of the barren and remote isle of Patmos, Rome and Ephesus almost represented the world; their rocky nest among the waters was scarcely visited except as a brief resting-place for those who sailed from one of those great cities to the other, or for occasional traders from Corinth.

(2) The second evidence is the fragment of the Epistle of Irenæus to Florinus preserved in the fifth book of the "Ecclesiastical History" of Eusebius. Irenæus mentions no dim tradition, appeals to no past which was never present. He has but to question his own recollections of Polycarp, whom he remembered in early life. "Where he sat to talk, his way, his manner of life, his personal appearance, how he used to tell of his intimacy with John, and with the others who had seen the Lord." Irenæus elsewhere distinctly says that "John himself issued the Gospel while living at Ephesus in Asia Minor, and that he survived in that city until Trajan's time."

(3) The third great historical evidence which connects St. John with Ephesus is that of Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, who wrote a synodical epistle to Victor and the Roman Church on the Quartodeciman question, toward the close of the second century. Polycrates speaks of the great ashes which sleep in Asia Minor until the Advent of the Lord, when He shall raise up His saints. He proceeds to mention Philip who sleeps in Hierapolis; two of his daughters; a third who takes her rest in Ephesus, and "John moreover, who leaned upon the breast of Jesus, who was a high-priest bearing the radiant plate of gold upon his forehead."

This threefold evidence would seem to render the sojourn of St. John at Ephesus for many years one of the most solidly attested facts of earlier Church history.

It will be necessary for our purpose to sketch the general condition of Ephesus in St. John's time.

A traveller coming from Antioch of Pisidia (as St. Paul did A. D. 54) descended from the mountain chain which separates the Meander from the Cayster. He passed down by a narrow ravine to the "Asian meadow" celebrated by Homer. There, rising from the valley, partly running up the slope of Mount Coressus, and again higher along the shoulder of Mount Prion, the traveller saw the great city of Ephesus towering upon the hills, with widely scattered suburbs. In the first century the population was immense, and included a strange mixture of races and religions. Large numbers of Jews were settled there, and seems to have possessed a full religious organisation under a High-Priest or Chief Rabbi. But the prevailing superstition was the worship of the Ephesian Artemis. The great temple, the priesthood whose chief seems to have enjoyed a royal or quasi-royal rank, the affluence of pilgrims at certain seasons of the year, the industries connected with objects of devotion, supported a swarm of devotees, whose fanaticism was intensified by their material interest in a vast religious establishment. Ephesus boasted of being a theocratic city, the possessor and keeper of a temple glorified by art as well as by devotion. It had a civic calendar marked by a round of splendid festivities associated with the cultus of the goddess. Yet the moral reputation of the city stood at the lowest point, even in the estimation of Greeks. The Greek character was effeminated in Ionia by Asiatic manners, and Ephesus was the most dissolute city of Ionia. Its once superb schools of art became infected by the ostentatious vulgarity of an ever-increasing parvenu opulence. The place was chiefly divided between dissipation and a degrading form of literature. Dancing and music were heard day and night; a protracted revel was visible in the streets. Lascivious romances whose infamy was proverbial were largely sold and passed from hand to hand. Yet there were not a few of a different character. In that divine climate, the very lassitude, which was the reaction from excessive amusement and perpetual sunshine, disposed many minds to seek for refuge in the shadows of a visionary world. Some who had received or inherited Christianity from Aquila and Priscilla, or from St. Paul himself, thirty or forty years before, had contaminated the purity of the faith with inferior elements derived from the contagion of local heresy, or from the infiltration of pagan thought. The Ionian intellect seems to have delighted in imaginative metaphysics; and for minds undisciplined by true logic or the training of severe science imaginative metaphysics is a dangerous form of mental recreation. The adept becomes the slave of his own formulæ, and drifts into partial insanity by a process which seems to himself to be one of indisputable reasoning. Other influences outside Christianity ran in the same direction. Amulets were bought by trembling believers. Astrological calculations were received with the irresistible fascination of terror. Systems of magic, incantations, forms of exorcism, traditions of theosophy, communications with demons—all that we should now sum up under the head of spiritualism—laid their spell upon thousands. No Christian reader of the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles will be inclined to doubt that beneath all this mass of superstition and imposture there lay some dark reality of evil power. At all events the extent of these practices, these "curious arts" in Ephesus at the

time of St. Paul's visit, is clearly proved by the extent of the local literature which spiritualism put forth. The value of the books of magic which were burned by penitents of this class, is estimated by St. Luke at fifty thousand pieces of silver—probably about thirteen hundred and fifty pounds of our money!

Let us now consider what ideas or allusions in the Epistles of St. John coincide with, and fit into, this Ephesian contexture of life thought.

We shall have occasion in the third chapter to refer to forms of Christian heresy or of semi-Christian speculation indisputably pointed to by St. John, and prevalent in Asia Minor when the Apostle wrote. But besides this, several other points of contact with Ephesus can be detected in the Epistles before us. (1) The first Epistle closes with a sharp decisive warning, expressed in a form which could only have been employed when those who were addressed habitually lived in an atmosphere saturated with idolatry, where the social temptations to come to terms with idolatrous practices were powerful and ubiquitous. This was no doubt true of many other places at the time, but it was pre-eminently true of Ephesus. Certain of the Gnostic Christian sects in Ionia held lax views about "eating things sacrificed unto idols," although fornication was a general accompaniment of such a compliance. Two of the angels of the Seven Churches of Asia within the Ephesian group—the angels of Pergamum and of Thyatira—receive special admonition from the Lord upon this subject. These considerations prove that the command, "Children, guard yourselves from the idols," had a very special suitability to the conditions of life in Ephesus. (2) The population of Ephesus was of a very composite kind. Many were attracted to the capital of Ionia by its reputation as the capital of the pleasures of the world. It was also the centre of an enormous trade by land and sea. Ephesus, Alexandria, Antioch, and Corinth were the four cities where at that period all races and all religions of civilised men were most largely represented. Now the First Epistle of St. John has a peculiar breadth in its representation of the purpose of God. Christ is not merely the fulfilment of the hopes of one particular people. The Church is not merely destined to be the home of a handful of spiritual citizens. The Atonement is as wide as the race of man. "He is the propitiation for the whole world;" "we have seen, and bear witness that the Father sent the Son as Saviour of the world." A cosmopolitan population is addressed in a cosmopolitan epistle. (3) We have seen that the gaiety and sunshine of Ephesus was sometimes darkened by the shadows of a world of magic; that for some natures Ionia was a land haunted by spiritual terrors. He must be a hasty student who fails to connect the extraordinary narrative in the nineteenth chapter of the Acts with the ample and awful recognition in the Epistle to the Ephesians of the mysterious conflict in the Christian life against evil intelligences, real, though unseen. The brilliant rationalist may dispose of such things by the convenient and compendious method of a sneer. "Such narratives as that" (of St. Paul's struggle with the exorcists at Ephesus) "are disagreeable little spots in everything that is done by the people. Though we cannot do a thou sandth part of what St. Paul did, we have system of physiology and of medicine ver superior to his." Perhaps he had a system spiritual diagnosis very superior to ours. In th epistle to the Angel of the Church of Thyatir mention is made of "the woman Jezebel, whic calleth herself a prophetess," who led astray th servants of Christ. St. John surely addresse himself to a community where influences pr cisely of this kind exist, and are recognise when he writes,—"Beloved, believe not ever spirit, but try the spirits whether they are God: because many false prophets are gone ou into the world. . . . Every spirit that confesset not Jesus is not of God." The Church Churches, which the First Epistle directly co templates, did not consist of men just converte Its whole language supposes Christians, some whom had grown old and were "fathers" in th faith, while others who were younger enjoyed th privilege of having been born and brought up a Christian atmosphere. They are reminde again and again, with a reiteration which wou be unaccountable if it had no special significanc that the commandment "that which they heard "the word," "the message," is the same whic they had "from the beginning." Now this wi exactly suit the circumstances of a Church lik the Ephesian, to which another Apostle ha originally preached the Gospel many years befor

On the whole, we have in favour of assignin these Epistles to Ionian and Ephesian surroun ings a considerable amount of external evidenc The general characteristics of the First Epist consonant with the view of their origin whic we have advocated are briefly these. (1)It addressed to readers who were encompassed b peculiar temptations to make a compromise wit idolatry. (2) It has an amplitude and generali of tone which befitted one who wrote to Church which embraced members from mar countries, and was thus in contact with men many races and religions. (3) It has a peculia solemnity of reference to the invisible world spiritual evil and to its terrible influence upo the human mind. (4) The Epistle is pervade by a desire to have it recognised that the cree and law of practice which it asserts is absolute one with that which had been proclaimed b earlier heralds of the cross to the same con munity. Every one of these characteristics consistent with the destination of the Epistle fo the Christians of Ephesus in the first instanc Its polemical element, which we are presenti to discuss, adds to an accumulation of coinc dences which no ingenuity can volatilise awa The Epistle meets Ephesian circumstances; also strikes at Ionian heresies.

Aïa-so-Louk, the modern name of Ephesu appears to be derived from two Greek word which speak of St. John the Divine, the theolo gian of the Church. As the memory of th Apostle haunts the city where he so long live even in its fall and long decay under its Turkis conquerors,—and the fatal spread of the malar from the marshes of the Cayster—so a memor of the place seems to rest in turn upon th Epistle, and we read it more satisfactorily whi we assign to it the origin attributed to it b Christian antiquity, and keep that memory befor our minds.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONNECTION OF THE EPISTLE WITH THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

1 John i. 4.

From the wholesale burning of books at Ephesus, as a consequence of awakened convictions, the most pregnant of all commentators upon the New Testament has drawn a powerful lesson. "True religion," says the writer, "puts bad books out of the way." Ephesus at great expense burnt curious and evil volumes, and the "word of God grew and prevailed." And he proceeds to show how just in the very matter where Ephesus had manifested such costly penitence, she was rewarded by being made a sort of depository of the most precious books which ever came from human pens. St. Paul addresses a letter to the Ephesians. Timothy was Bishop of Ephesus when the two great pastoral Epistles were sent to him. All St. John's writings point to the same place. The Gospel and Epistles were written there, or with primary reference to the capital of Ionia. The Apocalypse was in all probability first read at Ephesus.

Of this group of Ephesian books we select two of primary importance—the Gospel and First Epistle of St. John. Let us dwell upon the close and thorough connection of the two documents, upon the interpretation of the Epistle by the Gospel, by whatever name we may prefer to designate the connection.

It is said indeed by a very high authority, that while the "whole Epistle is permeated with thoughts of the person and work of Christ," yet "direct references to facts of the Gospel are singularly rare." More particularly it is stated that "we find here none of the foundation and (so to speak) crucial events summarised in the earliest Christian confession as we still find them in the Apostle's creed." And among these events are placed, "the Birth of the Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Session, the Coming to Judgment."

To us there seems to be some exaggeration in this way of putting the matter. A writing which accompanied a sacred history, and which was a spiritual comment upon that very history, was not likely to repeat the history upon which it commented, just in the same shape. Surely the Birth is the necessary condition of having come in the flesh. The incident of the piercing of the side, and the water and blood which flowed from it, is distinctly spoken of; and in that the Crucifixion is implied. Shrinking with shame from Jesus at His Coming, which is spoken of in another verse, has no meaning unless that Coming be to Judgment. The sixth chapter is, if we may so say, the section of "the Blood," in the fourth Gospel. That section standing in the Gospel, standing in the great Sacrament of the Church, standing in the perpetually cleansing and purifying efficacy of the Atonement—ever present as a witness, which becomes personal, because identified with a Living Personality—finds its echo and counterpart in the Epistle towards the beginning and near the close.

We now turn to that which is the most conclusive evidence of connection between two documents—one historical, the other moral and spiritual—of which literary composition is capable. Let us suppose that a writer of profound thoughtfulness has finished, after long elaboration, the historical record of an eventful and many-sided life—a life of supreme importance to a nation, or to the general thought and progress of humanity. The book is sent to the representatives of some community or school. The ideas which its subject has uttered to the world, from their breadth and from the occasional obscurity of expression incident to all great spiritual utterances, need some elucidation. The plan is really exhaustive, and combines the facts of the life with a full insight into their relations; but it may easily be missed by any but thoughtful readers. The author will accompany this main work by something which in modern language we might call an introduction, or appendix, or advertisement, or explanatory pamphlet, or encyclical letter. Now the ancient form of literary composition rendered books packed with thought doubly difficult both to read and write; for they did not admit foot-notes, or marginal analyses, or abstracts. St. John then practically says, first to his readers in Asia Minor, then to the Church for ever—"With this life of Jesus I send you not only thoughts for your spiritual benefit, moulded round His teaching, but something more; I send you an abstract, a compendium of contents at the beginning of this letter; I also send you at its close a key to the plan on which my Gospel is conceived." And surely a careful reader of the Gospel at its first publication would have desired assistance exactly of this nature. He would have wished to have a synopsis of contents, short but comprehensive, and a synoptical view of the author's plan—of the idea which guided him in his choice of incidents so momentous and of teaching so varied.

We have in the First Epistle two synopses of the Gospel which correspond with a perfect precision to these claims. We have: (1) a synopsis of the contents of the Gospel; (2) a synoptical view of the conception from which it was written.

1. We find in the Epistle at the very outset a synopsis of the contents of the Gospel.

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we gazed upon, and our hands handled—I speak concerning the Word who is the Life—that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you also."

What are the contents of the Gospel? (1) A lofty and dogmatic proœmium, which tells us of "the Word who was in the beginning with God—in Whom was life." (2) Discourses and utterances, sometimes running on through pages, sometimes brief and broken. (3) Works, sometimes miraculous, sometimes wrought into the common contexture of human life—looks, influences, seen by the very eyes of St. John and others, gazed upon with ever deepening joy and wonder. (4) Incidents which proved that all this issued from One who was intensely human; that it was as real as life and humanity—historical, not visionary; the doing and the effluence of a Manhood which could be, and which was, grasped by human hands.

Such is a synopsis of the Gospel precisely as it is given in the beginning of the First Epistle. (1) The Epistle mentions first, "that which was from the beginning." There is the compendium of the proœmium of the Gospel. (2) One of the

most important constituent parts of the Gospel is to be found in its ample preservation of dialogues, in which the Saviour is one interlocutor; of monologues spoken to the hushed hearts of the disciples, or to the listening Heart of the Father, yet not in tones so low that their love did not find it audible. This element of the narrative is summed up by the writer of the Epistle in two words—"That which we heard." (3) The works of benevolence or power, the doings and sufferings—the pathos or joy which springs up from them in the souls of the disciples—occupy a large portion of the Gospel. All these come under the heading, "that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we gazed upon," with one unbroken gaze of wonder as so beautiful, and of awe as so divine. (4) The assertion of the reality of the Manhood of Him who was yet the Life manifested—a reality through all His words, works, sufferings—finds its strong, bold summary in this compendium of the contents of the Gospel, "and our hands have handled." Nay, a still shorter compendium follows: (1) The Life with the Father. (2) The Life manifested.

2. But we have more than a synopsis which embraces the contents of the Gospel at the beginning of the Epistle. We have towards its close a second synopsis of the whole framework of the Gospel; not now the theory of the Person of Christ, which in such a life was necessarily placed at its beginning, but of the human conception which pervaded the Evangelist's composition.

The second synopsis, not of the contents of the Gospel, but of the aim and conception which it assumed in the form into which it was moulded by St. John, is given by the Epistle with a fulness which omits scarcely a paragraph of the Gospel. In the space of six verses of the fifth chapter the word witness, as verb or substantive, is repeated ten times. The simplicity of St. John's artless rhetoric can make no more emphatic claim on our attention. The Gospel is indeed a tissue woven out of many lines of evidence human and divine. Compress its purpose into one single word. No doubt it is supremely the Gospel of the Divinity of Jesus. But, next to that, it may best be defined as the Gospel of Witness. These witnesses we may take in the order of the Epistle. St. John feels that his Gospel is more than a book; it is a past made everlastingly present. Such as the great Life was in history, so it stands for ever. Jesus *is* "the propitiation," "*is* righteous," "*is* here." So the great influences round His Person, the manifold witnesses of His Life, stand witnessing for ever in the Gospel and in the Church. What are these? (1) The Spirit is ever witnessing. So our Lord in the Gospel—"when the Comforter is come, He shall witness of Me." No one can doubt that the Spirit is one pre-eminent subject of the Gospel. Indeed, teaching about Him, above all as the witness to Christ, occupies three unbroken chapters in one place. (2) The water is ever witnessing. So long as St. John's Gospel lasts, and permeates the Church with its influence, the water must so testify. There is scarcely a paragraph of it where water is not; almost always with some relation to Christ. The witness of the Baptist is, "I baptize with water." The Jordan itself bears witness that all its waters cannot give that which He bestows who is "preferred before" John. Is not the water of Cana that was made wine a witness to His glory? The birth of "water and of the Spirit," is another witness. And so in the Gospel, section after section. The water of Jacob's well; the water of the pool of Bethesda; the waters of the sea of Galilee, with their stormy waves upon which He walked; the water outpoured at the feast of tabernacles, with its application to the river of living water; the water of Siloam; the water poured into the basin, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet; the water which, with the blood, streamed from the riven side upon the cross; the water of the sea of Galilee in its gentler mood, when Jesus showed Himself on its beach to the seven; as long as all this is recorded in the Gospel, as long as the sacrament of Baptism, with its visible water and its invisible grace working in the regenerate, abides among the faithful;—so long is the water ever witnessing. (3) The Blood is ever "witnessing." Expiation once for all; purification continually from the blood outpoured; drinking the blood of the Son of Man by participation in the sacrament of His love, with the grace and strength that it gives day by day to innumerable souls; the Gospel concentrated into that great sacrifice; the Church's gifts of benediction summarised in the unspeakable Gift; this is the unceasing witness of the Blood. (4) "The witness of men" fills the Gospel from beginning to end. The glorious series of confessions wrung from willing and unwilling hearts form the points of division round which the whole narrative may be grouped. Let us think of all those attestations which lie between the Baptist's precious testimony, with the sweet yet fainter utterances of Andrew, Philip, Nathanael, and the perfect creed of Christendom condensed into the burning words of Thomas—"my Lord and my God." What a range of feeling and faith; what a variety of attestation coming from human souls, sometimes wrung from them half unwillingly, sometimes uttered at crisis-moments with an impulse that could not be resisted! The witness of men in the Gospel, and the assurance of one testimony that was to be given by the Apostles individually and collectively, besides the evidences already named, include the following—the witness of Nicodemus, of the Samaritan woman, of the Samaritans, of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, of Simon Peter, of the officers of the Jewish authorities, of the blind man, of Pilate. (5) The "witness of God" occupies also a great position in the fourth Gospel. That witness may be said to be given in five forms: the witness of the Father, of Christ Himself, of the Holy Spirit, of Scripture, of miracles. This great cloud of witnesses, human and divine, finds its appropriate completion in another subjective witness. The whole body of evidence passes from the region of the intellectual to that of the moral and spiritual life. The evidence acquires that evidentness which is to all our knowledge what the sap is to the tree. The faithful carries it in his heart; it goes about with him, rests with him day and night, is close to him in life and death. He, the principle of whose being is belief ever going out of itself and resting its acts of faith on the Son of God, has all that manifold witness in him.

It would be easy to enlarge upon the verbal connection between the Epistle before us and the Gospel which it accompanied. We might draw out (as has often been done) a list of quotations from the Gospel, a whole common treasury of

mystic language; but we prefer to leave an undivided impression upon the mind. A document which gives us a synopsis of the contents of another document at the beginning, and a synoptical analysis of its predominant idea at the close, covering the entire work, and capable of absorbing every part of it (except some necessary adjuncts of a rich and crowded narrative), has a connection with it which is vital and integral. The Epistle is at once an abstract of the contents of the Gospel, and a key to its purport. To the Gospel, at least to it and the Epistle considered as integrally one, the Apostle refers when he says: "these things write we unto you."

St. John had asserted that one end of his declaration was to make his readers hold fast "fellowship with us," *i. e.*, with the Church as the Apostolic Church; aye, and that fellowship of ours is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ;" "and these things," he continues (with special reference to his Gospel, as spoken of in his opening words), "we write unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled."

There is as truly a joy as a "patience and comfort of the Scriptures." The Apostle here speaks of "your joy," but that implies his also.

All great literature, like all else that is beautiful, is a "joy for ever." To the true student his books are this. But this is so only with a few really great books. We are not speaking of works of exact science. Butler, Pascal, Bacon, Shakespeare, Homer, Scott, theirs is work of which congenial spirits never grow quite tired. But to be capable of giving out joy, books must have been written with it. The Scotch poet tells us that no poet ever found the Muse until he had learned to walk beside the brook, and "to think long." That which is not thought over with pleasure; that which, as it gradually rises before the author in its unity, does not fill him with delight; will never permanently give pleasure to readers. He must know joy before he can say—"these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

The book that is to give joy must be a part of a man's self. That is just what most books are not. They are laborious, diligent, useful perhaps; they are not interesting or delightful. How touching it is, when the poor old stiff hand must write, and the overworked brain think, for bread! Is there anything so pathetic in literature as Scott setting his back bravely to the wall, and forcing from his imagination the reluctant creations which used to issue with such splendid profusion from its haunted chambers?

Of the conditions under which an inspired writer pursued his labours we know but little. But some conditions are apparent in the books of St. John with which we are now concerned. The fourth Gospel is a book written without *arrière pensée*, without literary conceit, without the paralysing dread of criticism. What verdict the polished society of Ephesus would pronounce; what sneers would circulate in philosophic quarters; what the numerous heretics would murmur in their conventicles; what critics within the Church might venture to whisper, missing perhaps favourite thoughts and catch-words; St. John cared no more than if he were dead. He communed with the memories of the past; he listened for the music of the Voice which had been the teacher of his life. To be faithful to these memories, to recall these words, to be true to Jesus, was his one aim. No one can doubt that the Gospel was written with a full delight. No one who is capable of feeling ever has doubted that it was written as if with "a feather dropped from an angel's wing"; that without aiming at anything but truth, it attains in parts at least a transcendent beauty. At the close of the proœmium, after the completest theological formula which the Church has ever possessed—the still, even pressure of a tide of thought—we have a parenthetic sentence, like the splendid unexpected rush and swell of a sudden wave ("we beheld the glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father"); then after the parenthesis a soft and murmuring fall of the whole great tide ("full of grace and truth"). Can we suppose that the Apostle hung over his sentence with literary zest? The number of writers is small who can give us an everlasting truth by a single word, a single pencil touch; who, having their mind loaded with thought, are wise enough to keep that strong and eloquent silence which is the prerogative only of the highest genius. St. John gives us one of these everlasting pictures, of these inexhaustible symbols, in three little words—"He then having received the sop, went immediately out, and *it was night*." Do we suppose that he admired the perfect effect of that powerful self-restraint? Just before the crucifixion he writes—"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crowns of thorns, and the purple robe, and Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!" The pathos, the majesty, the royalty of sorrow, the admiration and pity of Pilate, have been for centuries the inspiration of Christian art. Did St. John congratulate himself upon the image of sorrow and of beauty which stands for ever in these lines? With St. John as a writer it is as with St. John delineated in the fresco at Padua by the genius of Giotto. The form of the ascending saint is made visible through a reticulation of rays of light in colours as splendid as ever came from mortal pencil; but the rays issue entirely from the Saviour, whose face and form are full before him.

The feeling of the Church has always been that the Gospel of St. John was a solemn work of faith and prayer. The oldest extant fragment upon the canon of the New Testament tells us that the Gospel was undertaken after earnest invitations from the brethren and the bishops, with solemn united fasting; not without special revelation to Andrew the Apostle that John was to do the work. A later and much less important document, connected in its origin with Patmos, embodies one beautiful legend about the composition of the Gospel. It tells how the Apostle was about to leave Patmos for Ephesus; how the Christians of the island besought him to leave in writing an account of the Incarnation, and mysterious life of the Son of God; how St. John and his chosen friends went forth from the haunts of men about a mile, and halted in a quiet spot called the gorge of Rest, and then ascended the mountain which overhung it. There they remained three days. "Then," writes Prochorus, "he ordered me to go down to the town for paper and ink. And after two days I found him standing rapt in prayer. Said he to me—'take the ink and paper, and stand on my right hand.' And I did so. And there was a great lightning and thunder, so that the mountain shook. And I fell on the ground as if dead. Whereupon John stretched forth his hand and took hold of me, and said—'stand up at this spot at my right hand.'

After which he prayed again, and after his prayer said unto me—'son Prochorus, what thou hearest from my mouth, write upon the sheets.' And having opened his mouth as he was standing praying, and looking up to heaven, he began to say—'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' And so following on, he spake in order, standing as he was, and I wrote sitting."

True instinct which tells us that the Gospel of St. John was the fruit of prayer as well as of memory; that it was thought out in some valley of rest, some hush among the hills; that it came from a solemn joy which it breathed forth upon others! "These things write I unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled." Generation after generation it has been so. In the numbers numberless of the Redeemed, there can be very few who have not been brightened by the joy of that book. Still, at one funeral after another, hearts are soothed by the word in it which says—"I am the Resurrection and the Life." Still the sorrowful and the dying ask to hear again and again—"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." A brave young officer sent to the war in Africa, from a regiment at home, where he had caused grief by his extravagance, penitent and dying in his tent, during the fatal day of Isandula, scrawled in pencil—"Dying, dear father and mother—happy—for Jesus says, 'He that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'" Our English Communion Office, with its divine beauty, is a texture shot through and through with golden threads from the discourse at Capernaum. Still are the disciples glad when they see the Lord in that record. It is the book of the church's smiles; it is the gladness of the saints; it is the purest fountain of joy in all the literature of earth.

CHAPTER III.

THE POLEMICAL ELEMENT IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

1 John iv. 2, 3.

A discussion (however far from technical completeness) of the polemical element in St. John's Epistle, probably seems likely to be destitute of interest or of instruction, except to ecclesiastical or philosophical antiquarians. Those who believe the Epistle to be a divine book must, however, take a different view of the matter. St. John was not merely dealing with forms of human error which were local and fortuitous. In refuting them he was enunciating principles of universal import, of almost illimitable application. Let us pass by those obscure sects, those subtle curiosities of error, which the diligence of minute research has excavated from the masses of erudition under which they have been buried; which theologians, like other antiquarians, have sometimes labelled with names at once uncouth and imaginative. Let us fix our attention upon such broad and well-defined features of heresy as credible witnesses have indelibly fixed upon the contemporaneous heretical thought of Asia Minor; and we shall see not only a great precision in St. John's words, but a radiant image of truth, which is equally adapted to enlighten us in the peculiar dangers of our age.

Controversy is the condition under which all truth must be held, which is not in necessary subject-matter—which is not either mathematical or physical. In the case of the second, controversy is active, until the fact of the physical law is established beyond the possibility of rational discussion; until self-consistent thought can only think upon the postulate of its admission. Now in these departments all the argument is on one side. We are not in a state of suspended speculation, leaning neither to affirmation nor denial, which is doubt. We are not in the position of inclining either to one side or the other, by an almost impalpable overplus of evidence, which is suspicion; or by those additions to this slender stock which convert suspicion into opinion. We are not merely yielding a strong adhesion to one side, while we must yet admit, to ourselves at least, that our knowledge is not perfect, nor absolutely manifest—which is the mental and moral position of belief. In necessary subject-matter, we know and see with that perfect intellectual vision for which controversy is impossible.

The region of belief must therefore, in our present condition, be a region from which controversy cannot be excluded.

Religious controversialists may be divided into three classes, for each of which we may find an emblem in the animal creation. The first are the nuisances, at times the numerous nuisances, of Churches. These controversialists delight in showing that the convictions of persons whom they happen to dislike, can, more or less plausibly, be pressed to unpopular conclusions. They are incessant fault-finders. Some of them, if they had an opportunity, might delight in finding the sun guilty in his daily worship of the many-coloured ritualism of the western clouds. Controversialists of this class, if minute, are venomous, and capable of inflicting a degree of pain quite out of proportion to their strength. Their emblem may be found somewhere in the range of "every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." The second class of controversialists is of a much higher nature. Their emblem is the hawk, with his bright eye, with the forward throw of his pinions, his rushing flight along the woodland skirt, his unerring stroke. Such hawks of the Churches, whose delight is in pouncing upon fallacies, fulfil an important function. They rid us of tribes of mischievous winged errors. The third class of controversialists is that which embraces St. John supremely—such minds also as Augustine's in his loftiest and most inspired moments, such as those which have endowed the Church with the Nicene Creed. Of such the eagle is the emblem. Over the grosser atmosphere of earthly anger or imperfect motives, over the clouds of error, poised in the light of the True Sun, with the eagle's upward wing and the eagle's sunward eye, St. John looks upon the truth. He is indeed the eagle of the four Evangelists, the eagle of God. If the eagle could speak with our language, his style would have something of the purity of the sky and of the brightness of the light. He would warn his nestlings against losing their way in the banks of clouds that lie below him so far. At times he might show that there was a danger or an error whose position he might indicate by the sweep of his wing, or by descending for a moment to strike.

There are then polemics in the Epistle and in the Gospel of St. John. But we refuse to hunt

down some obscure heresy in every sentence. It will be enough to indicate the master heresy of Asia Minor, to which St. John undoubtedly refers, with its intellectual and moral perils. In so doing we shall find the very truth which our own generation especially needs.

The prophetic words addressed by St. Paul to the Church of Ephesus thirty years before the date of this Epistle had found only too complete a fulfilment. "From among their own selves," at Ephesus in particular, through the Churches of Asia Minor in general, men had arisen "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them." The prediction began to justify itself when Timothy was Bishop of Ephesus only five or six years later. A few significant words in the First Epistle to Timothy let us see the heretical influences that were at work. St. Paul speaks with the solemnity of a closing charge when he warns Timothy against what were once "profane babblings," and "antitheses of the Gnosis which is falsely so called." In an earlier portion of the same Epistle the young bishop is exhorted to charge certain men not to teach a "different doctrine," neither to give "heed to myths and genealogies," out of whose endless mazes no intellect entangled in them can ever find its way. Those commentators put us on a false scent who would have us look after Judaising error, Jewish "stemmata." The reference is not to Judaistic ritualism, but to semi-Pagan philosophical speculation. The "genealogies" are systems of Divine potencies which the Gnostics (and probably some Jewish Rabbis of Gnosticising tendency) called "æons," and so the earliest Christian writers understood the word.

Now without entering into the details of Gnosticism, this may be said of its general method and purpose. It aspired at once to accept and to transform the Christian creed; to elevate its faith into a philosophy, a knowledge—and then to make this knowledge cashier and supersede faith, love, holiness, redemption itself.

This system was strangely eclectic, and amalgamated certain elements not only of Greek and Egyptian, but of Persian and Indian, Pantheistic thought. It was infected throughout with dualism and doketism. Dualism held that all good and evil in the universe proceeded from two first principles, good and evil. Matter was the power of evil whose home is in the region of darkness. Minds which started from this fundamental view could only accept the Incarnation provisionally and with reserve, and must at once proceed to explain it away. "The Word was made flesh;" but the Word of God, the True Light, could not be personally united to an actual material system called a human body, plunged in the world of matter, darkened and contaminated by its immersion. The human flesh in which Jesus appeared to be seen was fictitious. Redemption was a drama with a shadow for its hero. The phantom of a Redeemer was nailed to the phantom of a cross. Philosophical dualism logically became theological doketism. Doketism logically evaporated dogmas, sacraments, duties, redemption.

It may be objected that this doketism has been a mere temporary and local aberration of the human intellect; a metaphysical curiosity, with no real roots in human nature. If so, its refutation is an obsolete piece of an obsolete controversy; and the Epistle in some of its most vital portions is a dead letter.

Now of course literal doketism is past and gone, dead and buried. The progress of the human mind, the slow and resistless influence of the logic of common sense, the wholesome influence of the sciences of observation in correcting visionary metaphysics, have swept away æons, emanations, dualism, and the rest. But a subtler, and to modern minds infinitely more attractive, doketism is round us, and accepted, as far as words go, with a passionate enthusiasm.

What is this doketism?

Let us refer to the history and to the language of a mind of singular subtlety and power.

In George Eliot's early career she was induced to prepare for the press a translation of Strauss's mythical explanation of the life of Jesus. It is no disrespect to so great a memory to say, that at that period of her career, at least, Miss Evans must have been unequal to grapple with such a work, if she desired to do so from a Christian point of view. She had not apparently studied the history or the structure of the Gospels. What she knew of their meaning she had imbibed from an antiquated and unscientific school of theologians. The faith of a sciolist engaged in a struggle for its life with the fatal strength of a critical giant instructed in the negative lore of all ages, and sharpened by hatred of the Christian religion, met with the result which was to be expected. Her faith expired, not without some painful throes. She fell a victim to the fallacy of youthful conceit—I cannot answer this or that objection, therefore it is unanswerable. She wrote at first that she was "Strauss-sick." It made her ill to dissect the beautiful story of the crucifixion. She took to herself a consolation singular in the circumstances. The sight of an ivory crucifix, and of a pathetic picture of the Passion, made her capable of enduring the first shock of the loss which her heart had sustained. That is, she found comfort in looking at tangible reminders of a scene which had ceased to be an historical reality, of a Sufferer who had faded from a living Redeemer into the spectre of a visionary past. After a time, however, she feels able to propose to herself and others "a new starting point. We can never have a satisfactory basis for the history of the man Jesus, but that negation does not affect the Idea of the Christ, either in its historical influence, or its great symbolic meanings." Yes! a Christ who has no history, of whom we do not possess one undoubted word, of whom we know, and can know, nothing; who has no flesh of fact, no blood of life; an idea, not a man; this is the Christ of modern doketism. The method of this widely diffused school is to separate the sentiments of admiration which the history inspires from the history itself; to sever the ideas of the faith from the facts of the faith, and then to present the ideas thus surviving the dissolvents of criticism as at once the refutation of the facts and the substitute for them.

This may be pretty writing, though false and illogical writing is rarely even that; but a little consideration will show that this new starting point is not even a plausible substitute for the old belief.

(1) We question simple believers in the first instance. We ask them what is the great religious power in Christianity for themselves, and for others like-minded? What makes people pure, good, self-denying, nurses of the sick, missionaries to the heathen? They will tell us that

the power lies, not in any doketic idea of a Christ-life which was never lived, but in "the conviction that that idea was really and perfectly incarnated in an actual career," of which we have a record literally and absolutely true in all essential particulars. When we turn to the past of the Church, we find that as it is with these persons, so it has ever been with the saints. For instance, we hear St. Paul speaking of his whole life. He tells us that "whether we went out of ourselves it was unto God, or whether we be sober, it is for you;" that is to say, such a life has two aspects, one God-ward, one man-ward. Its God-ward aspect is a noble insanity, its man-ward aspect a noble sanity; the first with its beautiful enthusiasm, the second with its saving common sense. What is the source of this? "For the love of Christ constraineth us,"—forces the whole stream of life to flow between these two banks without the deviations of selfishness—"because we thus judge that He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but to Him who for their sakes died and rose again." It was the real unselfish life of a real unselfish Man which made such a life as that of St. Paul a possibility. Or we may think of the first beginning of St. John's love for our Lord. When he turned to the past, he remembered one bright day about ten in the morning, when the real Jesus turned to him and to another with a real look, and said with a human voice, "What seek ye?" and then—"Come, and ye shall see." It was the real living love that won the only kind of love which could enable the old man to write as he did in this Epistle so many years afterwards—"we love because He first loved us."

(2) We address ourselves next to those who look at Christ simply as an ideal. We venture to put to them a definite question. You believe that there is no solid basis for the history of the man Jesus; that his life as an historical reality is lost in a dazzling mist of legend and adoration. Has the idea of a Christ, divorced from all accompaniment of authentic fact, unfixed in a definite historical form, uncontinued in an abiding existence, been operative or inoperative for yourselves? Has it been a practical power and motive, or an occasional and evanescent sentiment? There can be no doubt about the answer. It is not a make-belief, but a belief, which gives purity and power. It is not an ideal of Jesus, but the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth us from all sin.

There are other lessons of abiding practical importance to be drawn from the polemical elements in St. John's Epistle. These, however, we can only briefly indicate, because we wish to leave an undivided impression of that which seems to be St. John's chief object controversially. There were Gnostics in Asia Minor for whom the mere knowledge of certain supposed spiritual truths was all in all, as there are those amongst ourselves who care for little but what are called clear views. For such St. John writes—"and hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." There were heretics in and about Ephesus who conceived that the special favour of God, or the illumination which they obtained by junction with the sect to which they had "gone out" from the Church, neutralised the poison of sin, and made innocuous for them that which might have been deadly for others. They suffered, as they thought, no more contamination by it, than "gold by lying upon the dunghill" (to use a favourite metaphor of their own). St. John utters a principle which cleaves through every fallacy in every age which says or insinuates that sin subjective can in any case cease to be sin objective. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law. All unrighteousness is sin." Possibly within the Church itself, certainly among the sectarians without it, there was a disposition to lessen the glory of the Incarnation, by looking upon the Atonement as narrow and partial in its aim. St. John's unhesitating statement is that "He is the propitiation for the whole world." Thus does the eagle of the Church ever fix his gaze above the clouds of error, upon the Sun of universal truth.

Above all, over and through his negation of temporary and local errors about the person of Christ, St. John leads the Church in all ages to the true Christ. Cerinthus, in a form which seems to us eccentric and revolting, proclaimed a Jesus not born of a virgin, temporarily endowed with the sovereign power of the Christ, deprived of Him before His passion and resurrection, while the Christ remained spiritual and impassible. He taught a commonplace Jesus. At the beginning of his Epistle and Gospel John "wings his soul, and leads his readers onward and upward." He is like a man who stands upon the shore and looks upon town and coast and bay. Then another takes the man off with him far to sea. All that he surveyed before is now lost to him; and as he gazes ever oceanward, he does not stay his eye upon any intervening object, but lets it range over the infinite azure. So the Apostle leads us above all creation, and transports us to the ages before it; makes us raise our eyes, not suffering us to find any end in the stretch above, since end is none. That "in the beginning," "from the beginning," of the Epistle and Gospel, includes nothing short of the eternal God. The doketics of many shades proclaimed an ideological, a misty Christ. "Every spirit which confesseth Jesus Christ as in flesh having come is of God, and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus, is not of God." "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, they who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh." Such a Christ of mist as these words warn us against is again shaped by more powerful intellects and touched with tenderer lights. But the shadowy Christ of George Eliot and of Mill is equally arraigned by the hand of St. John. Each believer may well think within himself—I must die, and that, it may be, very soon; I must be alone with God, and my own soul; with that which I am and have been; with my memories, and with my sins. In that hour the weird desolate language of the Psalmist will find its realisation: "Lover and friend hast thou put from me, and mine acquaintance are—darkness." Then we want, and then we may find, a real Saviour. Then we shall know that if we have only a doketic Christ, we shall indeed be alone—for "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

NOTE.

THE two following extracts in addition to what has been already said in this discourse will supply the reader with that which it is most necessary

for him to know upon the heresies of Asia Minor. 1. "Two principal heresies upon the nature of Christ then prevailed, each diametrically opposite to the other, as well as to the Catholic faith. One was the heresy of the Doketæ, which destroyed the verity of the Human Nature in Christ; the other was the heresy of the Ebionites, who denied the Divine Nature, and the eternal Generation, and inclined to press the observation of the ceremonial law. Ancient writers allow these as heresies of the first century; all admit that they were powerful in the age of Ignatius. Hence Theodoret ("Procem.") divided the books of these heresies into two categories. In the first he included those who put forward the idea of a second Creator, and asserted that the Lord had appeared illusively. In the second he placed those who maintained that the Lord was merely a man. Of the first Jerome observed ('Adv. Lucifer.,' xxiii.) 'that while the Apostles yet remained upon the earth, while the blood of Christ was almost smoking upon the sod of Judea, some asserted that the body of the Lord was a phantom.' Of the second the same writer remarked that 'St. John, at the invitation of the bishops of Asia Minor, wrote his Gospel against Cerinthus and other heretics—and especially against the dogma of the Ebionites then rising into existence, who asserted that Christ did not exist before Mary.' Epiphanius notes that these heresies were mainly of Asia Minor (*φημὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ*), 'Hæres.,' lvi." (Pearson, "Vindic. Ignat.," ii., c. i., p. 351).

2. "Two of these sects or schools are very ancient, and seem to have been referred to by St. John. The first is that of the Naassenians or Ophites. The antiquity of this sect is guaranteed to us by the author of the 'Philosophumena,' who represents them as the real founders of Gnosticism. 'Later,' he says, 'they were called Gnostics, pretending that they only knew the depths.' (To this allusion is made in Apoc. ii. 24, which would identify these sectaries with the Balaamites and Nicolaitans.) The second of these great heresies of Asia Minor is the doketic. The publication of the 'Philosophumena' has furnished us with more precise information about their tenets. We need not say much about the Divine emanation—the fall of souls into matter, their corporeal captivity, their final rehabilitation (these are merely the ordinary Gnostic ideas). But we may follow what they assert about the Saviour and His manifestation in the world. They admit in Him the only Son of the Father (*ὁ μονογενὴς παῖς ἄνωθεν αἰώνιος*), who descended to the region of shadows and the Virgin's womb, where He clothed Himself in a gross, human material body. But this was a vestment of no integrally personal and permanent character; it was, indeed, a sort of masquerade, an artifice or fiction imagined to deceive the prince of this world. The Saviour at His baptism received a second birth, and clad himself with a subtler texture of body, formed in the bosom of the waters—if that can be termed a body which was but a fantastic texture woven or framed upon the model of His earthly body. During the hours of the Passion, the flesh formed in Mary's womb, and it alone, was nailed to the tree. The great Archon or Demiurgus, whose work that flesh was, was played upon and deceived, in pouring His wrath only upon the work of His hands. For the soul, or spiritual substance, which had been wounded in the flesh of the Saviour, extricated itself from this as from an unmeet and hateful vesture; and itself contributing to nailing it to the cross, triumphed by that very flesh over principalities and powers. It did not, however, remain naked, but clad in the subtler form which it had assumed in its baptismal second birth ('Philosoph.,' viii. 10). What is remarkable in this theory is, first, the admission of the reality of the terrestrial body, formed in the Virgin's womb, and then nailed to the cross. The negation is only of the real and permanent union of this body with the heavenly spirit which inhabits it. We shall further note the importance which it attaches to the Saviour's baptism, and the part played by water, as if an intermediate element between flesh and spirit. This may bear upon 1 John v. 8."

[This passage is from a "Dissertation—les Trois Témoins Célestes," in a collection of religious and literary papers by French scholars (Tom. ii., Sept., 1868, pp. 388-392). The author, since deceased, was the Abbé Le Hir, M. Renan's instructor in Hebrew at Saint Sulpice, and pronounced by his pupil one of the first of European Hebraists and scientific theologians.]

CHAPTER IV.

THE IMAGE OF ST. JOHN'S SOUL IN HIS EPISTLE.

1 John v. 18-20.

Much has been said in the last few years of a series of subtle and delicate experiments in sound. Means have been devised of doing for the ear something analogous to that which glasses do for another sense, and of making the results palpable by a system of notation. We are told that every tree, for instance, according to its foliage, its position, and the direction of the winds, has its own prevalent note or tone, which can be marked down, and its timbre made first visible by this notation, and then audible. So is it with the souls of the saints of God, and chiefly of the Apostles. Each has its own note, the prevalent key on which its peculiar music is set. Or we may employ another image which possibly has St. John's own authority. Each of the Twelve has his own emblem among the twelve vast and precious foundation stones which underlie the whole wall of the Church. St. John may thus differ from St. Peter, as the sapphire's azure differs from the jasper's strength and radiance. Each is beautiful, but with its own characteristic tint of beauty.

We propose to examine the peculiarities of St. John's spiritual nature which may be traced in this Epistle. We try to form some conception of the key on which it is set, of the colour which it reflects in the light of heaven, of the image of a soul which it presents. In this attempt we cannot be deceived. St. John is so transparently honest; he takes such a deep, almost terribly severe view of truth. We find him using an expression about truth which is perhaps without a parallel in any other writer. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie, and are not doing the truth." The truth then for him is something co-extensive with our whole nature and whole life. Truth is not only to be spoken—

that is but a fragmentary manifestation of it. It is to be done. It would have been for him the darkest of lies to have put forth a spiritual commentary on his Gospel which was not realised in himself. In the Epistle, no doubt, he uses the first person singular sparingly, modestly including himself in the simple "we" of Christian association. Yet we are as sure of the perfect accuracy of the picture of his soul, of the music in his heart which he makes visible and audible in his letter, as we are that he heard the voice of many waters, and saw the city coming down from God out of heaven; as sure, as if at the close of this fifth chapter he had added with the triumphant emphasis of truth, in his simple and stately way, "I John heard these things and saw them." He closes this letter with a threefold affirmation of certain primary postulates of the Christian life; of its purity, of its privilege, of its Presence, —"we know," "we know," "we know." In each case the plural might be exchanged for the singular. He says "*we* know," because he is sure "*I* know."

In studying the Epistles of St. John we may well ask what we see and hear therein of St. John's character, (1) as a sacred writer, (2) as a saintly soul.

I.

We consider first the indications in the Epistle of the Apostle's character as a sacred writer.

For help in this direction we do not turn with much satisfaction to essays or annotations pervaded by the modern spirit. The textual criticism of minute scholarship is no doubt much, but it is not all. Aorists are made for man, not man for the aorist. He indeed who has not traced every fibre of the sacred text with grammar and lexicon cannot quite honestly claim to be an expositor of it. But in the case of a book like Scripture this, after all, is but an important preliminary. The frigid subtlety of the commentator who always seems to have the questions for a divinity examination before his eyes, fails in the glow and elevation necessary to bring us into communion with the spirit of St. John. Led by such guides, the Apostle passes under our review as a third-rate writer of a magnificent language in decadence, not as the greatest of theologians and masters of the spiritual life—with whatever defects of literary style, at once the Plato of the Twelve in one region, and the Aristotle in the other; the first by his "lofty inspiration," the second by his "judicious utilitarianism." The deepest thought of the Church has been brooding for seventeen centuries over these pregnant and many-sided words, so many of which are the very words of Christ. To separate ourselves from this vast and beautiful commentary is to place ourselves out of the atmosphere in which we can best feel the influence of St. John.

Let us read Chrysostom's description of the style and thought of the author of the fourth Gospel. "The son of thunder, the loved of Christ, the pillar of the Churches, who leaned on Jesus' bosom, makes his entrance. He plays no drama, he covers his head with no mask. Yet he wears array of inimitable beauty. For he comes having his feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and his loins girt, not with fleece dyed in purple, or bedropped with gold, but woven through and through with, and composed of, the truth itself. He will now appear before us, not dramatically, for with him there is no theatrical effect or fiction, but with his head bared he tells the bare truth. All these things he will speak with absolute accuracy, being the friend of the King Himself—aye, having the King speaking within him, and hearing all things from Him which He heareth from the Father; as He saith—'you I have called friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known unto you.' Wherefore, as if we all at once saw one stooping down from yonder heaven, and promising to tell us truly of things there, we should all flock to listen to him, so let us now dispose ourselves. For it is from up there that this man speaks down to us. And the fisherman is not carried away by the whirling current of his own exuberant verbosity; but all that he utters is with the steadfast accuracy of truth, and as if he stood upon a rock he budges not. All time is his witness. Seest thou the boldness, and the great authority of his words! how he utters nothing by way of doubtful conjecture, but all demonstratively, as if passing sentence. Very lofty is this Apostle, and full of dogmas, and lingers over them more than over other things!" This admirable passage, with its fresh and noble enthusiasm, nowhere reminds us of the glacial subtleties of the schools. It is the utterance of an expositor who spoke the language in which his master wrote, and breathed the same spiritual atmosphere. It is scarcely less true of the Epistle than of the Gospel of St. John.

Here also "He is full of dogmas," here again he is the theologian of the Church. But we are not to estimate the amount of dogma merely by the number of words in which it is expressed. Dogma, indeed, is not really composed of isolated texts—as pollen showered from conifers and germs scattered from mosses, accidentally brought together and compacted, are found upon chemical analysis to make up certain lumps of coal. It is primary and structural. The Divinity and Incarnation of Jesus pervade the First Epistle. Its whole structure is Trinitarian. It contains two of the three great three-word dogmatic utterances of the New Testament about the nature of God (the first being in the fourth Gospel)—"God is Spirit," "God is light," "God is love." The chief dogmatic statements of the Atonement are found in these few chapters. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." "He is the propitiation for the whole world." "God loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins." Where the Apostle passes on to deal with the spiritual life, he once more "is full of dogmas," *i. e.*, of eternal, self-evidenced, oracular sentences, spoken as if "down from heaven," or by one "whose foot is upon a rock,"—apparently identical propositions, all-inclusive, the dogmas of moral and spiritual life, as those upon the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, are of strictly theological truth. A further characteristic of St. John as a sacred writer in his Epistle is, that he appears to indicate throughout the moral and spiritual conditions which were necessary for receiving the Gospel with which he endowed the Church as the life of their life. These conditions are three. The first is spirituality, sub-

mission to the teaching of the Spirit, that they may know by it the meaning of the words of Jesus—the "anointing" of the Holy Ghost, which is ever "teaching all things" that He said. The second condition is purity, at least the continuing effort after self-purification which is incumbent even upon those who have received the great pardon. This involves the following in life's daily walk of the One perfect life-walk, the imitation of that which is supremely good, "incarnated in an actual earthly career." All must be purity, or effort after purity, on the side of those who would read aright the Gospel of the immaculate Lamb of God. The third condition for such readers is love—charity. When he comes to deal fully with that great theme, the eagle of God wheels far out of sight. In the depths of His Eternal Being, "God is love." Then this truth comes closer to us as believers. It stands completely and for ever manifested in its work in us, because "God hath sent" (a mission in the past, but with abiding consequences) "His Son, His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live through Him." Yet again, he rises higher from the manifestation of this love to the eternal and essential principle in which it stands present for ever. "In this is the love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and once for all sent His Son a propitiation for our sins." Then follows the manifestation of our love. "If God so loved us, we also are bound to love one another." Do we think it strange that St. John does not first draw the lesson—"If God so loved us, we also are bound to love God"? It has been in his heart all along, but he utters it in his own way, in the solemn pathetic question—"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, God whom he hath not seen how can he love?" Yet once more he sums up the creed in a few short words. "We have believed the love that God hath in us." Truly and deeply has it been said that this creed of the heart, suffused with the softest tints and sweetest colours, goes to the root of all heresies upon the Incarnation, whether in St. John's time or later. That God should give up His Son by sending Him forth in humanity; that the Word made flesh should humble Himself to the death upon the cross, the Sinless offer Himself for sinners, this is what heresy cannot bring itself to understand. It is the excess of such love which makes it incredible. "We have believed the love" is the whole faith of a Christian man. It is St. John's creed in three words.

Such are the chief characteristics of St. John as a sacred writer, which may be traced in his Epistle. These characteristics of the author imply corresponding characteristics of the man. He who states with such inevitable precision, with such noble and self-contained enthusiasm, the great dogmas of the Christian faith, the great laws of the Christian life, must himself have entirely believed them. He who insists upon these conditions in the readers of his Gospel must himself have aimed at, and possessed, spirituality, purity, and love.

II.

We proceed to look at the First Epistle as a picture of the soul of its author.

(1) His was a life free from the dominion of wilful and habitual sin of any kind. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot continue sinning." "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." A man so entirely true, if conscious to himself of any reigning sin, dare not have deliberately written these words.

(2) But if St. John's was a life free from subjection to any form of the power of sin, he shows us that sanctity is not sinlessness, in language which it is alike unwise and unsafe to attempt to explain away. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." "If we say that we have not sinned and are not sinners, we make Him a liar." But so long as we do not fall back into darkness, the blood of Jesus is ever purifying us from all sin. This he has written that the fulness of the Christian life may be realised in believers; that each step of their walk may follow the blessed footprints of the most holy life; that each successive act of a consecrated existence may be free from sin. And yet, if any fail in some such single act, if he swerve, for a moment, from the "true tenour" of the course which he is shaping, there is no reason to despair. Beautiful humility of this pure and lofty soul! How tenderly, with what lowly graciousness he places himself among those who have and who need an Advocate. "Mark John's humility," cries St. Augustine; "he says not 'ye have,' nor 'ye have me,' nor even 'ye have Christ.' But he puts forward Christ, not himself; and he says 'we have,' not 'ye have,' thus placing himself in the rank of sinners." Nor does St. John cover himself under the subterfuges by which men at different times have tried to get rid of a truth so humiliating to spiritual pride—sometimes by asserting that they so stand accepted in Christ that no sin is accounted to them for such; sometimes by pleading personal exemption for themselves as believers.

This Epistle stands alone in the New Testament in being addressed to two generations—one of which after conversion had grown old in a Christian atmosphere, whilst the other had been educated from the cradle under the influences of the Christian Church. It is therefore natural that such a letter should give prominence to the constant need of pardon. It certainly does not speak so much of the great initial pardon, as of the continuing pardons needed by human frailty. In dwelling upon pardon once given, upon sanctification once begun, men are possibly apt to forget the pardon that is daily wanting, the purification that is never to cease. We are to walk daily from pardon to pardon, from purification to purification. Yesterday's surrender of self to Christ may grow ineffectual if it be not renewed to-day. This is sometimes said to be a humiliating view of the Christian life. Perhaps so—but it is the view of the Church, which places in its offices a daily confession of sin; of St. John in this Epistle; nay, of Him who teaches us, after our prayers for bread day by day, to pray for a daily forgiveness. This may be more humiliating, but it is safer teaching than that which proclaims a pardon to be appropriated in a moment for all sins past, present, and to come.

This humility may be traced incidentally in other regions of the Christian life. Thus he speaks of the possibility at least of his being

among those who might "shrink with shame from Christ in His coming." He does not disdain to write as if, in hours of spiritual depression, there were tests by which he too might need to lull and "persuade his heart before God."

(3) St. John again has a boundless faith in prayer. It is the key put into the child's hand by which he may let himself into the house, and come into his Father's presence when he will, at any hour of the night or day. And prayer made according to the conditions which God has laid down is never quite lost. The particular thing asked for may not indeed be given; but the substance of the request—the holier wish, the better purpose underlying its weakness and imperfection—never fails to be granted.

(4) All but superficial readers must perceive that in the writings and character of St. John there is from time to time a tonic and wholesome severity. Art and modern literature have agreed to bestow upon the Apostle of love the features of a languid and inert tenderness. It is forgotten that St. John was the son of thunder; that he could once wish to bring down fire from heaven; and that the natural character is transfigured, not inverted, by grace. The Apostle uses great plainness of speech. For him a lie is a lie, and darkness is never courteously called light. He abhors and shudders at those heresies which rob the soul first of Christ, and then of God. Those who undermine the Incarnation are for him not interesting and original speculators, but "lying prophets." He underlines his warnings against such men with his roughest and blackest pencil mark. "Whoso sayeth to him 'good speed' hath fellowship with his works, those wicked works"—for such heresy is not simply one work, but a series of works. The schismatic prelate or pretender Diotrephes may "babble," but his babblings are wicked words for all that, and are in truth the "works which he is doing."

The influence of every great Christian teacher lasts long beyond the day of his death. It is felt in a general tone and spirit, in a special appropriation of certain parts of the creed, in a peculiar method of the Christian life. This influence is very discernible in the remains of two disciples of St. John, Ignatius and Polycarp. In writing to the Ephesians Ignatius does not indeed explicitly refer to St. John's Epistle, as he does to that of St. Paul to the Ephesians. But he draws in a few bold lines a picture of the Christian life which is imbued with the very spirit of St. John. The character which the Apostle loved was quiet and real; we feel that his heart is not with "him that sayeth." So Ignatius writes—"it is better to keep silence, and yet to *be*, than to talk and *not to be*. It is good to teach if 'he that sayeth doeth.' He who has gotten to himself the word of Jesus truly is able to hear the silence of Jesus also, so that he may act through that which he speaks, and be known through the things wherein he is silent. Let us therefore do all things as in His presence who dwelleth in us, that we may be His temple, and that He may be in us our God." This is the very spirit of St. John. We feel in it at once his severe common sense and his glorious mysticism.

We must add that the influence of St. John may be traced in matters which are often considered alien to his simple and spiritual piety. It seems that Episcopacy was consolidated and extended under his fostering care. The language of his disciple Ignatius, upon the necessity of union with the Episcopate is, after all conceivable deductions, of startling strength. A few decades could not possibly have removed Ignatius so far from the lines marked out to him by St. John as he must have advanced, if this teaching upon Church government was a new departure. And with this conception of Church government we must associate other matters also. The immediate successors of St. John, who had learned from his lips, held deep sacramental views. The Eucharist is "the bread of God, the bread of heaven, the bread of life, the flesh of Christ." Again Ignatius cries—"Desire to use one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup unto oneness of His blood, one altar, as one Bishop, with the Presbytery and deacons." Hints are not wanting that sweetness and light in public worship derived inspiration from the same quarter. The language of Ignatius is deeply tinged with his passion for music. The beautiful story, how he set down, immediately after a vision, the melody to which he had heard the angels chanting, and caused it to be used in his church at Antioch, attests the impression of enthusiasm and care for sacred song which was associated with the memory of Ignatius. Nor can we be surprised at these features of Ephesian Christianity, when we remember who was the founder of those Churches. He was the writer of three books. These books come to us with a continuous living interpretation of more than seventeen centuries of historical Christianity. From the fourth Gospel in large measure has arisen the sacramental instinct, from the Apocalypse the æsthetic instinct, which has been certainly exaggerated both in the East and West. The third and sixth chapters of St. John's Gospel permeate every baptismal and eucharistic office. Given an inspired book which represents the worship of the redeemed as one of perfect majesty and beauty, men may well in the presence of noble churches and stately liturgies, adopt the words of our great English Christian poet—

> "Things which shed upon the outward frame
> Of worship glory and grace—which who shall blame
> That ever look'd to heaven for final rest?"

The third book in this group of writings supplies the sweet and quiet spirituality which is the foundation of every regenerate nature.

Such is the image of the soul which is presented to us by St. John himself. It is based upon a firm conviction of the nature of God, of the Divinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement of our Lord. It is spiritual. It is pure, or being purified. The highest theological truth—"God is Love"—supremely realised in the Holy Trinity, supremely manifested in the sending forth of God's only Son, becomes the law of its common social life, made visible in gentle patience, in giving and forgiving. Such a life will be free from the degradation of habitual sin. Yet it is at best an imperfect representation of the one perfect life. It needs unceasing purification by the blood of Jesus, the continual advocacy of One who is sinless. Such a nature, however full of charity, will not be weakly indulgent to vital error or to ambitious schism; for it knows the value of truth and unity. It

feels the sweetness of a calm conscience, and of a simple belief in the efficacy of prayer. Over every such life—over all the grief that may be, all the temptation that must be—is the purifying hope of a great Advent, the ennobling assurance of a perfect victory, the knowledge that if we continue true to the principle of our new birth we are safe. And our safety is, not that we keep ourselves, but that we are kept by arms which are as soft as love, and as strong as eternity.

These Epistles are full of instruction and of comfort for us, just because they are written in an atmosphere of the Church which, in one respect at least, resembles our own. There is in them no reference whatever to a continuance of miraculous powers, to raptures, or to extraordinary phenomena. All in them which is supernatural continues even to this day, in the possession of an inspired record, in sacramental grace, in the pardon and holiness, the peace and strength of believers. The apocryphal "Acts of John" contain some fragments of real beauty almost lost in questionable stories and prolix declamation. It is probably not literally true that when St. John in early life wished to make himself a home, his Lord said to him, "I have need of thee, John;" that that thrilling Voice once came to him, wafted over the still darkened sea—"John, hadst thou not been Mine, I would have suffered thee to marry." But the Epistle shows us much more effectually that he had a pure heart and virgin will. It is scarcely probable that the son of Zebedee ever drained a cup of hemlock with impunity; but he bore within him an effectual charm against the poison of sin. We of this nineteenth century may smile when we read that he possessed the power of turning leaves into gold, of transmuting pebbles into jewels, of fusing shattered gems into one; but he carried with him wherever he went that most excellent gift of charity, which makes the commonest things of earth radiant with beauty. He may not actually have praised his Master during his last hour in words which seem to us not quite unworthy even of such lips —"Thou art the only Lord, the root of immortality, the fountain of incorruption. Thou who madest our rough wild nature soft and quiet, who deliveredst me from the imagination of the moment, and didst keep me safe within the guard of that which abideth for ever." But such thoughts in life or death were never far from him for whom Christ was the Word and the Life; who knew that while "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

May we so look upon this image of the Apostle's soul in his Epistle that we may reflect something of its brightness! May we be able to think, as we turn to this threefold assertion of knowledge—"I know something of the security of this keeping. I know something of the sweetness of being in the Church, that isle of light surrounded by a darkened world. I know something of the beauty of the perfect human life recorded by St. John, something of the continued presence of the Son of God, something of the new sense which He gives, that we may know Him who is the Very God." Blessed exchange—not to be vaunted loudly, but spoken reverently in our own hearts—the exchange of we, for I. There is much divinity in these pronouns.

PART II.

SOME GENERAL RULES FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

I. Subject-matter.

(1) The Epistle is to be read through with constant reference to the Gospel. In what precise form the former is related to the latter (whether as a preface or as an appendix, as a spiritual commentary or an encyclical) critics may decide. But there is a vital and constant connection. The two documents not only touch each other in thought, but interpenetrate each other; and the Epistle is constantly suggesting questions which the Gospel only can answer, *e. g.*, 1 John i. 1, *cf.* John i. 1-14; 1 John v. 9, "witness of men," *cf.* John i. 15-36, 41, 45, 49, iii. 2, 27-36, iv. 29-42, vi. 68, 69, vii. 46, ix. 38, xi. 27, xviii. 38, xix. 5, 6, xx. 28.

(2) Such eloquence of style as St. John possesses is real rather than verbal. The interpreter must look not only at the words themselves, but at that which precedes and follows; above all he must fix his attention not only upon the verbal expression of the thought, but upon the thought itself. For the formal connecting link is not rarely omitted, and must be supplied by the devout and candid diligence of the reader. The "root below the stream" can only be traced by our bending over the water until it becomes translucent to us.

E. g., 1 John i. 7, 8. Ver. 7, "the root below the stream" is a question of this kind, which naturally arises from reading ver. 6—"Must it be said that the sons of light need a constant cleansing by the blood of Jesus, which implies a constant guilt"? Some such thought is the latent root of connection. The answer is supplied by the following verse. ["It is so" for] "if we say that we have no sin," etc. *Cf.* also iii. 16, 17, xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11, v. 3 (*ad. fin.*), 4.

II. Language.

1. *Tenses.*

In the New Testament generally tenses are employed very much in the same sense, and with the same general accuracy, as in other Greek authors. The so-called *enallage temporum*, or perpetual and convenient Hebraism, has been proved by the greatest Hebrew scholars to be no Hebraism at all. But it is one of the simple secrets of St. John's quiet thoughtful power, that he uses tenses with the most rigorous precision.

(*a*) The *Present* of continuing, uninterrupted action, *e. g.*, i. 8, ii. 6, iii. 7, 8, 9.

Hence the so-called substantised participle with article ὁ has in St. John the sense of the continuous and constitutive temper and conduct of any man, the principle of his moral and spiritual life—*e. g.*, ὁ λέγων, he who is ever vaunting, ii. 4; πᾶς ὁ μισῶν, every one the abiding principle of whose life is hatred, iii. 15; πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν, every one the abiding principle of whose life is love, iv. 7.

The Infinitive Present is generally used to

express an action now in course of performing or continued in itself or in its results, or frequently repeated—*e. g.*, 1 John ii. 6, iii. 8, 9, v. 18 (Winer, "Gr. of N. T. Diction," Part 3, xliv. 348).

(*b*) The *Aorist.*

This tense is generally used either of a thing occurring only once, which does not admit, or at least does not require, the notion of continuance and perpetuity; or of something which is brief and, as it were, only momentary in duration (Stallbaum, "Plat. Enthyd.," p. 140). This limitation or isolation of the predicated action is most accurately indicated by the usual form of this tense in Greek. The aorist verb is encased between the augment ε-, past time, and the adjunct σ-, future time, *i. e.*, the act is fixed off within certain limits of previous and consequent time (Donaldson, "Gr. Gr.," 427, B. 2). The aorist is used with most significant accuracy in the Epistle of St. John, *e. g.*, ii. 6, 11, 27, iv. 10, v. 18.

(*c*) The *Perfect.*

The Perfect denotes action absolutely past which lasts on in its effects. "The idea of completeness conveyed by the aorist must be distinguished from that of a state consequent on an act, which is the meaning of the perfect" (Donaldson, "Gr. Gr.," 419). Careful observation of this principle is the key to some of the chief difficulties of the Epistle (iii. 9, v. 4, 18).

(*2*) The form of accessional parallelism is to be carefully noticed. The second member is always in advance of the first; and a third is occasionally introduced in advance of the second, denoting the highest point to which the thought is thrown up by the tide of thought, *e. g.*, 1 John ii. 4, 5, 6, v. 11, 27.

(3) The preparatory touch upon the chord which announces a theme to be amplified afterwards,—*e. g.*, ii. 29, iii. 9-iv. 7, v. 3, 4; iii. 21-v. 14, ii. 20, iii. 24, iv. 3, v. 6, 8, ii. 13, 14, iv. 4-v. 4, 5.

(4) One secret of St. John's simple and solemn rhetoric consists in an impressive change in the order in which a leading word is used, *e. g.*, 1 John ii. 24, iv. 20.

These principles carefully applied will be the best commentary upon the letter of the Apostle, to whom not only when his subject is—

> "De Deo Deum verum
> Alpha et Omega, Patrem rerum";

but when he unfolds the principles of our spiritual life, we may apply Adam of St. Victor's powerful and untranslatable line,

> "Solers scribit idiota."

SECTION I.

GREEK TEXT.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER RENDERING.
Ο ΗΝ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἑωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς· καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἑωράκαμεν, καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον, ἥτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν· ὃ ἑωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν· καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ· καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη.	Quod fuit ab initio, quod audivimus, et vidimus oculis nostris, quod perspeximus, et manus nostræ temtaverunt, de Verbo vitæ; et vita manifestata est, et vidimus et testamur, et adnuntiamus vobis vitam æternam, quæ erat apud Patrem, et apparuit nobis; quod vidimus et audivimus et adnuntiamus vobis, ut et vos societatem habeatis nobiscum, et societas nostra sit cum Patre, et Filio eius Iesu Christo. Et hæc scripsimus vobis ut gaudium nostrum sit plenum.	That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.	That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be fulfilled.	That which was ever from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we gazed upon, and our hands handled—*I speak* concerning the Word who is the Life—and the Life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal *life*, as being that which was ever with the Father, and was manifested unto us: that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and that fellowship, which is our *fellowship*, is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be fulfilled.

CHAPTER V.

ANALYSIS AND THEORY OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

1 John i. 1.

In the opening verses of this Epistle we have a sentence whose ample and prolonged prelude has but one parallel in St. John's writings. It is, as an old divine says, "prefaced and brought in with more magnificent ceremony than any passage in Scripture."

The very emotion and enthusiasm with which it is written, and the sublimity of the exordium as a whole, tend to make the highest sense also the most natural sense. Of what or of whom does St. John speak in the phrase "concerning the Lord of Life," or "the Lord who is the Life"? The neuter "that which" is used for the masculine—"He who"—according to St. John's practice of employing the neuter comprehensively when a collective whole is to be expressed. The phrase "from the beginning," taken by itself, might no doubt be employed to signify the beginning of Christianity, or of the

ministry of Christ. But even viewing it as entirely isolated from its context of language and circumstance, it has a greater claim to be looked upon as from eternity or from the beginning of the creation. Other considerations are decisive in favour of the last interpretation.

(1) We have already adverted to the lofty and transcendental tone of the whole passage, elevating as it does each clause by the irresistible upward tendency of the whole sentence. The climax and resting place cannot stop short of the bosom of God. (2) But again, we must also bear in mind that the Epistle is everywhere to be read with the Gospel before us, and the language of the Epistle to be connected with that of the Gospel. The proœmium of the Epistle is the subjective version of the objective historical point of view which we find at the close of the preface to the Gospel. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" so St. John begins his sentence in the Gospel with a statement of an historical fact. But he proceeds, "and we delightedly beheld His glory;" that is a statement of the personal impression attested by his own consciousness and that of other witnesses. But let us note carefully that in the Epistle, which is in subjective relation to the Gospel, this process is exactly reversed. The Apostle begins with the personal impression; pauses to affirm the reality of the many proofs in the realm of fact of that which produced this impression through the senses upon the conceptions and emotions of those who were brought into contact with the Saviour; and then returns to the subjective impression from which he had originally started. (3) Much of the language in this passage is inconsistent with our understanding by the Word the first announcement of the Gospel preaching. One might of course speak of hearing the commencement of the Gospel message, but surely not of seeing and handling it. (4) It is a noteworthy fact that the Gospel and the Apocalypse begin with the mention of the personal Word. This may well lead us to expect that Logos should be used in the same sense in the proœmium of the great Epistle by the same author.

We conclude then that when St. John here speaks of the Word of Life, he refers to something higher again than the preaching of life, and that he has in view both the manifestation of the life which has taken place in our humanity, and Him who is personally at once the Word and the Life. The proœmium may be thus paraphrased. "That which in all its collective influence was from the beginning as understood by Moses, by Solomon, and Micah; which we have first and above all heard in divinely human utterances, but which we have also seen with these very eyes; which we gazed upon with the full and entranced sight that delights in the object contemplated; and which these hands handled reverentially at His bidding. I speak all this concerning the Word who is also the Life."

Tracts and sheets are often printed in our day with anthologies of texts which are supposed to contain the very essence of the Gospel. But the sweetest scents, it is said, are not distilled exclusively from flowers, for the flower is but an exhalation. The seeds, the leaf, the stem, the very bark should be macerated, because they contain the odoriferous substance in minute sacs. So the purest Christian doctrine is distilled, not only from a few exquisite flowers in a textual anthology, but from the whole substance, so to speak, of the message. Now it will be observed that at the beginning of the Epistle which accompanied the fourth Gospel, our attention is directed not to a sentiment, but to a fact and to a Person. In the collections of texts to which reference has been made, we should probably never find two brief passages which may not unjustly be considered to concentrate the essence of the scheme of salvation more nearly than any others. "The Word was made flesh." "Concerning the Word of Life (and that Life was once manifested, and we have seen and consequently are witnesses and announce to you from Him who sent us that Life, that eternal Life whose it is to have been in eternal relation with the Father, and manifested to us); That which we have seen and heard declare we from Him who sent us unto you, to the end that you too may have fellowship with us."

It would be disrespectful to the theologian of the New Testament to pass by the great dogmatic term never, so far as we are told, applied by our Lord to Himself, but with which St. John begins each of his three principal writings —The Word.

Such mountains of erudition have been heaped over this term that it has become difficult to discover the buried thought. The Apostle adopted a word which was already in use in various quarters simply because if, from the nature of the case necessarily inadequate, it was yet more suitable than any other. He also, as profound ancient thinkers conceived, looked into the depths of the human mind, into the first principles of that which is the chief distinction of man from the lower creation—language. The human word, these thinkers taught, is twofold; inner and outer—now as the manifestation to the mind itself of unuttered thought, now as a part of language uttered to others. The word as signifying unuttered thought, the mould in which it exists in the mind, illustrates the eternal relation of the Father to the Son. The word as signifying uttered thought illustrates the relation as conveyed to man by the Incarnation. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God which is in the bosom of the Father He interpreted Him." For the theologian of the Church Jesus is thus the Word; because He had His being from the Father in a way which presents some analogy to the human word, which is sometimes the inner vesture, sometimes the outward utterance of thought—sometimes the human thought in that language without which man cannot think, sometimes the speech whereby the speaker interprets it to others. Christ is the Word Whom out of the fulness of His thought and being the Father has eternally inspoken and outspoken into personal existence.

One too well knows that such teaching as this runs the risk of appearing uselessly subtle and technical, but its practical value will appear upon reflection. Because it gives us possession of the point of view from which St. John himself surveys, and from which he would have the Church contemplate, the history of the life of our Lord. And indeed for that life the theology of the Word, *i. e.*, of the Incarnation, is simply necessary.

For we must agree with M. Renan so far

at least as this, that a great life, even as the world counts greatness, is an organic whole with an underlying vitalising idea; which must be construed as such, and cannot be adequately rendered by a mere narration of facts. Without this unifying principle the facts will be not only incoherent but inconsistent. There must be a point of view from which we can embrace the life as one. The great test here, as in art, is the formation of a living, consistent, unmutilated whole.

Thus a general point of view (if we are to use modern language easily capable of being misunderstood we must say a theory) is wanted of the Person, the work, the character of Christ. The synoptical Evangelists had furnished the Church with the narrative of His earthly origin. St. John in his Gospel and Epistle, under the guidance of the Spirit, endowed it with the theory of His Person.

Other points of view have been adopted, from the heresies of the early ages to the speculations of our own. All but St. John's have failed to co-ordinate the elements of the problem. The earlier attempts essayed to read the history upon the assumption that He was merely human or merely divine. They tried in their weary round to unhumanise or undeify the God-Man, to degrade the perfect Deity, to mutilate the perfect Humanity—to present to the adoration of mankind a something neither entirely human nor entirely divine, but an impossible mixture of the two. The truth on these momentous subjects was fused under the fires of controversy. The last centuries have produced theories less subtle and metaphysical, but bolder and more blasphemous. Some have looked upon Him as a pretender or an enthusiast. But the depth and sobriety of His teaching upon ground where we are able to test it—the texture of circumstantial word and work which will bear to be inspected under any microscope or cross-examined by any prosecutor—have almost shamed such blasphemy into respectful silence. Others of later date admit with patronising admiration that the martyr of Calvary is a saint of transcendent excellence. But if He who called Himself Son of God was not much more than saint, He was something less. Indeed He would have been something of three characters; saint, visionary, pretender—at moments the Son of God in His elevated devotion, at other times condescending to something of the practice of the charlatan, His unparalleled presumption only excused by His unparalleled success.

Now the point of view taken by St. John is the only one which is possible or consistent—the only one which reconciles the humiliation and the glory recorded in the Gospels, which harmonises the otherwise insoluble contradictions that beset His Person and His work. One after another, to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" answers are attempted, sometimes angry, sometimes sorrowful, always confused. The frank respectful bewilderment of the better Socinianism, the gay brilliance of French romance, the heavy insolence of German criticism, have woven their revolting or perplexed christologies. The Church still points with a confidence, which only deepens as the ages pass, to the enunciation of the theory of the Saviour's Person by St. John—in his Gospel, "The Word was made flesh"—in his Epistle, "Concerning the Word of Life."

CHAPTER VI.

ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL HISTORICAL, NOT IDEOLOGICAL.

1 John i. 1.

Our argument so far has been that St. John's Gospel is dominated by a central idea and by a theory which harmonises the great and many-sided life which it contains, and which is repeated again at the beginning of the Epistle in a form analogous to that in which it had been cast in the proœmium of the Gospel—allowing for the difference between a history and a document of a more subjective character moulded upon that history.

There is one objection to the accuracy, almost to the veracity, of a life written from such a theory or point of view. It may disdain to be shackled by the bondage of facts. It may become an essay in which possibilities and speculations are mistaken for actual events, and history is superseded by metaphysics. It may degenerate into a romance or prose-poem; if the subject is religious, into a mystic effusion. In the case of the fourth Gospel the cycles in which the narrative moves, the unveiling as of the progress of a drama, are thought by some to confirm the suspicion awakened by the point of view given in its proœmium, and in the opening of the Epistle. The Gospel, it is said, is ideological. To us it appears that those who have entered most deeply into the spirit of St. John will most deeply feel the significance of the two words which we place at the head of this discourse—"which we have heard," "which we have seen with our very eyes" (which we contemplated with entranced gaze), "which our hands have handled."

More truly than any other, St. John could say of this letter in the words of an American poet:

"This is not a book—It is I!"

In one so true, so simple, so profound, so oracular, there is a special reason for this prolonged appeal to the senses, for the place which is assigned to each. In the fact that hearing stands first, there is a reference to one characteristic of that Gospel to which the Epistle throughout refers. Beyond the synoptical Evangelists, St. John records the words of Jesus. The position which hearing holds in the sentence, above and prior to sight and handling, indicates the reverential estimation in which the Apostle held his Master's teaching.* The expression places us on solid historical ground, because it is a moral demonstration that one like St. John would not have dared to invent whole discourses and place them in the lips of Jesus. Thus in the "we have heard" there is a guarantee of the sincerity of the report of the discourses, which forms so large a proportion of the narrative that it practically guarantees the whole Gospel.

On this accusation of ideology against St.

*The appeal to the senses of *seeing* and *hearing* is a trait common to *all* the group of St. John's writings (John i. 14, xix. 35; 1 John i. 1, 2, iv. 14; Apoc. i. 2). The true reading (κἀγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. Apoc. xxi. 8, where *hearing* stands before *seeing*) is indicative of John's style.

John's Gospel, let us make a further remark founded upon the Epistle.

It is said that the Gospel systematically subordinates chronological order and historical sequence of facts to the necessity imposed by the theory of the Word which stands in the forefront of the Epistle and Gospel.

But mystic ideology, indifference to historical veracity as compared with adherence to a conception or theory, is absolutely inconsistent with that strong, simple, severe appeal to the validity of the historical principle of belief upon sufficient evidence which pervades St. John's writings. His Gospel is a tissue woven of many lines of evidence. "Witness" stands in almost every page of that Gospel, and indeed is found there nearly as often as in the whole of the rest of the New Testament. The word occurs ten times in five short verses of the Epistle.* There is no possibility of mistaking this prolixity of reiteration in a writer so simple and so sincere as our Apostle. The theologian is an historian. He has no intention of sacrificing history to dogma, and no necessity for doing so. His theory, and that alone, harmonises his facts. His facts have passed in the domain of human history, and have had that evidence of witness which proves that they did so.

A few of the stories of the earliest ages of Christianity have ever been repeated, and rightly so, as affording the most beautiful illustrations of St. John's character, the most simple and truthful idea of the impression left by his character and his work. His tender love for souls, his deathless desire to promote mutual love among his people, are enshrined in two anecdotes which the Church has never forgotten. It has scarcely been noticed that a tradition of not much later date (at least as old as Tertullian, born A. D. 90) credits St. John with a stern reverence for the accuracy of historical truth, and tells us what, in the estimation of those who were near him in time, the Apostle thought of the lawfulness of ideological religious romance. It was said that a presbyter of Asia Minor confessed that he was the author of certain apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla—probably the same strange but unquestionably very ancient document with the same title which is still preserved. The man's motive does not seem to have been selfish. His work was apparently the composition of an ardent and romantic nature passionately attracted by a saint so wonderful as St. Paul. The tradition went on to assert that St. John without hesitation degraded this clerical romance-writer from his ministry. But the offence of the Asiatic presbyter would have been light indeed compared with that of the mendacious Evangelist, who could have deliberately fabricated discourses and narrated miracles which he dared to attribute to the Incarnate Son of God. The guilt of publishing to the Church apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla would have paled before the crimson sin of forging a Gospel.

These considerations upon St. John's prolonged and circumstantial claim to personal acquaintance with the Word made flesh, confirmed by every avenue of communication between man and man—and first in order by the hearing of that sweet yet awful teaching—point to the fourth Gospel again and again. And the simple assertion—"that which we have heard"—accounts for one characteristic of the fourth Gospel which would otherwise be a perplexing enigma—its dramatic vividness and consistency.

This dramatic truth of St. John's narrative, manifested in various developments, deserves careful consideration. There are three notes in the fourth Gospel which indicate either a consummate dramatic instinct or a most faithful record. (1) The delineation of individual characters. The Evangelist tells us with no unmeaning distinction, that Jesus "knew all men, and knew what is in man!"* For some persons take an apparently profound view of human nature in the abstract. They pass for being sages so long as they confine themselves to sounding generalisations, but they are convicted on the field of life and experience. They claim to know what is in man; but they know it vaguely, as one might be in possession of the outlines of a map, yet totally ignorant of most places within its limits. Others, who mostly affect to be keen men of the world, refrain from generalisations; but they have an insight, which at times is startling, into the characters of the individual men who cross their path. There is a sense in which they superficially seem to know all men, but their knowledge after all is capricious and limited. One class affects to know men, but does not even affect to know man; the other class knows something about man, but is lost in the infinite variety of the world of real men. Our Lord knew both—both the abstract ultimate principles of human nature and the subtle distinctions which mark off every human character from every other. Of this peculiar knowledge he who was brought into the most intimate communion with the Great Teacher was made in some degree a partaker in the course of His earthly ministry. With how few touches, yet how clearly, are delineated the Baptist, Nathanael, the Samaritan woman, the blind man, Philip, Thomas, Martha and Mary, Pilate! (2) More particularly the appropriateness and consistency of the language used by the various persons introduced in the narrative are, in the case of a writer like St. John, a multiplied proof of historical veracity. For instance, of St. Thomas only one single sentence, containing seven words, is preserved, outside the memorable narrative in the twentieth chapter; yet how unmistakably does that brief sentence indicate the same character—tender, impetuous, loving, yet ever inclined to take the darker view of things because from the very excess of its affection it cannot believe in that which it most desires, and demands accumulated and convincing proof of its own happiness. Further, the language of our Lord which St. John preserves is both morally and intellectually a marvellous witness to the proof of his assertion here in the outset of his Epistle.

This may be exemplified by an illustration from modern literature. Victor Hugo, in his "Légende des Siècles," has in one passage only placed in our Lord's lips a few words which are not found in the Evangelist. Every one will at once feel that these words ring hollow, that there is in them something exaggerated and factitious—and that, although the dramatist had the advantage of having a type of style already constructed for him. People talk as if the representation in detail of a perfect character were a comparatively easy performance. Yet every

* 1 John v. 6-12.

* John iii. 24, 25.

such representation shows some flaw when closely inspected. For instance, a character in which Shakespeare so evidently delighted as Buckingham, whose end is so noble and martyr-like, is thus described, when on his trial, by a sympathising witness:

> "'How did he bear himself?'
> 'When he was brought again to the bar, to hear
> His knell rung out, his judgment—he was struck
> With such an agony, he sweat extremely,
> And something spoke in choler, *ill and hasty;*
> But he fell to himself again, and sweetly
> In all the rest show'd a most noble patience.'"

Our argument comes to this point. Here is one man of all but the highest rank in dramatic genius, who utterly fails to invent even one sentence which could possibly be taken for an utterance of our Lord. Here is another, the most transcendent in the same order whom the human race has ever known, who tacitly confesses the impossibility of representing a character which shall be "one entire and perfect chrysolite," without speck or flaw. Take yet another instance. Sir Walter Scott appeals for "the fair license due to the author of a fictitious composition;" and admits that he "cannot pretend to the observation of complete accuracy even in outward costume, much less in the more important points of language and manners." But St. John was evidently a man of no such pretensions as these kings of the human imagination—no Scott or Victor Hugo, much less a Shakespeare. How then—except on the assumption of his being a faithful reporter, of his recording words actually spoken, and witnessing to incidents which he had seen with his very eyes and contemplated with loving and admiring reverence—can we account for his having given us long successions of sentences, continuous discourses in which we trace a certain unity and adaptation; and a character which stands alone among all recorded in history or conceived in fiction, by presenting to us an excellence faultless in every detail? We assert that the one answer to this question is boldly given us by St. John in the forefront of his Epistle—"That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes—concerning the Word who is the Life—declare we unto you."

St. John's mode of writing history may profitably be contrasted with that of one who in his own line was a great master, as it has been ably criticised by a distinguished statesman. Voltaire's historical masterpiece is a portion of the life of Maria Theresa, which is unquestionably written from a partly ideological point of view; for those who have patience to go back to the "sources," and to compare Voltaire's narrative with them, will see the process by which a literary master has produced his effect. The writer works as if he were composing a classical tragedy restricted to the unities of time and place. The three days of the coronation and of the successive votes are brought into one effect, of which we are made to feel that it is due to a magic inspiration of Maria Theresa. Yet, as the great historical critic to whom we refer proceeds to demonstrate, a different charm, very much more real because it comes from truth, may be found in literal historical accuracy without this academic rouge. Writers more conscientious than Voltaire would not have assumed that Maria Theresa was degraded by a husband who was inferior to her. They would not have substituted some pretty and pretentious phrases for the genuine emotion not quite veiled under the official Latin of the Queen. "However high a thing art may be, reality, truth, which is the work of God, is higher!" It is this conviction, this entire intense adhesion to truth, this childlike ingenuousness which has made St. John as an historian attain the higher region which is usually reached by genius alone—which has given us narratives and passages whose ideal beauty or awe is so transcendent or solemn, whose pictorial grandeur or pathos is so inexhaustible, whose philosophical depth is so unfathomable.

He stands with spell-bound delight before his work without the disappointment which ever attends upon men of genius; because that work is not drawn from himself, because he can say three words—which we have "heard," which we have "seen" with our eyes, which we have "gazed" upon.

SECTION II.

GREEK TEXT.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς φῶς ἐστιν, καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία. ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατῶμεν, ψευδόμεθα, καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν· ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν, ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων, καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας. Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν, καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐν ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔστιν. ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστι καὶ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας. ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύ-	Et hæc est adnuntiatio quam audivimus ab eo, et adnuntiamus vobis, quoniam Deus lux est, et tenebræ in eo non sunt ullæ. Si dixerimus quoniam societatem habemus cum eo et in tenebris ambulamus, mentimur, et non facimus veritatem: si autem in luce ambulamus sicut et ipse est in luce, societatem habemus ad invicem, et sanguis Iesu Christi, Filii eius, mundat nos omni peccato. Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est. Si confiteamur peccata nostra, fidelis et justus est, ut remittat nobis peccata	This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we	And this is the message which we have heard from Him, and announce unto you, that God is light, and *in* Him is *no darkness* at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and *to* cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If	And this is the message which we have heard from Him and are announcing unto you that God is light, and darkness in Him there is none. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and are walking in the darkness, we lie and are not doing the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son is purifying us from all sin. If we say that we have not sin, we mislead ourselves and the truth in us is not. If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive our sins and purify us from

SECTION II.—*Continued.*

GREEK TEXT.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
στην ποιοῦμεν αὐτόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν, ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε· καὶ ἐάν τις ἁμάρτῃ, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον· καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστι περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν· οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.	nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate. Si dixerimus quoniam non peccavimus, mendacem faciemus eum, et verbum eius in nobis non est. Filioli mei, hæc scribo vobis, ut non peccetis: sed et si quis peccaverit advocatum habemus apud Patrem, Iesum Christum iustum; et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris, non pro nostris autem tantum sed etiam pro totius mundi.	have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.	we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My *little* children, these things write I unto you, that ye may not sin. And if *any man sin*, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.	all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned a liar we are making Him, and His word is not in us. My children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And yet if any may have sinned, an Advocate have we with the Father Jesus Christ *who* is righteous: and He is propitiation for our sins; yea, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

CHAPTER VII.

EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

1 John ii. 1, 2.

Of the Incarnation of the Word, of the whole previous strain of solemn oracular annunciation, there are two great objects. Rightly understood, it at once stimulates and soothes; it supplies inducements to holiness, and yet quiets the accusing heart. (1) It urges to a pervading holiness in each recurring circumstance of life. "That ye may not sin" is the bold universal language of the morality of God. Men only understand moral teaching when it comes with a series of monographs on the virtues, sobriety, chastity, and the rest. Christianity does not overlook these, but it comes first with all-inclusive principles. The morality of man is like the sculptor working line by line and part by part, partially and successively. The morality of God is like nature, and works in every part of the flower and tree with a sort of ubiquitous presence. "These things write we unto you." No dead letter—a living spirit infuses the lines; there is a deathless principle behind the words which will vitalise and permeate all isolated relations and developments of conduct. "These things write we unto you that ye may not sin."

(2) But further, this announcement also soothes. There may be isolated acts of sin against the whole tenour of the higher and nobler life. There may be, God forbid!—but it may be—some glaring act of inconsistency. In this case the Apostle uses a form of expression which includes himself, "we have," and yet points to Christ, not to himself, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ"—and that in view of His being One who is perfectly and simply righteous; "and He is the propitiation for our sins."

Then, as if suddenly fired by a great thought, St. John's view broadens over the whole world beyond the limits of the comparatively little group of believers whom his words at that time could reach. The Incarnation and Atonement have been before his soul. The Catholic Church is the correlative of the first, humanity of the second. The Paraclete whom he beheld is ever in relation with, ever turned towards, the Father. His propitiation is, and He is it. It was not simply a fact in history which works on with unexhaustible force. As the Advocate is ever turned towards the Father, so the propitiation lives on with unexhausted life. His intercession is not verbal, temporary, interrupted. The Church, in her best days, never prayed—"Jesus, pray for me!" It is interpretative, continuous, unbroken. In time it is eternally valid, eternally present. In space it extends as far as human need, and therefore takes in every place. "Not for our sins only," but for men universally, "for the whole world."

It is implied then in this passage, that Christ was intended as a propitiation for the whole world; and that He is fitted for satisfying all human wants.

(1) Christ was intended for the whole world. Let us see the Divine intention in one incident of the crucifixion. In that are mingling lines of glory and of humiliation. The King of humanity appears with a scarlet camp-mantle flung contemptuously over His shoulders; but to the eye of faith it is the purple of empire. He is crowned with the acanthus wreath; but the wreath of mockery is the royalty of our race. He is crucified between two thieves; but His cross is a Judgment-Throne, and at His right hand and His left are the two separated worlds of belief and unbelief. All the Evangelists tell us that a superscription, a title of accusation, was written over His cross; two of them add that it was written over Him "in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew" (or in Hebrew, Greek, Latin). In Hebrew—the sacred tongue of patriarchs and seers, of the nation all whose members were in idea and destination those of whom God said, "My prophets." In Greek—the "musical and golden tongue which gave a soul to the objects of sense and a body to the abstractions of philosophy;" the language of a people whose mission it was to give a principle of fermentation to all races of mankind, susceptible of those subtle and largely indefinable influences which are called collectively Progress. In Latin—the dialect of a people originally the strongest of all the sons of men. The three languages represent the three races and their ideas—revelation, art, literature; progress, war, and jurisprudence. Beneath the title is the thorn-crowned head of the ideal King of humanity.

Wherever these three tendencies of the human race exist, wherever annunciation can be made in human language, wherever there is a heart to sin, a tongue to speak, an eye to read, the cross has a message. The superscription, "written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin," is the

historical symbol translated into its dogmatic form by St. John—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

CHAPTER VIII.

MISSIONARY APPLICATION OF THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

1 John ii. 2.

Let us now consider the universal and ineradicable wants of man.

Such a consideration is substantially unaffected by speculation as to the theory of man's origin. Whether the first men are to be looked for by the banks of some icy river feebly shaping their arrowheads of flint, or in godlike and glorious progenitors beside the streams of Eden; whether our ancestors were the result of an inconceivably ancient evolution, or called into existence by a creative act, or sprung from some lower creature elevated in the fulness of time by a majestic inspiration,—at least, as a matter of fact, man has other and deeper wants than those of the back and stomach. Man as he is has five spiritual instincts. How they came to be there, let it be repeated, is not the question. It is the fact of their existence, not the mode of their genesis, with which we are now concerned.

(1) There is almost, if not quite, without exception the instinct which may be generally described as the instinct of the Divine. In the wonderful address where St. Paul so fully recognises the influence of geographical circumstance and of climate, he speaks of God "having made out of one blood every nation of men to seek after their Lord, if haply at least" (as might be expected) "they would feel for Him"—like men in darkness groping towards the light. (2) There is the instinct of prayer, the "testimony of the soul naturally Christian." The little child at our knees meets us half-way in the first touching lessons in the science of prayer. In danger, when the vessel seems to be sinking in a storm, it is ever as it was in the days of Jonah, when "the mariners cried every man unto his God." (3) There is the instinct of immortality, the desire that our conscious existence should continue beyond death.

> "Who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> These thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather swallow'd up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night?"

(4) There is the instinct of morality, call it conscience or what we will. The lowest, most sordid, most materialised languages are never quite without witness to this nobler instinct. Though such languages have lien among the pots, yet their wings are as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings and her feathers like gold. The most impoverished vocabularies have words of moral judgment, "good" or "bad;" of praise or blame, "truth and lie;" above all, those august words which recognise a law paramount to all other laws, "I must," "I ought." (5) There is the instinct of sacrifice, which, if not absolutely universal, is at least all but so—the sense of impurity and unworthiness, which says by the very fact of bringing a victim, "I am not worthy to come alone; may my guilt be transferred to the representative which I immolate."

(1) Thus then man seeks after God. Philosophy unaided does not succeed in finding Him. The theistic systems marshal their syllogisms; they prove, but do not convince. The pantheistic systems glitter before man's eye; but when he grasps them in his feverish hand, and brushes off the mystic gold dust from the moth's wings, a death's-head mocks him. St. John has found the essence of the whole question, stripped from it all its plausible disguises, and characterises Mahommedan and Judaistic Deism in a few words. Nay, the philosophical deism of Christian countries comes within the scope of his terrible proposition. "Deo erexit Voltairius," was the philosopher's inscription over the porch of a church; but Voltaire had not in any true sense a God to whom he could dedicate it. For St. John tells us—"whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." Other words there are in his Second Epistle whose full import seems to have been generally overlooked, but which are of solemn significance to those who go out from the camp of Christianity with the idea of finding a more refined morality and a more ethereal spiritualism. "Whosoever goeth forward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ"; whosoever writes progress on his standard, and goes forward beyond the lines of Christ, loses natural as well as supernatural religion—"he hath not God." (2) Man wants to pray. Poor disinherited child, what master of requests shall he find? Who shall interpret his broken language to God, God's infinite language to him? (3) Man yearns for the assurance of immortal life. This can best be given by one specimen of manhood risen from the grave, one traveller come back from the undiscovered bourne with the breath of eternity on His cheek and its light in His eye; one like Jonah, Himself the living sign and proof that He has been down in the great deeps. (4) Man needs a morality to instruct and elevate conscience. Such a morality must possess these characteristics. It must be authoritative, resting upon an absolute will; its teacher must say, not "I think," or "I conclude," but—"verily, verily I say unto you." It must be unmixed with baser and more questionable elements. It must be pervasive, laying the strong grasp of its purity on the whole domain of thought and feeling as well as of action. It must be exemplified. It must present to us a series of pictures, of object-lessons in which we may see it illustrated. Finally, this morality must be spiritual. It must come to man, not like the Jewish Talmud with its seventy thousand precepts which few indeed can ever learn, but with a compendious and condensed, yet all-embracing brevity—with words that are spirit and life. (5) As man knows duty more thoroughly, the instinct of sacrifice will speak with an ever-increasing intensity. "My heart is overwhelmed by the infinite purity of this law. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; let me find God and be reconciled to Him." When the old Latin spoke of propitiation he thought of something which brought near (*prope*); his inner thought was—"let God come near to me, that I may be near to God." These five ultimate spiritual wants, these five ineradicable spiritual instincts, He must meet, of whom a

master of spiritual truth like St. John can say with his plenitude of insight—"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

We shall better understand the fulness of St. John's thought if we proceed to consider that this fitness in Christ for meeting the spiritual wants of humanity is exclusive.

Three great religions of the world are more or less Missionary. Hinduism, which embraces at least a hundred and ninety millions of souls, is certainly not in any sense missionary. For Hinduism transplanted from its ancient shrines and local superstitions dies like a flower without roots. But Judaism at times has strung itself to a kind of exertion almost inconsistent with its leading idea. The very word "proselyte" attests the unnatural fervour to which it had worked itself up in our Lord's time. The Pharisee was a missionary sent out by pride and consecrated by self-will. "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him tenfold more the child of hell than yourselves." Buddhism has had enormous missionary success from one point of view. Not long ago it was said that it outnumbered Christendom. But it is to be observed that it finds adherents among people of only one type of thought and character. Outside these races it is and must ever be, non-existent. We may except the fanciful perversion of a few idle people in London, Calcutta, or Ceylon, captivated for a season or two by "the light of Asia." We may except also a very few more remarkable cases where the esoteric principle of Buddhism commends itself to certain profound thinkers stricken with the dreary disease of modern sentiment. Mohammedanism has also, in a limited degree, proved itself a missionary religion, not only by the sword. In British India it counts millions of adherents, and it is still making some progress in India. In other ages whole Christian populations (but belonging to heretical and debased forms of Christianity) have gone over to Mohammedanism. Let us be just to it. It once elevated the pagan Arabs. Even now it elevates the Negro above his fetich. But it must ever remain a religion for stationary races, with its sterile God and its poor literality, the dead book pressing upon it with a weight of lead. Its merits are these—it inculcates a lofty, if sterile, Theism; it fulfils the pledge conveyed in the word Moslem, by inspiring a calm, if frigid, resignation to destiny; it teaches the duty of prayer with a strange impressiveness. But whole realms of thought and feeling are crushed out by its bloody and lustful grasp. It is without purity, without tenderness, and without humility.

Thus, then, we come back again with a truer insight to the exclusive fitness of Christ to meet the wants of mankind.

Others besides the Incarnate Lord have obtained from a portion of their fellow-men some measure of passionate enthusiasm. Each people has a hero during this life, call him demigod, or what we will. But such men are idolised by one race alone. The very qualities which procure them an apotheosis are precisely those which prove how narrow the type is which they represent; how far they are from speaking to all humanity. A national type is a narrow and exclusive type.

No European, unless effeminated and enfeebled, could really love an Asiatic Messiah. But Christ is loved everywhere. No race or kindred is exempt from the sweet contagion produced by the universal appeal of the universal Saviour. From all languages spoken by the lips of man, hymns of adoration are offered to Him. We read in England the "Confessions" of St. Augustine. Those words still quiver with the emotions of penitence and praise; still breathe the breath of life. Those ardent affections, those yearnings of personal love to Christ, which filled the heart of Augustine fifteen centuries ago, under the blue sky of Africa, touch us even now under this grey heaven in the fierce hurry of our modern life. But they have in them equally the possibility of touching the Shanar of Tinnevelly, the Negro—even the Bushman, or the native of Tierra del Fuego. By a homage of such diversity and such extent we recognise a universal Saviour for the universal wants of universal man, the fitting propitiation for the whole world.

Towards the close of this Epistle St. John oracularly utters three great canons of universal Christian consciousness—"we know," "we know," "we know." Of these three canons the second is—"we know that we are from God, and the world lieth wholly in the wicked one." "A characteristic Johannic exaggeration"! some critic has exclaimed; yet surely even in Christian lands where men lie outside the influences of the Divine society, we have only to read the Police-reports to justify the Apostle. In columes of travels, again, in the pages of Darwin and Baker, from missionary records in places where the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations, we are told of deeds of lust and blood which almost make us blush to bear the same form with creatures so degraded. Yet the very same missionary records bear witness that in every race which the Gospel proclamation has reached, however low it may be placed in the scale of the ethnologist; deep under the ruins of the fall are the spiritual instincts, the affections which have for their object the infinite God, and for their career the illimitable ages. The shadow of sin is broad indeed. But in the evening light of God's love the shadow of the cross is projected further still into the infinite beyond. Missionary success is therefore sure, if it be slow. The reason is given by St. John. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world."

SECTION III. (1).

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. ὁ λέγων, ὅτι "Ἔγνωκα αὐτόν," καὶ τὰς	Et in hoc scimus quoniam cognovimus eum, si mandata eius observemus. Qui dicit se nosse eum et man-	And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know	And *hereby know* we that we *know* Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him,	And hereby we do know that we have knowledge of Him, if we observe His commandments. He that

SECTION III. (1).—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστὶν, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν· ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ τετελείωται. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν. ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν, ὀφείλει, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν, καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως περιπατεῖν.	data eius non custodit, mendax est, et in eo veritas non est: qui autem servat verbum eius, vere in eo caritas Dei perfecta est: in hoc scimus quoniam in ipso sumus. Qui dicit se in ipso manere debet sicut ille ambulavit et ipse ambulare.	Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.	and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whoso keepeth His word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him: he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked.	saith I have knowledge of Him and observeth not His commandments is a liar, and in this man the truth is not. But whoso observeth His word, verily in this man the love of God is perfected. Hereby know we that we are in Him: he that saith he abideth in Him is bound, even as He walked, so also Himself to be ever walking.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREAT LIFE WALK A PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

1 John ii. 6.

This verse is one of those in reading which we may easily fall into the fallacy of mistaking familiarity for knowledge.

Let us bring out its meaning with accuracy.

St. John's hatred of unreality, of lying in every form, leads him to claim in Christians a perfect correspondence between the outward profession and the inward life, as well as the visible manifestation of it. "He that saith" always marks a danger to those who are outwardly in Christian communion. It is the "take notice" of a hidden falsity. He whose claim, possibly whose vaunt, is that he abideth in Christ, has contracted a moral debt of far-reaching significance. St. John seems to pause for a moment. He points to a picture in a page of the scroll which is beside him—the picture of Christ in the Gospel drawn by himself; not a vague magnificence, a mere harmony of colour, but a likeness of absolute historical truth. Every pilgrim of time in the continuous course of his daily walk, outward and inward, has by the possession of that Gospel contracted an obligation to be walking by the one great life-walk of the Pilgrim of eternity. The very depth and intensity of feeling half hushes the Apostle's voice. Instead of the beloved Name which all who love it will easily supply, St. John uses the reverential He, the pronoun which specially belongs to Christ in the vocabulary of the Epistle. "He that saith he abideth in Him" is bound, even as He once walked, to be ever walking.

I.

The importance of example in the moral and spiritual life gives emphasis to this canon of St. John.

Such an example as can be sufficient for creatures like ourselves should be at once manifested in concrete form and susceptible of ideal application.

This was felt by a great, but unhappily antichristian, thinker, the exponent of a severe and lofty morality. Mr. Mill fully confesses that there may be an elevating and an ennobling influence in a Divine ideal; and thus justifies the apparently startling precept—"be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." But he considered that some more human model was necessary for the moral striver. He recommends novel-readers, when they are charmed or strengthened by some conception of pure manhood or womanhood, to carry that conception with them into their own lives. He would have them ask themselves in difficult positions, how that strong and lofty man, that tender and unselfish woman, would have behaved in similar circumstances, and so bear about with them a standard of duty at once compendious and affecting. But to this there is one fatal objection—that such an elaborate process of make-believe is practically impossible. A fantastic morality, if it were possible at all, must be a feeble morality. Surely an authentic example will be greatly more valuable.

But example, however precious, is made indefinitely more powerful when it is living example, example crowned by personal influence.

So far as the stain of a guilty past can be removed from those who have contracted it, they are improvable and capable of restoration, chiefly, perhaps almost exclusively, by personal influence in some form. When a process of deterioration and decay has set in in any human soul, the germ of a more wholesome growth is introduced in nearly every case, by the transfusion and transplantation of healthier life. We test the soundness or the putrefaction of a soul by its capacity of receiving and assimilating this germ of restoration. A parent is in doubt whether a son is susceptible of renovation, whether he has not become wholly evil. He tries to bring the young man under the personal influence of a friend of noble and sympathetic character. Has his son any capacity left for being touched by such a character; of admiring its strength on one side, its softness on another? When he is in contact with it, when he perceives how pure, how self-sacrificing, how true and straight it is, is there a glow in his face, a trembling of his voice, a moisture in his eye, a wholesome self-humiliation? Or does he repel all this with a sneer and a bitter gibe? Has he that evil attitude which is possessed only by the most deeply corrupt—"they blaspheme, rail at glories." The Chaplain of a penitentiary records that among the most degraded of its inmates was one miserable creature. The Matron met her with firmness, but with a good will which no hardness could break down, no insolence overcome. One evening after prayers the Chaplain observed this poor outcast stealthily kissing the shadow of the

Matron thrown by her candle upon the wall. He saw that the diseased nature was beginning to be capable of assimilating new life, that the victory of wholesome personal influence had begun. He found reason for concluding that his judgment was well founded.

The law of restoration by living example through personal influence pervades the whole of our human relations under God's natural and moral government as truly as the principle of mediation. This law also pervades the system of restoration revealed to us by Christianity. It is one of the chief results of the Incarnation itself. It begins to act upon us first, when the Gospels become something more to us than a mere history, when we realise in some degree how He walked. But it is not complete until we know that all this is not merely of the past, but of the present; that He is not dead, but living; that we may therefore use that little word "is" about Christ in the lofty sense of St. John —"even as He is pure;" "in Him is no sin;" "even as He is righteous;" "He is the propitiation for our sins." If this is true, as it undoubtedly is, of all good human influence personal and living, is it not true of the Personal and living Christ in an infinitely higher degree? If the shadow of Peter overshadowing the sick had some strange efficacy; if handkerchiefs or aprons from the body of Paul wrought upon the sick and possessed; what may be the spiritual result of contact with Christ Himself? Of one of those men specially gifted to raise struggling natures and of others like him, a true poet lately taken from us has sung in one of his most glorious strains. Matthew Arnold likens mankind to a host inexorably bound by divine appointment to march over mountain and desert to the city of God. But they become entangled in the wilderness through which they march, split into mutinous factions, and are in danger of "battering on the rocks" for ever in vain, of dying one by one in the waste. Then comes the poet's appeal to the "Servants of God":—

> "Then in the hour of need
> Of your fainting, dispirited race,
> Ye like angels appear!
> Languor is not in your heart,
> Weakness is not in your word,
> Weariness not on your brow.
> Eyes rekindling, and prayers
> Follow your steps as ye go.
> Ye fill up the gaps in our file,
> Strengthen the wavering line,
> Stablish, continue our march—
> On, to the bound of the waste—
> On to the City of God."

If all this be true of the personal influence of good and strong men—true in proportion to their goodness and strength—it must be true of the influence of the Strongest and Best with Whom we are brought into personal relation by prayer and sacraments, and by meditation upon the sacred record which tells us what His one life-walk was. Strength is not wanting upon His part, for He is able to save to the uttermost. Pity is not wanting; for to use touching words (attributed to St. Paul in a very ancient apocryphal document), "He alone sympathised with a world that has lost its way."

Let it not be forgotten that in that of which St. John speaks lies the true answer to an objection, formulated by the great antichristian writer above quoted, and constantly repeated by others. "The ideal of Christian morality," says Mr. Mill, "is negative rather than positive; passive rather than active; innocence rather than nobleness; abstinence from evil, rather than energetic pursuit of good; in its precepts (as has been well said), 'thou shalt not' predominates unduly over 'thou shalt.'" The answer is this. (1) A true religious system must have a distinct moral code. If not, it would be justly condemned for "expressing itself" (in the words of Mr. Mill's own accusation against Christianity elsewhere) "in language most general, and possessing rather the impressiveness of poetry or eloquence than the precision of legislation." But the necessary formula of precise legislation is, "thou shalt not"; and without this it cannot be precise. (2) But further. To say that Christian legislation is negative, a mere string of "thou shalt nots," is just such a superficial accusation as might be expected from a man who should enter a church upon some rare occasion, and happen to listen to the Ten Commandments, but fall asleep before he could hear the Epistle and Gospel. The philosopher of duty, Kant, has told us that the peculiarity of a moral principle, of any proposition which states what duty is, is to convey the meaning of an imperative through the form of an indicative. In his own expressive, if pedantic, language—"its categorical form involves an epitactic meaning." St. John asserts that the Christian "ought to walk even as Christ walked." To every one who receives it, that proposition is therefore precisely equivalent to a command—"walk as Christ walked." Is it a negative, passive morality, a mere system of "thou shalt not," which contains such a precept as that? Does not the Christian religion in virtue of this alone enforce a great "thou shalt;" which every man who brings himself within its range will find rising with him in the morning, following him like his shadow all day long, and lying down with him when he goes to rest?

II.

It should be clearly understood that in the words "even as He walked," the Gospel of St. John is both referred to and attested.

For surely, to point with any degree of moral seriousness to an example, is to presuppose some clear knowledge and definite record of it. No example can be beautiful or instructive when its shape is lost in darkness. It has indeed been said by a deeply religious writer, "that the likeness of the Christian to Christ is to His character, not to the particular form in which it was historically manifested." And this, of course, is in one sense a truism. But how else except by this historical manifestation can we know the character of Christ in any true sense of the word knowledge? For those who are familiar with the fourth Gospel, the term "walk" was tenderly significant. For if it was used with a reminiscence of the Old Testament and of the language of our Lord, to denote the whole continuous activity of the life of any man inward and outward, there was another signification which became entwined with it. St. John had used the word historically in his Gospel, not without allusion to the Saviour's homelessness on earth, to His itinerant life of beneficence and of teaching. Those who first re-

ceived this Epistle with deepest reverence as the utterance of the Apostle whom they loved, when they came to the precept—"walk even as He walked"—would ask themselves how did He walk? What do we know of the great rule of life thus proposed to us? The Gospel which accompanied this letter, and with which it was in some way closely connected, was a sufficient and definite answer.

III.

The character of Christ in his Gospel is thus, according to St. John, the loftiest ideal of purity, peace, self-sacrifice, unbroken communion with God; the inexhaustible fountain of regulated thoughts, high aims, holy action, constant prayer.

We may advert to one aspect of this perfection as delineated in the fourth Gospel—our Lord's way of doing small things, or at least things which in human estimation appear to be small.

The fourth chapter of that Gospel contains a marvellous record of word and work. Let us trace that record back to its beginning. There are seeds of spiritual life scattered in many hearts which were destined to yield a rich harvest in due time; there is the account of one sensuous nature, quickened and spiritualised; there are promises which have been for successive centuries as a river of God to weary natures. All these results issue from three words spoken by a tired traveller, sitting naturally over a well—"give me to drink."

We take another instance. There is one passage in St. John's Gospel which divides with the proœmium of his Epistle the glory of being the loftiest, the most prolonged, the most sustained, in the Apostle's writings.

It is the prelude of a work which might have seemed to be of little moment. Yet all the height of a great ideal is over it, like the vault of heaven; all the power of a Divine purpose is under it, like the strength of the great deep; all the consciousness of His death, of His ascension, of His coming dominion, of His Divine origin, of His session at God's right hand—all the hoarded love in His heart for His own which were in the world—passes by some mysterious transference into that little incident of tenderness and of humiliation. He sets an everlasting mark upon it, not by a basin of gold crusted with gems, nor by mixing precious scents with the water which He poured out, nor by using linen of the finest tissue, but by the absolute perfection of love and dutiful humility in the spirit and in every detail of the whole action. It is one more of those little chinks through which the whole sunshine of heaven streams in upon those who have eyes to see.*

The underlying secret of this feature of our Lord's character is told by Himself. "My meat is to be ever doing the will of Him that sent Me, and so, when the times come, by one great decisive act to finish His work." All along the course of that life-walk there were smaller preludes to the great act which won our redemption—multitudinous daily little perfect epitomes of love and sacrifice, without which the crowning sacrifice would not have been what it was. The plan of our life must, of course, be constructed on a scale as different as the human from the Divine. Yet there is a true sense in which this lesson of the great life may be applied to us.

The apparently small things of life must not be despised or neglected on account of their smallness, by those who would follow the precept of St. John. Patience and diligence in petty trades, in services called menial, in waiting on the sick and old, in a hundred such works, all come within the sweep of this net, with its lines that look as thin as cobwebs, and which yet for Christian hearts are stronger than fibres of steel—"walk even as He walked." This, too, is our only security. A French poet has told a beautiful tale. Near a river which runs between French and German territory, a blacksmith was at work one snowy night near Christmas time. He was tired out, standing by his forge, and wistfully looking towards his little home, lighted up a short quarter of a mile away, and wife and children waiting for their festal supper, when he should return. It came to the last piece of his work, a rivet which it was difficult to finish properly; for it was of peculiar shape, intended by the contractor who employed him to pin the metal work of a bridge which he was constructing over the river. The smith was sorely tempted to fail in giving honest work, to hurry over a job which seemed at once so troublesome and so trifling. But some good angel whispered to the man that he should do his best. He turned to the forge with a sigh, and never rested until the work was as complete as his skill could make it. The poet carries us on for a year or two. War breaks out. A squadron of the blacksmith's countrymen is driven over the bridge in headlong flight. Men, horses, guns, try its solidity. For a moment or two the whole weight of the mass really hangs upon the one rivet. There are times in life when the whole weight of the soul also hangs upon a rivet; the rivet of sobriety, of purity, of honesty, of command of temper. Possibly we have devoted little or no honest work to it in the years when we should have perfected the work; and so, in the day of trial, the rivet snaps, and we are lost.

There is one word of encouragement which should be finally spoken for the sake of one class of God's servants.

Some are sick, weary, broken, paralysed, it may be slowly dying. What—they sometimes think—have we to do with this precept? Others who have hope, elasticity, capacity of service, may walk as He walked; but we can scarcely do so. Such persons should remember what walking in the Christian sense is—all life's activity inward and outward. Let them think of Christ upon His cross. He was fixed to it, nailed hand and foot. Nailed; yet never—not when He trod upon the waves, not when He moved upward through the air to His throne—never did He walk more truly, because He walked in the way of perfect love. It is just whilst looking at the moveless form upon the tree that we may hear most touchingly the great "thou shalt"—thou shalt walk even as He walked.

IV.

As there is a literal, so there is a mystical walking as Christ walked. This is an idea which deeply pervades St. Paul's writings. Is it His birth? We are born again. Is it His

* John xiii. 1-6.

life? We walk with Him in newness of life. Is it His death? We are crucified with Him. Is it His burial? We are buried with Him. Is it His resurrection? We are risen again with Him. Is it His ascension—His very session at God's right hand? "He hath raised us up and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places." They know nothing of St. Paul's mind who know nothing of this image of a soul seen in the very dust of death, loved, pardoned, quickened, elevated, crowned, throned. It was this conception at work from the beginning in the general consciousness of Christians which moulded round itself the order of the Christian year.

It will illustrate this idea for us if we think of the difference between the outside and the inside of a church.

Outside on some high spire we see the light just lingering far up, while the shadows are coldly gathering in the streets below; and we know that it is winter. Again the evening falls warm and golden on the churchyard, and we recognise the touch of summer. But inside it is always God's weather; it is Christ all the year long. Now the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, or circumcised with the knife of the law, manifested to the Gentiles, or manifesting Himself with a glory that breaks through the veil; now the Man tempted in the wilderness; now the victim dying on the cross; now the Victor risen, ascended, sending the Holy Spirit; now for twenty-five Sundays worshipped as the Everlasting Word with the Father and the Holy Ghost. In this mystical following of Christ also, the one perpetual lesson is—"he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."

SECTION III. (2).

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἴχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιά ἐστιν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὃ ἐστιν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει. ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει. καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδε ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.	Carissimi, non mandatum novum scribo vobis, sed mandatum vetus quod habuistis ab initio: mandatum vetus est verbum quod audistis. Iterum mandatum novum scribo vobis, quod est verum et in ipso et in vobis, quoniam tenebræ transierunt et lumen verum jam lucet. Qui dicit se in luce esse et fratrum suum odit, in tenebris est usque adhuc. Qui diligit fratrem suum in lumine manet, et scandalum in eo non est: qui autem odit fratrem suum, in tenebris est, et in tenebris ambulat et nescit quo eat, quoniam tenebræ obcæcaverunt oculos eius.	Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.	Beloved, no new commandment write I unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye heard. Again, a new commandment write I unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.	Beloved, no fresh commandment I am writing unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The commandment, the old commandment, is the word which ye heard. Again, a fresh commandment I am writing unto you, which thing [*as a whole*] is true in Him and in you: because the shadow is drifting by, and the light, the very *light*, is already enlightening. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, in the darkness is he hitherto. He that loveth his brother in the light abideth he, and scandal in him there is not. But he that hateth his brother in the darkness is he, and in the darkness walketh he, and he knoweth not whither he goeth because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.

SECTION III. (3).

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. Ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροί ἐστε. καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον, μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ· ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ	Scribo vobis, filioli, quoniam remittentur vobis, peccata propter nomen eius. Scribo vobis, patres, quoniam cognovistis eum qui ab initio est. Scribo vobis, adolescentes, quoniam vicistis malignum. Scribo vobis, infantes, quia cognovistis patrem. Scripsi vobis, iuvenes, quia fortes estis et verbum Dei in vobis manet et vicistis malignum. Nolite diligere mundum neque eaquæ in mundo sunt. Si quis diligit mundum, non est caritas Patris in eo: quoniam omne	I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong,	I write unto you, my little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye know Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye know the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye know Him which is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word	I am writing unto you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I am writing unto you, fathers, because ye have knowledge of Him who is from the beginning. I am writing unto you, young men, because ye are conquerors of the wicked one. I have written unto you, little children, because ye have knowledge of the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have knowledge of Him who is from the beginning.

SECTION III. (3).—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἀλλὰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν· καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ· ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	quod in mundo est, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitæ; quæ non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est. Et mundus transibit et concupiscentia eius: qui autem facit voluntatem Dei, manet in eternum.	and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.	of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.	I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong and the word of God abideth in you, and ye are conquerors of the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the arrogancy of living, is not from the Father, but from the world is it. And the world is drifting by, and the lust of it: but he that is doing the will of God abideth for ever.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORLD WHICH WE MUST NOT LOVE.

1 John ii. 15, 16.

An adequate development of words so compressed and pregnant as these would require a separate treatise, or series of treatises. But if we succeed in grasping St. John's conception of the world, we shall have a key that will open to us this cabinet of spiritual thought.

I.

In the writings of St. John the world is always found in one or other of four senses, as may be decided by the context. (1) It means the creation, the universe. So our Lord in His High-priestly prayer—"Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." (2) It is used for the earth locally as the place where man resides; and whose soil the Son of God trod for a while. "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world." (3) It denotes the chief inhabitants of the earth, they to whom the counsels of God mainly point—men universally. Such a transference is common in nearly all languages. Both the inhabitants of a building, and the material structure which contains them, are called "a house;" and the inhabitants are frequently bitterly blamed, while the beauty of the structure is passionately admired. In this sense there is a magnificent width in the word "world." We cannot but feel indignant at attempts to gird its grandeur within the narrow rim of a human system. "The bread that I will give," said He who knew best, "is My flesh which I will give for the life of the world." "He is the propitiation for the whole world," writes the Apostle at the beginning of this chapter. In this sense, if we would imitate Christ, if we would aspire to the Father's perfection, "love not the world" must be tempered by that other tender oracle—"God so loved the world."

In none of these senses can the world here be understood.

There remains then (4) a fourth signification, which has two allied shades of thought. World is employed to cover the whole present existence, with its blended good and evil—susceptible of elevation by grace, susceptible also of deeper depths of sin and ruin. But yet again the indifferent meaning passes into one that is wholly evil, wholly within a region of darkness. The first creation was pronounced by God in each department "good" collectively; when crowned by God's masterpiece in man, "very good." "All things," our Apostle tells us, "were made through Him (the Word), and without Him was not anything made that was made." But as that was a world wholly good, so is this a world wholly evil. This evil world is not God's creation, drew not its origin from Him. All that is in it came out from it, from nothing higher. This wholly evil world is not the material creation; if it were, we should be landed in dualism, or Manicheism. It is not an entity, an actual tangible thing, a creation. It is not of God's world that St. John cries in that last fierce word of abhorrence which he flings at it as he sees the shadowy thing like an evil spirit made visible in an idol's arms—"the world lieth wholly in the evil one."

This anti-world, this caricature of creation, this thing of negations, is spun out of three abuses of the endowment of God's glorious gift of free-will to man; out of three noble instincts ignobly used. First, "the lust of the flesh"—of which flesh is the seat, and supplies the organic medium through which it works. The flesh is that softer part of the frame which by the network of the nerves is intensely susceptible of pleasurable and painful sensations; capable of heroic patient submission to the higher principles of conscience and spirit, capable also of frightful rebellion. Of all theologians St. John is the least likely to fall into the exaggeration of libelling the flesh as essentially evil. Is it not he who, whether in his Gospel, or in his Epistles, delights to speak of the flesh of Jesus, to record words in which He refers to it? Still the flesh brings us into contact with all sins which are sins that spring from, and end in, the senses. Shall we ask for a catalogue of particulars from St. John? Nay, we cannot expect that the virgin Apostle, who received the Virgin Mother from the Virgin Lord upon the cross,

will sully his virgin pen with words so abhorred. When he has uttered the lust of the flesh his shudder is followed by an eloquent silence. We can fill up the blank too well—drunkenness, gluttony, thoughts and motions which spring from deliberate, wilfully cherished, rebellious sensuality; which fill many of us with pain and fear, and wring cries and bitter tears from penitents, and even from saints. The second, abuse of free-will, the second element in this world which is not God's world, is the desire of which the eyes are the seat—"the lust of the eyes." To the two sins which we instinctively associate with this phrase—voluptuousness and curiosity of the senses or the soul—Scripture might seem to add envy, which derives so much of its aliment from sight. In this lies the Christian's warning against wilfully indulging in evil sights, bad plays, bad books, bad pictures. He who is outwardly the spectator of these things becomes inwardly the actor of them. The eye is, so to speak, the burning-glass of the soul; it draws the rays from their evil brightness to a focus, and may kindle a raging fire in the heart. Under this department comes unregulated spiritual or intellectual curiosity. The first need not trouble us so much as it did Christians in a more believing time. Comparatively very few are in danger from the *planchette* or from astrology. But surely it is a rash thing for an ordinary mind, without a clear call of duty, without any adequate preparation, to place its faith within the deadly grip of some powerful adversary. People really seem to have absolutely no conscience about reading anything—the last philosophical Life of Christ, or the last romance; of which the titles might be with advantage exchanged, for the philosophical history is a light romance, and the romance is a heavy philosophy. The third constituent in the evil anti-trinity of the anti-world is "the pride" (the arrogancy, gasconade, almost swagger) "of life," of which the lower life is the seat. The thought is not so much of outward pomp and ostentation as of that false pride which arises in the heart. The arrogancy is within; the gasconade plays its "fantastic tricks before high heaven." And each of these three elements (making up as they do collectively all that is "in the world" and springing out of the world) is not a substantive thing, not an original ingredient of man's nature, or among the forms of God's world; it is the perversion of an element which had a use that was noble, or at least innocent. For first comes "the lust of the flesh." Take those two objects to which this lust turns with a fierce and perverted passion. The possession of flesh in itself leads man to crave for the necessary support to his native weakness. The mutual craving for the love of beings so like and so unlike as man and woman, if it be a weakness, has at least a most touching and exquisite side. Again, is not a yearning for beauty gratified through the eyes? Were they not given for the enjoyment, for the teaching, at once high and sweet, of Nature and of Art? Art may be a moral and spiritual discipline. The ideas of Beauty from gifted minds by cunning hands transferred to, and stamped upon, outward things, come from the ancient and uncreated Beauty, whose beauty is as perfect as His truth and strength. Still further; in the lower life, and in its lawful use, there was intended to be a something of quiet satisfaction, a certain restfulness, at times making us happy and triumphant. And lo! for all this, not moderate fare and pure love, not thoughtful curiosity and the sweet pensiveness which is the best tribute to the beautiful—not a wise humility which makes us feel that our times are in God's hands and our means His continual gift—but degraded senses, low art, evil literature, a pride which is as grovelling as it is godless.

These three typical summaries of the evil tendencies in the exercise of free-will correspond with a remarkable fulness to the two narratives of trial which give us the compendium and general outline of all human temptation.

Our Lord's three temptations answer to this division. The lust of the flesh is in essence the rebellion of the lower appetites, inherent to creaturely dependence, against the higher principle or law. The nearest and only conceivable approach to this in the sinless Man would be in His seeking lawful support by unlawful means—procuring food by a miraculous exertion of power, which only would have become sinful, or short of the highest goodness, by some condition of its exercise at that time and in that place. An appeal to the desire for beauty and glory, with an implied hint of using them for God's greater honour, is the essence of the second temptation; the one possible approximation to the "lust of the eyes" in that perfect character. The interior deception of some touch of pride in the visible support of angels wafting the Son of God through the air is Satan's one sinister way of insinuating to the Saviour something akin to "the pride of life."

In the case of the other earlier typical trials it will be observed that while the temptations fit into the same threefold framework, they are placed in an order which exactly reverses that of St. John. For in Eden the first approach is through "pride"; the magnificent promise of elevation in the scale of being, of the knowledge that would win the wonder of the spiritual world. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."* The next step is that which directs the curiosity both of the senses and of the aspiring mind to the object forbidden—"when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise."† Then seems to have come some strange and sad rebellion of the lower nature, filling their souls with shame; some bitter revelation of the law of sin in their members; some knowledge that they were contaminated by the "lust of the flesh."‡ The order of the temptation in the narrative of Moses is historical; St. John's order is moral and spiritual, answering to the facts of life. The "lust of the flesh," which may approach the child through childish greed, grows apace. At first it is half unconscious; then it becomes coarse and palpable. In the man's desire acting with unregulated curiosity, through ambition of knowledge at any price, searching out for itself books and other instruments with deliberate desire to kindle lust, the "lust of the eyes" ceases not its fatal influence. The crowning sin of pride with its selfishness, which is self apart from God as well as from the brother, finds its place in the "pride of life."

*Gen. iii. 5. †Gen. iii. 6. ‡Gen. iii. 7.

III.

We may now be in a position to see more clearly against what world the Primate of early Christendom pronounced his anathema, and launched his interdict, and why?

What "world" did he denounce?

Clearly not the world as the creation, the universe. Not again the earth locally. God made and ordered all things. Why should we not love them with a holy and a blameless love? Only we should not love them in themselves; we should not cling to them forgetting Him. Suppose that some husband heaped beautiful and costly presents upon his wife whom he loved. At last with the intuition of love he begins to see what is the secret of such cold imitation of love as that icy heart can give. She loves him not—his riches, not the man; his gifts, not the giver. And thus loving with that frigid love which has no heart in it, there is no true love; her heart is another's. Gifts are given that the giver may be loved in them. If it is true that "gifts are naught when givers prove unkind," it is also true that there is a sort of adultery of the heart when the taker is unkind—because the gift is valuable, not because the bestower is dear. And so the world, God's beautiful world, now becomes to us an idol. If we are so lost in the possession of Nature, in the march of law, in the majestic growth, in the stars above and in the plants below, that we forget the Lawgiver, who from such humble beginnings has brought out a world of beauty and order; if with modern poets we find content, calm, happiness, purity, rest, simply in contemplating the glaciers, the waves, and the stars; then we look at the world even in this sense in a way which is a violation of St. John's rule. Yet again, the world which is now condemned is not humanity. There is no real Christianity in taking black views, and speaking bitter things, about the human society to which we belong, and the human nature of which we are partakers. No doubt Christianity believes that man "is very far gone from original righteousness;" that there is a "corruption in the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam." Yet the utterers of unwholesome apothegms, the suspecters of their kind, are not Christian thinkers. The philosophic historian, whose gorge rose at the doctrine of the Fall, thought much worse of man practically than the Fathers of the Church. They bowed before martyrdom and purity, and believed in them with a child-like faith. For Gibbon, the martyr was not quite so true, nor the virgin quite so pure, nor the saint quite so holy. He Who knew human nature best, Who has thrown that terrible ray of light into the unlit gulf of the heart when He tells us "what proceeds out of the heart of man," * had yet the ear which was the first to hear the trembling of the one chord that yet kept healthful time and tune in the harlot's passionate heart. He believed that man was recoverable; lost, but capable of being found. After all, in this sense there is something worthy of love in man. "God so loved" (not so hated) "the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." Shall we say that we are to hate the world which He loved?

And now we come to that world which God never loved, never will love, never will reconcile to Himself,—which we are not to love.

This is most important to see; for there is always a danger in setting out with a stricter standard than Christ's, a narrower road than the narrow one which leads to heaven. Experience proves that they who begin with standards of duty which are impossibly high end with standards of duty which are sometimes sadly low. Such men have tried the impracticable, and failed; the practicable seems to be too hard for them ever afterwards. They who begin by anathematising the world in things innocent, indifferent, or even laudable, not rarely end by a reaction of thought which believes that the world is nothing and nowhere.

But there is such a thing as the world in St. John's sense—an evil world brought into existence by the abuse of our free-will; filled by the anti-trinity, by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

Let us not confuse "the world" with the earth, with the whole race of man, with general society, with any particular set, however much some sets are to be avoided. Look at the thing fairly. Two people, we will say, go to London, to live there. One, from circumstances of life and position, naturally falls into the highest social circle. Another has introductions to a smaller set, with an apparently more serious connection. Follow the first some evening. He drives to a great gathering. The room which he enters is ablaze with light; jewelled orders sparkle upon men's coats, and fair women move in exquisite dresses. We look at the scene and we say—"what worldly society has the man fallen into!" Perhaps so, in a sense. But about the same time the other walks to a little room with humbler adjuncts, where a grave and apparently serious circle meet together. We are able to look in there also, and we exclaim—"this is serious society, unworldly society." Perhaps so, again. Yet let us read the letters of Mary Godolphin. She bore a life unspotted by the world in the dissolute court of Charles II., because the love of the Father was in her. In small serious circles are there no hidden lusts which blaze up in scandals? Is there no vanity, no pride, no hatred? In the world of Charles II.'s court Mary Godolphin lived out of the world which God hated; in the religious world not a few, certainly, live in the world which is not God's. For, once more, the world is not so much a place—though at times its power seems to have been drawn into one intense focus, as in the empire of which Rome was the centre, and which may have been in the Apostle's thought in the following verse. In the truest and deepest sense the world consists of our own spiritual surrounding; it is the place which we make for our own souls. No walls that ever were reared can shut out the world from us; the "Nun of Kenmare" found that it followed her into the seemingly spiritual retreat of a severe Order. The world in its essence is subtler and thinner than the most infinitesimal of the bacterian germs in the air. They can be strained off by the exquisite apparatus of a man of science. At a certain height they cease to exist. But the world may be wherever we are; we carry it with us wherever we go, it lasts while our lives last. No consecration can utterly banish it even from within the church's walls; it dares to be round

* Mark vii. 21.

us while we kneel, and follows us into the presence of God.

Why does God hate this "world"—the world in this sense? St. John tells us. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Deep in every heart must be one or other of two loves. There is no room for two master-passions. There is an expulsive power in all true affection. What tenderness and pathos, how much of expostulation, more potent because reserved—"the love of the Father is not in him"! He has told all his "little ones" that he has written to them because they "know the Father." St. John does not use sacred names at random. Even Voltaire felt that there was something almost awful in hearing Newton pronounce the name of God. Such in an incomparably higher degree is the spirit of St. John. In this section he writes of "the love of the Father," * and of the "will of God."† The first title has more sweetness than majesty; the second more majesty than sweetness. He would throw into his plea some of the winningness of one who uses this as a resistless argument with a tempted, but loving child—an argument often successful when every other fails. "If you do this, your Father will not love you; you will not be His child." We have but to read this with the hearts of God's dear children. Then we shall find that if the "love not" of this verse contains "words of extirpation" it ends with others which are intended to draw us with cords of a man, and with bands of love.

CHAPTER XI.

USE AND ABUSE OF THE SENSE OF THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

1 John ii. 17.

The connection of the passage in which these words occur is not difficult to trace for those who are used to follow those "roots below the stream," those real rather than verbal links latent in the substance of St. John's thoughts. He addresses those whom he has in view with a paternal authority, as his "sons" in the faith—with an endearing variation as "little children." He reminds them of the wisdom and strength involved in their Christian life. Theirs is the sweetest flower of knowledge—"to know the Father." Theirs is the grandest crown of victory—"to overcome the wicked one." But there remains an enemy in one sense more dangerous than the Evil One—the world. By the world in this place we are to understand that element in the material and human sphere, in the region of mingled good and evil, which is external to God, to the influence of His Spirit, to the boundaries of His Church—nay, which frequently passes over those boundaries. In this sense it is, so to speak, a fictitious world, a world of wills separated from God because dominated by self; a shadowy caricature of creation; an anti-kosmos, which the Author of the kosmos has not made. What has been well called "the great love not" rings out—"love not the world." For this admonition two reasons of ever enduring validity are given by St. John. (1) The application of the law of human nature, that two master-passions cannot coexist in one man. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (2) The unsatisfactory nature of the world, its incurable transitoriness, its "visible tendency to non-existence." "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

It will be well to consider how far this thought of the transitoriness of the world, of its drifting by in ceaseless change, is in itself salutary and Christian, how far it needs to be supplemented and elevated by that which follows and closes the verse.

I.

There can be no doubt, then, that up to a certain point this conviction is a necessary element of Christian thought, feeling, and character; that it is at least among the preliminaries of a saving reception of Christ.

There is in the great majority of the world a surprising and almost incredible levity. There is a disposition to believe in the permanency of that which we have known to continue long, and which has become habitual. There is a tale of a man who was resolved to keep from his children the knowledge of death. He was the Governor of a colony, and had lost in succession his wife and many children. Two only, mere infants, were left. He withdrew to a beautiful and secluded island, and tried to barricade his daughters from the fatal knowledge which, when once acquired, darkens the spirit with anticipation. In the ocean-island death was to be a forbidden word. If met with in the pages of a book, and questions were asked, no answer was to be given. If some one expired, the body was to be removed, and the children were to be told that the departed had gone to another country. It does not need much imagination to feel sure that the secret could not be kept; that some fish on the coral reef, or some bright bird in the tropic forest, gave the little ones the hint of a something that touched the splendour of the sunset with a strange presentiment; that some hour came when, as to the rest of us, so to them, the mute presence would insist upon being made known. Ours is a stranger mode of dealing with ourselves than was the father's way of dealing with his children. We tacitly resolve to play a game of make-believe with ourselves, to forget that which cannot be forgotten, to remove to an incalculable distance that which is inexorably near. And the fear of death with us does not come from the nerves, but from the will. Death ushers us into the presence of God. Those of whom we speak hate and fear death because they fear God and hate His presence. Now it is necessary for such persons as these to be awakened from their illusion. That which is supremely important for them is to realise that "the world" is indeed "drifting by;" that there is an emptiness in all that is created, a vanity in all that is not eternal; that time is short, eternity long. They must be brought to see that with the world, the "lust thereof" (the concupiscence, the lust of it, which has the world for its object, which belongs to it, and which the world stimulates) passes by also. The world, which is the object of the desire, is a phantom and a shadow; the desire itself must be therefore the phantom of a phantom and the shadow of a shadow.

* 1 John ii. 15, 16. † *Ibid.* ver. 17.

This conviction has a thousand times over led human souls to the one true abiding centre of eternal reality. It has come in a thousand ways. It has been said that one heard the fifth chapter of Genesis read, with those words eight times repeated over the close of each record of longevity, like the strokes of a funeral bell, "and he died;" and that the impression never left him, until he planted his foot upon the rock over the tide of the changing years. Sometimes this conviction is produced by the death of friends—sometimes by the slow discipline of life—sometimes no doubt it may be begun, sometimes deepened, by the preacher's voice upon the watch-night, by the effective ritualism of the tolling bell, of the silent prayer, of the well-selected hymn. And it is right that the world's dancing in, or drinking in, the New Year, should be a hint to Christians to pray it in. This is one of the happy plagiarisms which the Church has made from the world. The heart feels as it never did before the truth of St. John's sad, calm, oracular survey of existence, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

II.

But we have not sounded the depth of the truth—certainly we have not exhausted St. John's meaning—until we have asked something more. Is this conviction alone always a herald of salvation? Is it always, taken by itself, even salutary? Can it never be exaggerated, and become the parent of evils almost greater than those which it supersedes?

We are led by careful study of the Bible to conclude that this sentiment of the flux of things is capable of exaggeration. For there is one important principle which arises from a comparison of the Old Testament with the New in this matter.

It is to be noticed that the Old Testament has infinitely more which corresponds to the first proposition of the text, without the qualification which follows it, than we can find in the New.

The patriarch Job's experience echoes in our ears. "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay." The Funeral Psalms make their melancholy chant. "Behold, Thou hast made my days as it were a span long. . . . Verily every man living is altogether vanity. For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain. . . . O spare me a little that I may smile again." Or we read the words of Moses, the man of God, in that ancient psalm of his, that hymn of time and of eternity. All that human speech can say is summed up in four words, the truest, the deepest, the saddest, and the most expressive, that ever fell from any mortal pen. "We bring our years to an end, as a sigh." Each life is a sigh between two eternities!

Our point is that in the New Testament there is greatly less of this element—greatly less of this pathetic moralising upon the vanity and fragility of human life, of which we have only cited a few examples—and that what there is lies in a different atmosphere, with sunnier and more cheerful surroundings. Indeed, in the whole compass of the New Testament there is perhaps but one passage which is set quite in the same key with our familiar declamations upon the uncertainty and shortness of human life—where St. James desires Christians ever to remember in all their projects to make deduction for the will of God, "not knowing what shall be on the morrow." In the New Testament the voice which wails for a second about the changefulness and misery is lost in the triumphant music by which it is encompassed. If earthly goods are depreciated, it is not merely because "the load of them troubles, the love of them taints, the loss of them tortures;" it is because better things are ready. There is no lamentation over the change, no clinging to the dead past. The tone is rather one of joyful invitation. "Your raft is going to pieces in the troubled sea of time; step into a gallant ship. The volcanic isle on which you stand is undermined by silent fires; we can promise to bring you with us to a shore of safety where you shall be compassed about with songs of deliverance."

It is no doubt true to urge that this style of thought and language is partly to be ascribed to a desire that the attention of Christians should be fixed on the return of their Lord, rather than upon their own death. But, if we believe Scripture to have been written under Divine guidance, the history of religion may supply us with good grounds for the absence of all exaggeration from its pages in speaking of the misery of life and the transitoriness of the world.

The largest religious experiment in the world, the history of a religion which at one time numerically exceeded Christendom, is a gigantic proof that it is not safe to allow unlimited license to melancholy speculation. The true symbol for humanity is not a skull and an hour-glass.

Some two thousand five hundred years ago, towards the end of the seventh century before Christ, at the foot of the mountains of Nepaul, in the capital of a kingdom of Central India, an infant was born whom the world will never forget. All gifts seemed to be showered on this child. He was the son of a powerful king and heir to his throne. The young Siddhârtha was of rare distinction, brave and beautiful, a thinker and a hero, married to an amiable and fascinating princess. But neither a great position nor domestic happiness could clear away the cloud of melancholy which hung over Siddhârtha, even under that lovely sky. His deep and meditative soul dwelt night and day upon the mystery of existence. He came to the conclusion that the life of the creature is incurably evil from three causes—the very fact of existence, desire, and ignorance. The things revealed by sense are evil. None has that continuance and that fixity which are the marks of Law, and the attainment of which is the condition of happiness. At last his resolution to leave all his splendour and become an ascetic was irrevocably fixed. One splendid morning the prince drove to a glorious garden. On his road he met a repulsive old man, wrinkled, toothless, bent. Another day, a wretched being wasted with fever crossed his path. Yet a third excursion—and a funeral passes along the road with a corpse on an open bier, and friends wailing as they go. His favourite attendant is obliged in each case to confess that these evils are not exceptional—that old age, sickness, and death are the fatal conditions of conscious ex-

istence for all the sons of men. Then the Prince Royal takes his first step towards becoming the deliverer of humanity. He cries—"woe, woe to the youth which old age must destroy, to the health which sickness must undermine, to the life which has so few days and is so full of evil." Hasty readers are apt to judge that the Prince was on the same track with the Patriarch of Idumea, and with Moses the man of God in the desert—nay, with St. John, when he writes from Ephesus that "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

It may be well to reconsider this; to see what contradictory principle lies under utterances which have so much superficial resemblance.

Siddhârtha became known as the Buddha, the august founder of a great and ancient religion. That religion has of later years been favourably compared with Christianity—yet what are its necessary results, as drawn out for us by those who have studied it most deeply? Scepticism, fanatic hatred of life, incurable sadness in a world fearfully misunderstood; rejection of the personality of man, of God, of the reality of Nature. Strange enigma! The Buddha sought to win annihilation by good works; everlasting non-being by a life of purity, of alms, of renunciation, of austerity. The prize of his high calling was not everlasting life, but everlasting death; for what else is impersonality, unconsciousness, absorption into the universe, but the negation of human existence? The acceptance of the principles of Buddhism is simply a sentence of death intellectually, morally, spiritually, almost physically, passed upon the race which submits to the melancholy bondage of its creed of desolation. It is the opium drunkenness of the spiritual world without the dreams that are its temporary consolation. It is enervating without being soft, and contemplative without being profound. It is a religion which is spiritual without recognising the soul, virtuous without the conception of duty, moral without the admission of liberty, charitable without love. It surveys a world without nature, and a universe without God. The human soul under its influence is not so much drunken as asphyxiated by a monotonous, unbalanced, perpetual repetition of one half of the truth—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

For let us carefully note that St. John adds a qualification which preserves the balance of truth. Over against the dreary contemplation of the perpetual flux of things, he sets a constant course of doing—over against the world, God in His deepest, truest personality, "the will of God"—over against the fact of our having a short time to live, and being full of misery, an everlasting fixity, "he abideth for ever"—(so well brought out by the old gloss which slipped into the Latin text, "even as God abideth for ever"). As the Lord had taught before, so the disciple now teaches, of the rocklike solidity, of the permanent abiding, under and over him who "doeth." Of the devotee who became in his turn the Buddha, Çakhya-Mouni could not have said one word of the close of our text. "He"—but human personality is lost in the triumph of knowledge. "Doeth the will of God"—but God is ignored, if not denied. "Abideth for ever"—but that is precisely the object of his aversion, the terror from which he wishes to be emancipated at any price, by any self-denial.

It may be supposed that this strain of thought is of little practical importance. It may be of use, indeed, in other lands to the missionary who is brought into contact with forms of Buddhism in China, India, or Ceylon, but not to us in these countries. In truth it is not so. It is about half a century ago since a great English theologian warned his University that the central principle of Buddhism was being spread far and wide in Europe from Berlin. This propaganda is not confined to philosophy. It is at work in literature generally, in poetry, in novels, above all in those collection of "Pensées" which have become so extensively popular. The unbelief of the last century advanced with flashing epigrams and defiant songs. With Byron it softened at times into a melancholy which was perhaps partly affected. But with Amiel, and others of our own day, unbelief assumes a sweet and dirge-like tone. The satanic mirth of the past unbelief is exchanged for a satanic melancholy in the present. Many currents of thought run into our hearts, and all are tinged with a darkness before unknown from new substances in the soil which colours the waters. There is little fear of our not hearing enough, great fear of our hearing too much, of the proposition—"the world passeth away, and the lust thereof."

All this may possibly serve as some explanation for the fact that the Christian Church, as such, has no fast for the last day of the year, no festival for New Year's Day except one quite unconnected with the lessons which may be drawn from the flight of time. The death of the old year, the birth of the new year, have touching associations for us. But the Church consecrates no death but that of Jesus and His martyrs, no nativity but that of her Lord, and of one whose birth was directly connected with His own—John the Baptist. A cause of this has been found in the fact that the day had become so deeply contaminated by the abominations of the heathen Saturnalia that it was impossible in the early Church to continue any very marked observation of it. This may well be so; but it is worth considering whether there is not another and deeper reason. Nothing that has now been said can be supposed to militate against the observance of this time by Christians in private, with solemn penitence for the transgressions of the past year, and earnest prayer for that upon which we enter—nothing against the edification of particular congregations by such services as those most striking ones which are held in so many places. But some explanation is supplied why the "Watch-night" is not recognised in the calendar of the Church.

Let us take our verse together as a whole and we have something better than moralising over the flight of time and the transitoriness of the world; something better than vulgarising "vanity of vanities" by vapid iteration.

It is hard to conceive a life in which death and evanescence have nothing that enforces their recognition. Now the removal of one dear to us, now a glance at the obituary with the name of some one of almost the same age as ourselves, brings a sudden shadow over the sunniest field. Yet surely it is not wholesome to encourage the perpetual presence of the cloud. We might impose upon ourselves the penance of being shut up all a winter's night

with a corpse, go half crazy with terror of that unearthly presence, and yet be no more spiritual after all.

We must learn to look at death in a different way, with new eyes. We all know how different dead faces are. Some speak to us merely of material ugliness, of the sweep of "decay's effacing fingers." In others a new idea seems to light up the face; there is the touch of a superhuman irradiation, of a beauty from a hidden life. We feel that we look on one who has seen Christ, and say—"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." These two kinds of faces answer to the two different views of life.

Not the transitory, but the permanent; not the fleeting, but the abiding; not death, but life, is the conclusion of the whole matter. The Christian life is not an initial spasm followed by a chronic dyspepsia. What does St. John give us as the picture of it exemplified in a believer? Daily, perpetual, constant doing the will of God. This is the end far beyond—somewhat inconsistent with—obstinately morbid meditation and surrounding ourselves with multiplied images of mortality. Lying in a coffin half the night might not lead to that end; nay, it might be a hindrance thereto. Beyond the grave, outside the coffin, is the object at which we are to look. "The current of things temporal," cries Augustine, "sweeps along. But like a tree over that stream has risen our Lord Jesus Christ. He willed to plant Himself as it were over the river. Are you whirled along by the current? Lay hold of the wood. Does the love of the world roll you onward in its course? Lay hold upon Christ. For you He became temporal that you might become eternal. For He was so made temporal as to remain eternal. Join thy heart to the eternity of God, and thou shalt be eternal with Him."

Those who have heard the Miserere in the Sistine Chapel describe the desolation which settles upon the soul which surrenders itself to the impression of the ritual. As the psalm proceeds, at the end of each rhythmical pulsation of thought, each beat of the alternate wings of the parallelism, a light upon the altar is extinguished. As the wail grows sadder the darkness grows deeper. When all the lights are out and the last echo of the strain dies away, there would be something suitable for the penitent's mood in the words—"the world passeth away and the lust thereof." Upon the altar of the Christian heart there are tapers at first unlighted, and before it a priest in black vestments. But one by one the vestments are exchanged for others which are white; one after another the lamps are lighted slowly and without noise, until gradually, we know not how the whole place is full of light. And ever sweeter and clearer, calm and happy, with a triumph which is at first repressed and reverential, but which increases as the light becomes diffused, the words are heard strong and quiet—a plain-song now that will swell into an anthem presently—"he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

SECTION IV.

GREEK.

Παιδία, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν· καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ὁ ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν· ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν. Ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν. εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν. Καὶ ὑμεῖς χρίσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου, καὶ οἴδατε πάντα. οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτήν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. Τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης, εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν. πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱόν, οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει. Ὑμεῖς ὃ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὃ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία, ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον. ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς. Καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρίσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκῃ ὑμᾶς·

LATIN.

Filioli, novissima hora est: et sicut audistis quia antichristus venit, nunc autem antichristi multi facti sunt, unde scimus quia novissima hora est. Ex nobis prodierunt, sed non erant ex nobis, nam si fuissent ex nobis, permansissent utique nobiscum; sed ut manifesti sint quoniam non sunt omnes ex nobis. Sed vos unctionem habetis a Sancto, et nostis omnia. Non scripsi vobis quasi ignorantibus veritatem, sed quasi scientibus eam, et quoniam omne mendacium ex veritate non est. Quis est mendax, nisi, qui negat quoniam Iesus non est Christus? Hic est antichristus, qui negat Patrem et Filium. Omnis qui negat Filium nec Patrem habet: qui confitetur Filium, et Patrem habet. Vos quod audistis ab initio, in vobis permaneat. Si in vobis permanserit quod ab initio audistis, et vos in Filio et Patre manebitis. Et hæc est promissio quam ipse polliticus est vobis, vitam æternam. Hæc scripsi vobis de his qui seducunt vos. Et vos unctionem

AUTHORISED VERSION.

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in

REVISED VERSION.

Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest how that they are not of us. And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, *even* he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father. And

ANOTHER VERSION.

Little children, it i a last hour; and as y heard that antichris cometh, so now man antichrists are in ex istence; whereby w know that it is a las hour. They went ou from us, but the were not of us; for i they had been of u they would have con tinued with us: bu that they might b made manifest hov that all are not of us *they went out*. But y have unction fro the Holy One, and y know all things. have not written unt you *this*—"ye kno not the truth"—bu *this*—"ye know it, and *this*—"every li is not from the truth. Who is the liar bu he that denieth tha Jesus is the Christ The antichrist is thi he that denieth th Father and the So Whosoever denie the Son the same hat not the Father; h that confesseth th Son also hath the Fa ther. As for you that which ye hear from the beginnin let it abide in yo If that abide in yo which from the be ginning ye heard, y also shall abide in th Son and in the Fa ther. And this is th

SECTION IV.—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος· καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μενεῖτε ἐν αὐτῷ. Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ· ἵνα ὅταν φανερωθῇ, σχῶμεν παρρησίαν, καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.	quam accepistis ab eo, maneat in vobis; et non necesse habetis ut aliquis doceat vos, sed sicut unctio eius docet vos de omnibus, et verum est, et non est mendacium, et sicut docuit vos manete in eo. Et nunc, filioli, manete in eo, ut cum apparuerit habemus fiduciam, et non confundamur ab eo in adventu eius.	the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, *even* eternal life. These *things* have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him. And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.	this is the promise which He promised us, *even* the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him. And now, *my* little children, abide in Him; that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.	promise which He promised us, the life, the eternal *life*. These things have I written unto you concerning those that would mislead you. And as for you—the anointing which ye received from Him abideth in you, and ye have no need that any be teaching you: but as His unction is teaching you continually concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and as it taught you, so shall ye abide in Him. And now, children, abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested we may have boldness and not shrink in shame from Him in His coming.

CHAPTER XII.

KNOWING ALL THINGS.

1 JOHN ii. 20.

THERE is little of the form of logical argument to which Western readers are habituated in the writings of St. John, steeped as his mind was in Hebraic influences. The inferential "therefore" is not to be found in this Epistle. Yet the diligent reader or expositor finds it more difficult to detach any single sentence, without loss to the general meaning, than in any other writing of the New Testament. The sentence may look almost as if its letters were graven brief and large upon a block of marble, and stood out in oracular isolation—but upon reverent study it will be found that the seemingly lapidary inscription is one of a series with each of which it is indissolubly connected—sometimes limited, sometimes enlarged, always coloured and influenced by that which precedes and follows.

It is peculiarly needful to bear this observation in mind in considering fully the almost startling principle stated in the verse which is prefixed to this discourse. A kind of spiritual omniscience appears to be attributed to believers. Catechisms, confessions, creeds, teachers, preachers, seem to be superseded by a stroke of the Apostle's pen, by what we are half tempted to consider as a magnificent exaggeration. The text sounds as if it outstripped even the fulfilment of the promise of the new covenant contained in Jeremiah's prophecy—"they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

The passages just before and after St. John's splendid annunciation in our text are occupied with the subject of Antichrist, here first mentioned in Scripture. In this section of our Epistle Antichrist is (1) revealed, and (2) refuted.

(1) Antichrist is revealed by the very crisis which the Church was then traversing. From this especially, from the transitory character of a world drifting by them in unceasing mutation, the Apostle is led to consider this as one of those crisis-hours of the Church's history, each of which may be the last hour, and which is assuredly—in the language of primitive Christianity—a last hour. The Apostle therefore exclaims with fatherly affection—"Little children, it is a last hour."

Deep in the heart of the Apostolic Church, because it came from those who had received it from Christ, there was one awful anticipation. St. John in this passage gives it a name. He remembers Who had told the Jews that "if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." He can announce to them that "as ye have heard this Antichrist cometh, even so now" (precisely as ye have heard) "many antichrists have come into existence and are around you, whereby we know that it is a last hour." The name Antichrist occurs only in these Epistles, and seems purposely intended to denote both one who occupies the place of Christ, and one who is against Christ. In "the Antichrist" the antichristian principle is personally concentrated. The conception of representative men is one which has become familiar to modern students of the philosophy of history. Such representative men, at once the products of the past, moulders of the present, and creative of the future, sum up in themselves tendencies and principles good and evil, and project them in a form equally compacted and intensified into the coming generations. Shadows and anticipations of Antichrist the holiest of the Church's sons have sometimes seen, even in the high places of the Church. But it is evident that as yet the Antichrist has not come. For wherever St. John mentions this fearful impersonation of evil, he connects the manifestation of his influence with absolute denial of the true Manhood, of the Messiahship, of the everlasting sonship of Jesus, of the Father, Who is His and our Father. In negation of the Personality of God, in the substitution of a glittering, but unreal, idea of human goodness and active philanthropy for the historical Christ, we of this age may not improbably hear his advancing

footsteps, and foresee the advent of a day when antichristianity shall find its great representative man.

(2) Antichrist is also refuted by a principle common to the life of Christians and by its result.

The principle by which he is refuted is a gift of insight lodged in the Church at large, and partaken of by all faithful souls.

A hint of a solemn crisis had been conveyed to the Christians of Asia Minor by secessions from the great Christian community. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us (which they did not, but went out) that they might be made manifest that not all are of us." Not only this. "Yea further, ye yourselves have a hallowing oil from Him who is hallowed, a chrism from the Christ, an unction from the Holy One, even from the Son of God." Chrism (as we are reminded by the most accurate of scholars) is always the material with which anointing is performed, never the act of anointing; it points to the unction of prophets, priests, and kings under the Old Testament, in whose sacrifices and mystic language oil symbolises the Holy Spirit as the spirit of joy and freedom. Quite possibly there may be some allusion to a literal use of oil in Baptism and Confirmation, which began at a very early period; though it is equally possible that the material may have arisen from the spiritual, and not in the reverse order. But beyond all question the real predominant reference is to the Holy Ghost. In the chrism here mentioned there is a feature characteristic of St. John's style. For there is first a faint prelusive note which (as we find in several other important subjects) is faintly struck and seems to die away, but is afterwards taken up, and more fully brought out. The full distinct mention of the Holy Spirit comes like a burst of the music of the "Veni Creator," carrying on the fainter prelude when it might seem to have been almost lost. The first reverential, almost timid hint, is succeeded by another, brief but significant—almost dogmatically expressive of the relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ as His Chrism, "the Chrism of Him." We shall presently have a direct mention of the Holy Ghost. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, from the Spirit which He gave us."

Antichrist is refuted by a result of this great principle of the life of the Holy Spirit in the living Church. "Ye have" chrism from the Christ; Antichrist shall not lay his unhallowing disanointing hand upon you. As a result of this, "ye know all things."

How are we to understand this startling expression?

If we receive any teachers as messengers commissioned by God, it is evident that their message must be communicated to us through the medium of human language. They come to us with minds that have been in contact with a Mind of infinite knowledge, and deliver utterances of universal import. They are therefore under an obligation to use language which is capable of being misunderstood by some persons. Our Lord and His Apostles so spoke at times. Two very different classes of men constantly misinterpret words like those of our text. The rationalist does so with a sinister smile; the fanatic with a cry of hysterical triumph. The first may point his epigram with effective reference to the exaggerated promise which is belied by the ignorance of so many ardent believers; the second may advance his absurd claim to personal infallibility in all things spiritual. Yet an Apostle calmly says—"ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." This, however, is but another asterisk directing the eye to the Master's promise in the Gospel, which is at once the warrant and the explanation of the utterance here: "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."* The express limitation of the Saviour's promise is the implied limitation of St. John's statement. "The Holy Ghost has been sent, according to this unfailing pledge. He teaches you (and, if He teaches, you know) all things which Christ has said, as far as their substance is written down in a true record—all things of the new creation spoken by our Lord, preserved by the help of the Spirit in the memories of chosen witnesses with unfading freshness, by the same Spirit unfolded and interpreted to you."

We should observe in what spirit and to whom St. John speaks.

He does not speak in the strain which would be adopted by a missionary in addressing men lately brought out of heathenism into the fold of Christ. He does not like a modern preacher or tract-writer at once divide his observations into two parts, one for the converted, one for the unconverted; all are his "dear ones" as beloved, his "sons" as brought into close spiritual relationship with himself. He classes them simply as young and old, with their respective graces of strength and knowledge. All are looked upon as "abiding"; almost the one exhortation is to abide unto the end in a condition upon which all have already entered, and in which some have long continued. We feel throughout the calmness and assurance of a spiritual teacher writing to Christian men who had either been born in the atmosphere of Christian tradition, or had lived in it for many years. They are again and again appealed to on the ground of a common Christian confidence—"we know." They have all the articles of the Christian creed, the great inheritance of a faithful summary of the words and works of Christ. The Gospel which Paul at first preached in Asia Minor was the starting point of the truth which remained among them, illustrated, expanded, applied, but absolutely unaltered. What the Christians whom St. John has in view really want is the revival of familiar truths, not the impartation of new. No spiritual voyage of discovery is needed; they have only to explore well-known regions. The memory and the affections must be stimulated. The truths which have become "cramped and bed-ridden" in the dormitory of the soul must acquire elasticity from exercise. The accumulation of ashes must be blown away, and the spark of fire beneath fanned into flame. This capacity of revival, of expansion, of quickened life, of developed truth, is in the unction common to the faithful, in the latent possibilities of the new birth. The same verse to which we have before referred as the best interpreter of this should be consulted again. There is an in-

* John xiv. 26.

structive distinction between the tenses—"as His unction is teaching"—"as it taught you." The teaching was, once for all, the creed definite and fixed, the body of truth a sum-total looked upon as one. "The unction taught." Once for all the Holy Spirit made known the Incarnation and stamped the recorded words of Christ with His seal. But there are depths of thought about His person which need to be reverently explored. There is an energy in His work which was not exhausted in the few years of its doing, and which is not imprisoned within the brief chronicle in which it is written. There are a spirit and a life in His words. In one aspect they have the strength of the tornado, which advances in a narrow line; but every foot of the column, as if armed with a tooth of steel, grinds and cuts into pieces all which resists it. Those words have also depths of tenderness, depths of wisdom, into which eighteen centuries have looked down and never yet seen the last of their meaning. Advancing time does but broaden the interpretation of the wisdom and the sympathy of those words. Applications of their significance are being discovered by Christian souls in forms as new and manifold as the claims of human need. The Church collectively is like one sanctified mind meditating incessantly upon the Incarnation; attaining more and more to an understanding of that character as it widens in a circle of glory round the form of its historical manifestation—considering how those words may be applied not only to self, but to humanity. The new wants of each successive generation bring new help out of that inexhaustible store. The Church may have "decided opinions"; but she has not the "deep slumber" which is said to accompany them. How can she be fast asleep who is ever learning from a teacher Who is always supplying her with fresh and varied lessons? The Church must be ever learning, because the anointing which "taught" once for all is also ever "teaching."

This profound saying is therefore chiefly true of Christians as a whole. Yet each individual believer may surely have a part in it. "There is a teacher in the heart who has also a chair in heaven." "The Holy Spirit who dwells in the justified soul," says a pious writer, "is a great director." May we not add that He is a great catechist? In difficulties, whether worldly, intellectual, or spiritual, thousands for a time helpless and ignorant, in presence of difficulties through which they could not make their way, have found with surprise how true in the sequel our text has become to them.

For we all know how different things, persons, truths, ideas may become, as they are seen at different times and in different lights, as they are seen in relation to God and truth or outside that relation. The bread in Holy Communion is unchanged in substance; but some new and glorious relation is superadded to it. It is devoted by its consecration to the noblest use manward and Godward, so that St. Paul speaks of it with hushed reverence as "The Body."* It seems to be a part of the same law that some one—once perhaps frivolous, commonplace, sinful—is taken into the hand of the great High Priest, broken with sorrow and penitence, and blessed; and thereafter he is at once personally the same, and yet another higher and better by that awful consecration to another use. So again with some truth of creed or catechism which we have fallen into the fallacy of supposing that we know because it is familiar. It may be a truth that is sweet or one that is tremendous. It awaits its consecration, its blessing, its transformation into a something which in itself is the same, yet which is other to us. That is to say, the familiar truth is old, in itself, in substance and expression. It needs no other, and can have no better formula. To change the formula would be to alter the truth; but to us it is taught newly with a fuller and nobler exposition by the unction which is "ever teaching," whereby we "know all things."

* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

SECTION V.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται. Ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ, ἵνα τέκνα Θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καί ἐσμεν. διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν. Ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα Θεοῦ ἐσμέν, καὶ οὔπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα· οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν φανερωθῇ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὀψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθώς ἐστιν. καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἁγνίζει ἑαυτὸν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἁγνός ἐστιν. Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ. καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία. καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ, καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν. Παιδία,	Si scitis quoniam iustus est, scitote quoniam omnis qui facit iustitiam ex ipso natus est. Videte qualem caritatem dedit nobis Pater ut filii Dei nominemur et simus. Propter hoc mundus non novit nos, quia non novit eum. Carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus et nondum apparuit quid erimus. Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est. Et omnis qui habet spem hanc in eo sanctificat se, sicut et ille sanctus est. Omnis qui facit peccatum et iniquitatem facit, et peccatum est iniquitas. Et scitis quoniam ille apparuit ut peccata tulerit, et peccatum in eo non est. Omnis qui in eo manet non peccat, et	If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was	If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope *set* on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness: and sin is lawlessness. And ye	If ye know that He is righteous, ye are aware that every one who is doing righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God;—and we are. Because of this the world knoweth us not because it knew not Him. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it never yet was manifested what we shall be; but we know that if it shall be manifested we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone that hath this hope *fixed* on Him is ever purifying himself even as He is pure. Every one that is doing sin, is also doing lawlessness; and, *indeed*, sin is

SECTION V.—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
μηδεὶς πλανάτω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν. ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου. πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει· καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται.	omnis qui peccat non vidit eum nec cognovit eum. Filioli, nemo vos seducat. Qui facit iustitiam, iustus est: sicut et ille instus est: qui facit peccatum, ex diabolo est quoniam ab initio diabolus peccat. In hoc apparuit Filius Dei, ut dissolvat opera diaboli. Omnis qui natus est ex Deo peccatum non facit, quoniam semen ipsius in eo manet, et non potest peccare, quoniam ex Deo natus est.	manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.	know that He was manifested to take away sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither knoweth Him. *My* little children, let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous; he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because His seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.	lawlessness. And ye know that He was manifested that He should take away sins; and sin in Him is not. Whosoever abideth in Him is not sinning; every one that is sinning hath not seen Him neither hath known Him. Little children, let no man mislead you; he that is doing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous: he that is doing sin is of the devil, because the devil is continually sinning from the beginning. Unto this end the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God is not doing sin; for His seed abideth in Him, and he is not able to be sinning, because he is born of God.

SECTION VI.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου. Πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους· οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξε τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια. μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος. Ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι μεταβεβήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωήν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ· πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν· καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν. Ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκε· καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς θεῖναι. ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρείαν ἔχοντα καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ; τεκνία, μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ γλώσσῃ, ἀλλ' ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν, καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν· ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ Θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γινώσκει πάντα. ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ	In hoc manifesti sunt filii Dei et filii diaboli. Omnis qui non est iustus non est ex Deo, et qui non diligit fratrem suum; quoniam hæc est adnuntiatio quam audistis ab initio, ut diligamus alterutrum, non sicut Cain ex maligno erat, et occidit fratrem suum. Et propter quid occidit eum? Quoniam opera eius maligna erant, fratris autem eius iusta. Nolite mirari, fratres, si odit nos mundus. Nos scimus quoniam translati sumus de morte in vitam, quoniam diligimus fratres: qui non diligit, manet in morte. Omnis qui odit fratrem suum homicida est, et scitis quoniam omnis homicida non habet vitam æternam in se manentem. In hoc cognovimus caritatem Dei, quoniam ille pro nobis animam suam posuit: et nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere. Qui habuerit substantiam mundi et viderit fratrem suum necesse habere et clauserit viscera sua ab eo, quomodo caritas Dei manet in eo? Filioli, non diligamus verbo nec lingua sed opere et veritate. In hoc cognovimus quoniam ex veritate sumus: et in conspectu eius suademus corda nostra, quoniam si reprehenderit nos cor nostrum, major est Deus corda nostram et novit omnia. Carissimi, si cor nostrum non reprehenderit nos, fi-	In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemn us, God is	In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? *My* little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth	In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: every one who is not doing righteousness is not of God, neither he that is not loving his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning that ye should love one another. Not as Cain was of the wicked one and slew his brother (*shall we be*). And wherefore slew he him? because his works were evil, but those of his brother righteous. Brethren, marvel not if the world hate you. We know that we have passed over from the death unto the life because we love the brethren. He who loveth not abideth in the death. Every one who hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we The Love because He laid down His life for us: and we are bound to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath the living of the world and gazes on his brother having need and shuts out his heart from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? Children, let us not love in word, nor with the tongue, but in work and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth and shall persuade our hearts before Him. For if

SECTION VI.—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
ἡμῶν, παρρησίαν ἐχομεν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ ὃ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν, λαμβάνομεν παρ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν, καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολήν. καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ, ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ. καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν.	duciam habemus ad Deum, et quodcumque petierimus accipiemus ab eo, quoniam mandata eius custodemus et ea quæ sunt placida coram eo facimus. Et hoc est mandatum eius ut credamus in nomine filii eius Iesu Christi et diligamus alterutrum sicut dedit mandatum nobis. Et qui servat mandata eius, in illo manet et ipse in eo: et in hoc scimus quoniam manet in nobis, de spiritu quem dedit nobis.	greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.	all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.	our heart condemn us God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not then have we boldness toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, for we observe His commandments, and are doing those things that are pleasing in His sight. And His commandment is this, that we should believe the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another as He gave commandment. And he who is observing His commandments abideth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us—from the Spirit which He gave us.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOFTY IDEALS PERILOUS UNLESS APPLIED.

1 John iii. 16-18.

Even the world sees that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ has very practical results. Even the Christmas which the world keeps is fruitful in two of these results—forgiving and giving. How many of the multitudinous letters at that season contain one or other of these things—either the kindly gift, or the tender of reconciliation; the confession "I was wrong," or the gentle advance "we were both wrong."

Love, charity (as we rather prefer to say), in its effects upon all our relations to others, is the beautiful subject of this section of our Epistle. It begins with the message of love itself—yet another asterisk referring to the Gospel, to the very substance of the teaching which the believers of Ephesus had first received from St. Paul, and which had been emphasised by St. John. This message is announced not merely as a sounding sentiment, but for the purpose of being carried out into action. As in moral subjects virtues and vices are best illustrated by their contraries; so, beside the bright picture of the Son of God, the Apostle points to the sinister likeness of Cain. After some brief and parenthetic words of pathetic consolation, he states as the mark of the great transition from death to life, the existence of love as a pervading spirit effectual in operation. The dark opposite of this is then delineated in consonance with the mode of representation just above. But two such pictures of darkness must not shadow the sunlit gallery of love. There is another—the fairest and brightest. Our love can only be estimated by likeness to it; it is imperfect unless it is conformed to the print of the wounds, unless it can be measured by the standard of the great Self-sacrifice. But if this may be claimed as the one real proof of conformity to Christ, much more is the limited partial sacrifice of "this world's good" required. This spirit, and the conduct which it requires in the long run, will be found to be the test of all solid spiritual comfort, of all true self-condemnation or self-acquittal.

We may say of the verses prefixed to this discourse, that they bring before us charity in its idea, in its example, in its characteristics—in theory, in action, in life.

I.

We have here love in its idea, "hereby know we love." Rather "hereby know we The Love."

Here the idea of charity in us runs parallel with that in Christ. It is a subtle but true remark, that there is here no logical inferential particle. "Because He laid down His life for us," is not followed by its natural correlative "therefore we," but by a simple connective "and we." The reason is this, that our duty herein is not a mere cold logical deduction. It is all of one piece with The Love. "We know The Love because He laid down His life for us; and we are in duty bound for the brethren to lay down our lives."

Here, then, is the idea of love, as capable of realisation in us. It is continuous unselfishness, to be crowned by voluntary death, if death is necessary. The beautiful old Church tradition shows that this language was the language of St. John's life. Who has forgotten how the Apostle in his old age is said to have gone on a journey to find the young man who had fled from Ephesus and joined a band of robbers; and to have appealed to the fugitive in words which are the pathetic echo of these—"if needs be I would die for thee as He for us"?

II.

The idea of charity is then practically illustrated by an incident of its opposite. "But whoso hath this world's good, and gazes upon his brother in need, and shuts up his heart

against him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" The reason for this descent in thought is wise and sound. High abstract ideas, expressed in lofty and transcendent language, are at once necessary and dangerous for creatures like us. They are necessary, because without these grand conceptions our moral language and our moral life would be wanting in dignity, in amplitude, in the inspiration and impulse which are often necessary for duty and always for restoration. But they are dangerous in proportion to their grandeur. Men are apt to mistake the emotion awakened by the very sound of these magnificent expressions of duty for the discharge of the duty itself. Hypocrisy delights in sublime speculations, because it has no intention of their costing anything. Some of the most abject creatures embodied by the masters of romance never fail to parade their sonorous generalisations. One of such characters, as the world will long remember, proclaims that sympathy is one of the holiest principles of our common nature, while he shakes his fist at a beggar.

Every large speculative ideal then is liable to this danger; and he who contemplates it requires to be brought down from his transcendental region to the test of some commonplace duty. This is the latent link of connection in this passage. The ideal of love to which St. John points is the loftiest of all the moral and spiritual emotions which belong to the sentiments of man. Its archetype is in the bosom of God, in the eternal relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "God is love." Its home in humanity is Christ's heart of fire and flesh; its example is the Incarnation ending in the Cross.

Now of course the question for all but one in thousands is not the attainment of this lofty ideal—laying down his life for the brethren. Now and then, indeed, the physician pays with his own death for the heroic rashness of drawing out from his patient the fatal matter. Sometimes the pastor is cut off by fever contracted in ministering to the sick, or by voluntarily living and working in an unwholesome atmosphere. Once or twice in a decade some heart is as finely touched by the spirit of love as Father Damien, facing the certainty of death from a long slow putrefaction, that a congregation of lepers may enjoy the consolations of faith. St. John here reminds us that the ordinary test of charity is much more commonplace. It is helpful compassion to a brother who is known to be in need, manifested by giving to him something of this world's "good"—of the "living" of this world which he possesses.

III.

We have next the characteristics of love in action. "My sons, let us not love in word nor with the tongue; but in work and truth." There is love in its energy and reality; in its effort and sincerity—active and honest, without indolence and without pretence. We may well be reminded here of another familiar story of St. John at Ephesus. When too old to walk himself to the assembly of the Church, he was carried there. The Apostle who had lain upon the breast of Jesus; who had derived from direct communication with Him those words and thoughts which are the life of the elect, was expected to address the faithful. The light of the Ephesian summer fell upon his white hair; perhaps glittered upon the mitre which tradition has assigned to him. But when he had risen to speak, he only repeated—"little children, love one another." Modern hearers are sometimes tempted to envy the primitive Christians of the Ephesian Church, if for nothing else, yet for the privilege of listening to the shortest sermon upon record in the annals of Christianity. When Christian preachers have behind them the same long series of virgin years, within them the same love of Christ and knowledge of His mysteries; when their very presence evinces the same sad, tender, smiling, weeping, all-embracing sympathy with the wants and sorrows of humanity; they may perhaps venture upon the perilous experiment of contracting their sermons within the same span as St. John's. And when some who, like the hearers at Ephesus, are not prepared for the repetition of an utterance so brief, begin to ask—"why are you always saying this?"—the answer may well be in the spirit of the reply which the aged Apostle is said to have made—"because it is the commandment of the Lord, and sufficient, if it only be fulfilled indeed."

IV.

This passage supplies an argument (capable, as we have seen in the Introduction, of much larger expansion from the Epistle as a whole) against mutilated views, fragmentary versions of the Christian life.

There are four such views which are widely prevalent at the present time.

(1) The first of these is emotionalism; which makes the entire Christian life consist in a series or bundle of emotions. Its origin is the desire of having the feelings touched, partly from sheer love of excitement; partly from an idea that if and when we have worked up certain emotions to a fixed point we are saved and safe. This reliance upon feelings is in the last analysis reliance upon self. It is a form of salvation by works; for feelings are inward actions. It is an unhappy anachronism which inverts the order of Scripture; which substitutes peace and grace (the compendious dogma of the heresy of the emotions) for grace and peace, the only order known to St. Paul and St. John. The only spiritual emotions spoken of in this Epistle are "joy, confidence, assuring our hearts before Him": the first as the result of receiving the history of Jesus in the Gospel, the Incarnation, and the blessed communion with God and the Church which it involves; the second as tried by tests of a most practical kind.

(2) The next of these mutilated views of the Christian life is doctrinalism—which makes it consist of a series or bundle of doctrines apprehended and expressed correctly, at least according to certain formulas, generally of a narrow and unauthorised character. According to this view the question to be answered is—has one quite correctly understood, can one verbally formulate certain almost scholastic distinctions in the doctrine of justification? The well-known standard—"the Bible only"—must be reduced by the excision of all within the Bible except the writings of St. Paul; and even in this

selected portion faith must be entirely guided by certain portions more selected still, so that the question finally may be reduced to this shape—"am I a great deal sounder than St. John and St. James, a little sounder than an unexpurgated St. Paul, as sound as a carefully expurgated edition of the Pauline Epistles?"

(3) The third mutilated view of the Christian life is humanitarianism—which makes it a series or bundle of philanthropic actions.

There are some who work for hospitals, or try to bring more light and sweetness into crowded dwelling-houses. Their lives are pure and noble. But the one article of their creed is humanity. Altruism is their highest duty. Their object, so far as they have any object apart from the supreme rule of doing right, is to lay hold on subjective immortality by living on in the recollection of those whom they have helped, whose existence has been soothed and sweetened by their sympathy. With others the case is different. Certain forms of this busy helpfulness—especially in the laudable provision of recreations for the poor—are an innocent interlude in fashionable life; sometimes, alas! a kind of work of supererogation, to atone for the want of devotion or of purity—possibly an untheological survival of a belief in justification by works.

(4) A fourth fragmentary view of the Christian life is observationism, which makes it to consist in a bundle or series of observances. Frequent services and communions, perhaps with exquisite forms and in beautifully decorated churches, have their dangers as well as their blessings. However closely linked these observances may be, there must still in every life be interstices between them. How are these filled up? What spirit within connects together, vivifies and unifies, this series of external acts of devotion? They are means to an end. What if the means come to interpose between us and the end—just as a great political thinker has observed that with legal minds the forms of business frequently overshadow the substance of business, which is their end, and for which they were called into existence. And what is the end of our Christian calling? A life pardoned; in process of purification; growing in faith, in love of God and man, in quiet joyful service. Certainly a "rage for ceremonials and statistics," a long list of observances, does not infallibly secure such a life, though it may often be not alone the delighted and continuous expression, but the constant food and support of such a life. But assuredly if men trust in any of these things—in their emotions, in their favourite formulas, in their philanthropic works, in their religious observances—in anything but Christ, they greatly need to go back to the simple text, "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

Now, as we have said above, in distinction from all these fragmentary views, St. John's Epistle is a survey of the completed Christian life, founded upon his Gospel. It is a consummate fruit ripened in the long summers of his experience. It is not a treatise upon the Christian affections, nor a system of doctrine, nor an essay upon works of charity, nor a companion to services.

Yet this wonderful Epistle presupposes at least much that is most precious of all these elements. (1) It is far from being a burst of emotionalism. Yet almost at the outset it speaks of an emotion as being the natural result of rightly received objective truth. St. John recognises feeling, whether of supernatural or natural origin; but he recognises it with a certain majestic reserve. Once only does he seem to be carried away. In a passage to which reference has just been made, after stating the dogma of the Incarnation, he suffuses it with a wealth of emotional colour. It is Christmas in his soul; the bells ring out good tidings of great joy. "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." (2) This Epistle is no dogmatic summary. Yet combining its prœmium with the other of the fourth Gospel, we have the most perfect statement of the dogma of the Incarnation. As we read thoughtfully on, dogma after dogma stands out in relief. The divinity of the Word, the reality of His manhood, the effect of His atonement, His intercession, His continual presence, the personality of the Holy Spirit, His gifts to us, the relation of the Spirit to Christ, the Holy Trinity—all these find their place in these few pages. If St. John is no mere doctrinalist he is yet the greatest theologian the Church has ever seen. (3) Once more; if the Apostle's Christianity is no mere humanitarian sentiment to encourage the cultivation of miscellaneous acts of good-nature, yet it is deeply pervaded by a sense of the integral connection of practical love of man with the love of God. So much is this the case, that a large gathering of the most emotional of modern sects is said to have gone on with a Bible reading in St. John's Epistle until they came to the words—"we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The reader immediately closed the book, pronouncing with general assent the verse was likely to disturb the peace of the children of God. Still St. John puts humanitarianism in its right place as a result of something higher. "This commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." As if he would say—"do not sever the law of social life from the law of supernatural life; do not separate the human fraternity from a Divine Fatherhood." (4) No one can suppose that for St. John religion was a mere string of observances. Indeed, to some his Epistle has given the notion of a man living in an atmosphere where external ordinances and ministries either did not exist at all, or only in almost impalpable forms. Yet in that wonderful manual, "The Imitation of Christ," there is scarcely the faintest trace of any of these external things; while no one could possibly argue that the author was ignorant of, or lightly esteemed, the ordinances and sacraments amongst which his life must have been spent. Certainly the fourth Gospel is deeply sacramental. This Epistle, with its calm, unhesitating conviction of the sonship of all to whom it is addressed; with its view of the Christian life as in idea a continuous growth from a birth the secret of whose origin is given in the Gospel; with its expressive hints of sources of grace and power and of a continual presence of Christ; with its deep mystical realisation of the double flow from the pierced side upon the cross, and its thrice-repeated exchange of the sacramental order "water and blood," for the historical order "blood and water"; unquestionably has the sacramental sense diffused throughout it. The Sacraments

are not in obtrusive prominence; yet for those who have eyes to see they lie in deep and tender distances. Such is the view of the Christian life in this letter—a life in which Christ's truth is blended with Christ's love; assimilated by thought, exhaling in worship, softening into sympathy with man's suffering and sorrow. It calls for the believing soul, the devout heart, the helping hand. It is the perfect balance in a saintly soul, of feeling, creed, communion, and work.

For of work for our fellow-man it is that the question is asked half despairingly—"whoso hath this world's good, and seeth" (gazes at) "his brother have need, and shutteth up his heart against him, how doth the love of God dwell in him." Some can quietly look at the poor brother; they see him in need. They may belong to "the sluggard Pity's vision-weaving tribe," who expend a sigh of sentiment upon such spectacles, and nothing more. Or they may be hardened professors of the "dismal science," who have learned to consider a sigh as the luxury of ignorance or of feebleness. But for all practical purposes both these classes interpose a too effectual barrier between their heart and their brother's need. But true Christians are made partakers in Christ of the mystery of human suffering. Even when they are not actually in sight of brethren in want, their ears are ever hearing the ceaseless moaning of the sea of human sorrow, with a sympathy which involves its own measure of pain, though a pain which brings with it abundant compensation. Their inner life has not merely won for itself the partly selfish satisfaction of personal escape from punishment, great as that blessing may be. They have caught something of the meaning of the secret of all love—"we love because He first loved us."* In those words is the romance (if we may dare to call it so) of the divine love-tale. Under its influence the face once hard and narrow often becomes radiant and softened; it smiles, or is tearful, in the light of the love of His face who first loved.

It is this principle of St. John which is ever at work in Christian lands. In hospitals it tells us that Christ is ever passing down the wards; that He will have no stinted service; that He must have more for His sick, more devotion, a gentler touch, a finer sympathy; that where His hand has broken and blessed, every particle is a sacred thing, and must be treated reverently.

Are there any who are tempted to think that our text has become antiquated; that it no longer holds true in the light of organised charity, of economic science? Let them listen to one who speaks with the weight of years of active benevolence, and with consummate knowledge of its method and duties.* "There are men who, in their detestation of roguery, forget that by a wholesale condemnation of charity, they run the risk of driving the honest to despair and of turning them into the very rogues of whom they desire so ardently to be quit. These men are unconsciously playing into the hands of the Socialists and the Anarchists, the only sections of society whose distinct interest it is that misery and starvation should increase. No doubt indiscriminate almsgiving is hurtful to the State as well as to the individual who receives the dole, but not less dangerous would it be to society if the principles of these stern political economists were to be literally accepted by any large number of the rich, and if charity ceased to be practised within the land. We cannot yet afford to shut ourselves up in the castle of philosophic indifference, regardless of the fate of those who have the misfortune to find themselves outside its walls."

* 1 John iv. 19.

* Lord Meath.

SECTION VII

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Αγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε, ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα, εἰ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν· ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστι. καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα, ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐκ ἔστι· καὶ τοῦτο ἐστι τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου, ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη. Ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστε, τεκνία. καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς· ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. Αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσί· διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσι, καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει· ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν Θεόν, ἀκούει ἡμῶν· ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. Ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης.	Carissimi, nolite omni spiritui credere, sed probate spiritus si ex Deo sint, quoniam multi pseudoprophetæ exierunt in mundum. In hoc cognoscitur spiritus Dei. Omnis spiritus qui confitetur Iesum Christum in carne venisse, ex Deo est: et omnis spiritus qui solvit Iesum Christum ex Deo non est; et hic est Antichristus quod audistis quoniam venit et nunc iam in mundo est. Vos ex Deo estis, filioli, et vicistis eum, quoniam maior est qui in vobis est quam qui in mundo. Ipsi de mundo sunt: ideo de mundo loquuntur, et mundus eos audit. Nos ex Deo sumus: qui novit Deum audit nos; qui non est ex Deo, non audit nos. In hoc cognoscimus spiritum veritatis et spiritum erroris.	Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.	Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, *my* little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they *as* of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us: he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.	Beloved, believe not any spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is that *power* of the antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and even now it is in the world already. Ye are of God, children, and have conquered them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore of the world is their manner of speech, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us, he who is not of God heareth not us. From this we know the spirit of The Truth, and the spirit of the error.

SECTION VIII.

GREEK.

Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστι, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν Θεόν· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν Θεόν· ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. Ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήσαμεν τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ Θεὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν. Θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται· ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ τετελειωμένη ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν. Καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ ἀπέσταλκε τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου. ὃς ἂν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ Θεῷ. Καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν. ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστί, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ Θεῷ μένει, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ. Ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως· ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ. φόβος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, ἀλλ' ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον, ὅτι ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει, ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ. ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς. Ἐάν τις εἴπῃ, Ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν Θεόν, καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ, ψεύστης ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἑώρακε τὸν Θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἑώρακε πῶς δύναται ἀγαπᾶν; καὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔχομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ.

Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγέννηται· καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ. ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν Θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. αὕτη γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν.

LATIN.

Carissimi, diligamus invicem, quoniam caritas ex Deo est, et omnis qui diligit ex Deo natus est et cognoscit Deum. Qui non diligit non novit Deum, quoniam Deus caritas est. In hoc apparuit caritas Dei in nobis, quoniam Filium Suum unigenitum misit Deus in mundum, ut vivamus per Eum. In hoc est caritas, non quasi nos dilexreimus Deum, sed quoniam ipse dilexit nos et misit Filium suum propitionem pro peccatis nostris. Carissimi, si sic Deus dilexit nos, et nos debemus alterutrum diligere. Deum nemo vidit unquam: si diligamus invicem, Deus in nobis manet, et caritas eius in nobis perfecta est. In hoc intelligimus quoniam in eo manemus et ipse in nobis. quoniam de Spiritu Suo dedit nobis. Et nos vidimus et testificamur quoniam Pater misit Filium salvatorem mundi. Quicunque confessus fuerit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei, Deus in eo manet, et ipse in Deo. Et nos cognovimus et credimus, caritati Dei quam habet Deus in nobis. Deus caritas est, et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet, et Deus in eo. In hoc perfecta est nobiscum caritas ut fiduciam habeamus in die iudicii quia sicut ille est et nos sumus in hoc mundo. Timor non est in caritate, sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem; quoniam timor pœnam habet, qui autem timet non est perfectus in caritate. Nos ergo diligamus invicem quoniam Deus prior dilexit nos. Si quis dixerit quoniam diligo Deum, et fratrem suum oderit, mendax est: qui enim non diligit fratrem suum quem vidit, Deum quem non vidit quomodo potest diligere? Et hoc mandatum habemus a Deo, ut qui diligat Deum diligat et fratrem suum.

Omnis qui credit quoniam Iesus est Christus, ex Deo natus est; et omnis qui diligit eum qui genuit, diligit eum qui natus est ex eo. In hoc cognoscimus quoniam diligimus natos Dei, cum Deum diligamus et mandata eius faciamus. Hæc est enim caritas Dei, ut mandata eius custodiamus.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

REVISED VERSION.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us: hereby know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment: and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and whosoever loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and do His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

ANOTHER VERSION.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God in us, because that God hath sent His Son, His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is The Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son *as* propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also are bounden to love one another. God no one hath ever yet beholden: if we love one another God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us. Herein know we that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us out of the *fulness* of His Spirit. And we have beheld and are bearing witness that the Father hath sent the Son *as* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in God, abideth in God, and God in him. Herein hath The Love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the Day of the Judgment: because as He is so are we in this world. Fear is not in love: but the perfect love casteth out fear, because fear bringeth punishment with it. He that is fearing is not made perfect in his love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, God whom he hath not seen how can he love? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one who loveth Him that begat loveth also Him that is begotten of Him. Herein we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do His commandments: for this is the love of God, that we observe His commandments.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

1 John iv. 17.

It has been so often repeated that St. John's eschatology is idealised and spiritual, that people now seldom pause to ask what is meant by the words. Those who repeat them most frequently seem to think that the idealised means that which will never come into the region of historical fact, and that the spiritual is best defined as the unreal. Yet, without postulating the Johannic authorship of the Apocalypse—where the Judgment is described with the most awful accompaniments of outward solemnity*—there are two places in this Epistle which are allowed to drop out of view, but which bring us face to face with the visible manifestations of an external Advent. It is a peculiarity of St. John's style (as we have frequently seen) to strike some chord of thought, so to speak, before its time; to allow the prelusive note to float away, until suddenly, after a time, it surprises us by coming back again with a fuller and bolder resonance. "And now, my sons,"† (had the Apostle said) "abide in Him, that if He shall be manifested, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed, shrinking from Him at His coming." In our text the same thought is resumed, and the reality of the Coming and Judgment in its external manifestation as emphatically given as in any other part of the New Testament.

We may here speak of the conception of the Day of Judgment: of the fear with which that conception is encompassed; and of the sole means of the removal of that fear which St. John recognises.

I.

We examine the general conception of "the Day of the Judgment," as given in the New Testament.

As there is that which with terrible emphasis is marked off as "the Judgment," "the Parousia," so there are other judgments or advents of a preparatory character. As there are phenomena known as mock suns, or halos round the moon, so there are fainter reflections ringed round the Advent, the Judgment. Thus, in the development of history, there are successive cycles of continuing judgment; preparatory advents; less completed crises, as even the world calls them.

But against one somewhat widely-spread way of blotting the Day of the Judgment from the calendar of the future—so far as believers are concerned—we should be on our guard. Some good men think themselves entitled to reason thus—"I am a Christian. I shall be an assessor in the judgment. For me there is, therefore, no judgment day." And it is even held out as an inducement to others to close with this conclusion, that they "shall be delivered from the bugbear of judgment."

The origin of this notion seems to be in certain universal tendencies of modern religious thought.

The idolatry of the immediate—the prompt creation of effect—is the perpetual snare of revivalism. Revivalism is thence fatally bound at once to follow the tide of emotion, and to increase the volume of the waters by which it is swept along. But the religious emotion of this generation has one characteristic by which it is distinguished from that of previous centuries. The revivalism of the past in all Churches rode upon the dark waves of fear. It worked upon human nature by exaggerated material descriptions of hell, by solemn appeals to the throne of Judgment. Certain schools of biblical criticism have enabled men to steel themselves against this form of preaching. An age of soft humanitarian sentiment—superficial and inclined to forget that perfect Goodness may be a very real cause of fear—must be stirred by emotions of a different kind. The infinite sweetness of our Father's heart—the conclusions, illogically but effectively drawn from this, of an Infinite good-nature, with its easy-going pardon, reconciliation all round, and exemption from all that is unpleasant—these, and such as these, are the only available materials for creating a great volume of emotion. An invertebrate creed; punishment either annihilated or mitigated; judgment, changed from a solemn and universal assize, a bar at which every soul must stand, to a splendid, and—for all who can say I am saved—a triumphant pageant in which they have no anxious concern; these are the readiest instruments, the most powerful leverage, with which to work extensively upon masses of men at the present time. And the seventh article of the Apostles' Creed must pass into the limbo of exploded superstition.

The only appeal to Scripture which such persons make, with any show of plausibility, is contained in an exposition of our Lord's teaching in a part of the fifth chapter of the fourth Gospel.* But clearly there are three Resurrection scenes which may be discriminated in those words. The first is spiritual, a present awakening of dead souls,† in those with whom the Son of Man is brought into contact in His earthly ministry. The second is a department of the same spiritual Resurrection. The Son of God, with that mysterious gift of Life in Himself,‡ has within Him a perpetual spring of rejuvenescence for a faded and dying world. A renewal of hearts is in process during all the days of time, a passage for soul after soul out of death into life. The third scene is the general§ Resurrection and general Judgment.‖ The first was the resurrection of comparatively few; the second of many; the third of all. If it is said that the believer "cometh not into judgment," the word in that place plainly signifies condemnation.

Clear and plain above all such subtleties ring out the awe-inspiring words: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment;" "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Reason supplies us with two great arguments for the General Judgment. One from the conscience of history, so to speak; the other from the individual conscience.

1. General history points to a general judgment. If there is no such judgment to come, then there is no one definite moral purpose in human society. Progress would be a melan-

* Apoc. xx. 12, 13. † 1 John ii. 28.

* John v. 21, 29. † Ver. 21. ‡ Ver. 26. § Ver. 24. ‖ Ver. 28, 29.

choly word, a deceptive appearance, a stream that has no issue, a road that leads nowhere. No one who believes that there is a Personal God, Who guides the course of human affairs, can come to the conclusion that the generations of man are to go on for ever without a winding-up, which shall decide upon the doings of all who take part in human life. In the philosophy of nature, the affirmation or denial of purpose is the affirmation or denial of God. So in the philosophy of history. Society without the General Judgment would be a chaos of random facts, a thing without rational retrospect or definite end—*i. e.*, without God. If man is under the government of God, human history is a drama, long-drawn, and of infinite variety, with inconceivably numerous actors. But a drama must have a last act. The last act of the drama of history is "The Day of the Judgment."

2. The other argument is derived from the individual conscience.

Conscience, as a matter of fact, has two voices. One is imperative; it tells us what we are to do. One is prophetic, and warns us of something which we are to receive. If there is to be no Day of the General Judgment, then the million prophecies of conscience will be belied, and our nature prove to be mendacious to its very roots.

There is no essential article of the Christian creed like this which can be isolated from the rest, and treated as if it stood alone. There is a solidarity of each with all the rest. Any which is isolated is in danger itself, and leaves the others exposed. For they have an internal harmony and congruity. They do not form a hotchpot of credenda. They are not so many beliefs, but one belief. Thus the isolation of articles is perilous. For, when we try to grasp and to defend one of them, we have no means left of measuring it but by terms of comparison which are drawn from ourselves, which must therefore be finite, and, by the inadequacy of the scale which they present, appear to render the article of faith thus detached incredible. Moreover, each article of our creed is a revelation of the Divine attributes, which meet together in unity. To divide the attributes by dividing the form in which they are revealed to us, is to belie and falsify the attribute; to give a monstrous development to one by not taking into account some other which is its balance and compensation. Thus, many men deny the truth of a punishment which involves final separation from God. They glory in the legal judgment which "dismisses hell with costs." But they do so by fixing their attention exclusively upon the one dogma which reveals one attribute of God. They isolate it from the Fall, from the Redemption by Christ, from the gravity of sin, from the truth that all whom the message of the Gospel reaches may avoid the penal consequences of sin. It is impossible to face the dogma of eternal separation from God without facing the dogma of Redemption. For Redemption involves in its very idea the intensity of sin, which needed the sacrifice of the Son of God; and further, the fact that the offer of salvation is so free and wide that it cannot be put away without a terrible wilfulness.

In dealing with many of the articles of the creed, there are opposite extremes. Exaggeration leads to a revenge upon them which is, perhaps, more perilous than neglect. Thus, as regards eternal punishment, in one century ghastly exaggerations were prevalent. It was assumed that the vast majority of mankind "are destined to everlasting punishment"; that "the floor of hell is crawled over by hosts of babies a span long." The inconsistency of such views with the love of God, and with the best instincts of man, was victoriously and passionately demonstrated. Then unbelief turned upon the dogma itself, and argued, with wide acceptance, that "with the overthrow of this conception goes the whole redemption-plan, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and the grand climax of the Church-scheme, the General Judgment." But the alleged article of faith was simply an exaggeration of that faith, and the objections lay altogether against the exaggeration of it.

II.

We have now to speak of the removal of that terror which accompanies the conception of the Day of the Judgment, and of the sole means of that emancipation which St. John recognises. For terror there is in every point of the repeated descriptions of Scripture—in the surroundings, in the summons, in the tribunal, in the trial, in one of the two sentences.

"God is love," writes St. John, "and he that abideth in love abideth in God: and God abideth in him. In this [abiding], love stands perfected with us, and the object is nothing less than this," not that we may be exempted from judgment, but that "we may have boldness in the Day of the Judgment." Boldness! It is the splendid word which denotes the citizen's right of free speech, the masculine privilege of courageous liberty. It is the tender word which expresses the child's unhesitating confidence, in "saying all out" to the parent. The ground of the boldness is conformity to Christ. Because "as He is," with that vivid idealising sense, frequent in St. John when he uses it of our Lord—"as He is," delineated in the fourth Gospel, seen by "the eye of the heart" * with constant reverence in the soul, with adoring wonder in heaven, perfectly true, pure, and righteous —"even so" (not, of course, with any equality in degree to that consummate ideal, but with a likeness ever growing, an aspiration ever advancing †)—"so are we in this world," purifying ourselves as He is pure.

Let us draw to a definite point our considerations upon the Judgment, and the Apostle's sweet encouragement for the "day of wrath, that dreadful day."

It is of the essence of the Christian faith to believe that the Son of God, in the Human Nature which He assumed, and which He has borne into heaven, shall come again, and gather all before Him, and pass sentence of condemnation or of peace according to their works. To hold this is necessary to prevent terrible doubts of the very existence of God; to guard us against sin, in view of that solemn account; to comfort us under affliction.

What a thought for us, if we would but meditate upon it! Often we complain of a commonplace life, of mean and petty employment. How can it be so, when at the end we, and those with whom we live, must look upon that great, overwhelming sight! Not an eye that shall not

* Ephes. i. 18. † *Cf.* Matt. v. 48.

see Him, not a knee that shall not bow, not an ear that shall not hear the sentence. The heart might sink and the imagination quail under the burden of the supernatural existence which we cannot escape. One of two looks we must turn upon the Crucified—one willing as that which we cast on some glorious picture, on the enchantment of the sky; the other unwilling and abject. We should weep first with Zechariah's mourners, with tears at once bitter because they are for sin, and sweet because they are for Christ.

But, above all things, let us hear how St. John sings us the sweet low hymn that breathes consolation through the terrible fall of the triple hammer-stroke of the rhyme in the "Dies iræ." We must seek to lead upon earth a life laid on the lines of Christ's. Then, when the Day of the Judgment comes; when the cross of fire (so, at least, the early Christians thought) shall stand in the black vault; when the sacred wounds of Him who was pierced shall stream over with a light beyond dawn or sunset; we shall find that the discipline of life is complete, that God's love after all its long working with us stands perfected, so that we shall be able, as citizens of the kingdom, as children of the Father, to say out all. A Christlike character in an un-Christlike world—this is the cure of the disease of terror. Any other is but the medicine of a quack. "There is no fear in love; but the perfect love casteth out fear, because fear brings punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

We may well close with that pregnant commentary on this verse which tells us of the four possible conditions of a human soul—"without either fear or love; with fear, without love; with fear and love; with love, without fear."

SECTION IX.

GREEK.

Καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι οὐκ εἰσίν· ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον· καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν. τίς ἐστιν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον, εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ; Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ αἵματος, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός· οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια. ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα· καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσιν. Εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὃ μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν αὐτῷ. ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ Θεῷ, ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὐ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν, ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ. Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία ὅτι ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεός. καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν. ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱόν, ἔχει τὴν ζωήν· ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει. Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζωὴν ἔχετε αἰώνιον, οἱ πιστεύοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησια ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτὸν, ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, ἀκούει ἡμῶν· καὶ ἐὰν οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὃ ἂν αἰτώμεθα, οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ᾐτήκαμεν παρ' αὐτοῦ. Ἐάν τις ἴδῃ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον, αἰτήσει, καὶ δώσει

LATIN.

Et mandata eius gravia non sunt. Quoniam omne quod natum est ex Deo vincit mundum: et hæc est victoria quæ vincit mundum, fides nostra. Qui est qui vincit mundum nisi qui credit quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei? Hic est qui venit per aquam et sanguinem, Iesus Christus: non in aqua solem, sed in aqua et sanguine. Et Spiritus est qui testificatur quoniam Christus est veritas. Quia tres sunt qui testimonium dant, Spiritus et aqua et sanguis, et tres unum sunt. Si testimonium hominum accipimus, testimonium Dei maius est: quoniam hoc est testimonium Deiquod maius est, quia testificatus est de Filio suo. Qui credit in Filio Dei, habet testimonium Dei in se: qui non credit mendacem facit eum: quoniam non credidit in testimonio quod testificatus est Deus de Filio suo. Et hoc est testimonium, quoniam vitam æternam dedit nobis Deus, et hæc vita in Filio eius. Qui habet Filium habet vitam: qui non habet filium vitam non habet. Hæc scripsi vobis ut sciatis quoniam vitam habetis æternam, qui creditis in nomine Filii Dei. Et hæc est fiducia quam habemus ad eum quia quodcumque petierimus secundum voluntatem eius audit nos. Et scimus quoniam audit nos quicquid petierimus, scimus quoniam habemus petitiones quas postulamus ab eo. Qui scit fratrem suum peccare peccatum non

AUTHORISED VERSION.

And His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even* our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confi-

REVISED VERSION.

And His commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, *even* our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar: because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, *even* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth

ANOTHER VERSION.

And His commandments are not heavy, for whatsoever is born of God conquereth the world: and this is the conquest that hath conquered the world—the Faith of us. Who is he that is conquering the world, but he that is believing that Jesus is the Son of God? This is He that came by water and blood—Jesus Christ: not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And the spirit is that which is ever witnessing that the Spirit is the truth. For three are they who are ever witnessing, the Spirit and the water and the blood: and the three agree in one.

If we receive the witness of men the witness of God is greater; because the witness of God is this, because (*I say*) He hath witnessed concerning His Son. He that is believing on the Son of God hath the witness in him, he that is not believing God hath made Him a liar: because he is not a believer in the witness that God witnessed concerning His Son. And this is the witness, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life, he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. These things have I written unto you that ye may know that ye have eternal life—ye that are believing in the name of the Son of God! And this is the boldness which we have to Himward, that if we ask any thing according to

SECTION IX.—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
αὐτῷ ζωὴν τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσι μὴ πρὸς θάνατον. ἔστιν ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ· πᾶσα ἀδικία ἁμαρτία ἐστίν, καὶ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία οὐ πρὸς θάνατον.	ad mortem, petit, et dabit ei vitam, peccantibus non ad mortem. Est peccatum ad mortem: non pro illo dico ut roget quis. Omnis iniquitas peccatum est: et est peccatum non ad mortem.	dence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.	us: and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him. If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.	His will, He is hearing us: and if we know that He is hearing us, we know that we have the desires that we have desired from Him. If any man see his brother sinning sin not unto death, he shall ask, and *God* shall give him life—(I *mean* for those who are not sinning unto death). Not concerning this *sin* am I saying that he should make request. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not unto death.

CHAPTER XV.

BIRTH AND VICTORY.

1 JOHN v. 3, 4, 5.

ST. JOHN here connects the Christian Birth with Victory. He tells us that of the supernatural life the destined and (so to speak) natural end is conquest.

Now in this there is a contrast between the law of nature and the law of grace. No doubt the first is marvellous. It may even, if we will, in one sense be termed a victory; for it is the proof of a successful contest with the blind fatalities of natural environment. It is in itself the conquest of a something which has conquered a world below it. The first faint cry of the baby is a wail, no doubt; but in its very utterance there is a half-triumphant undertone. Boyhood, youth, opening manhood—at least in those who are physically and intellectually gifted—generally possess some share of "the rapture of the strife" with nature and with their contemporaries.

> "Youth hath triumphal mornings; its days bound
> From night as from a victory."

But sooner or later that which pessimists style "the martyrdom of life" sets in. However brightly the drama opens, the last scene is always tragic. Our natural birth inevitably ends in defeat.

A birth and a defeat is thus the epitome of each life which is naturally brought into the field of our present human existence. The defeat is sighed over, sometimes consummated, in every cradle; it is attested by every grave.

But if birth and defeat is the motto of the natural life, birth and victory is the motto of every one born into the city of God.

This victory is spoken of in our verses as a victory along the whole line. It is the conquest of the collective Church, of the whole mass of regenerate humanity, so far as it has been true to the principle of its birth—the conquest of the Faith which is "The Faith of us," who are knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of the Son of God, Christ our Lord. But it is something more than that. The general victory is also a victory in detail. Every true individual believer shares in it. The battle is a battle of soldiers. The abstract ideal victory is realised and made concrete in each life of struggle which is a life of enduring faith. The triumph is not merely one of a school, or of a party. The question rings with a triumphant challenge down the ranks—"who is the ever-conqueror of the world, but the ever-believer that Jesus is the Son of God?"

We are thus brought to two of St. John's great master-conceptions, both of which came to him from *hearing* the Lord who is the Life—both of which are to be read in connection with the fourth Gospel—the Christian's Birth and his victory.

I.

The Apostle introduces the idea of the Birth which has its origin from God precisely by the same process to which attention has already been more than once directed.

St. John frequently mentions some great subject; at first like a musician who with perfect command of his instrument touches what seems to be an almost random key, faintly, as if incidentally and half wandering from his theme.

But just as the sound appears to be absorbed by the purpose of the composition, or all but lost in the distance, the same chord is struck again more decidedly; and then, after more or less interval, is brought out with a music so full and sonorous, that we perceive that it has been one of the master's leading ideas from the very first. So, when the subject is first spoken of, we hear—"Every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." The subject is suspended for a while; then comes a somewhat more marked reference. "Whosoever is born of God is not a doer of sin; and he cannot continue sinning, because of God he is born." There is yet one more tender recurrence to the favourite theme—"Every one that loveth is born of God." Then, finally here at last the chord, so often struck, grown bolder since the prelude, gathers all the music round it. It interweaves with itself another strain which has similarly been gaining amplitude of volume in its course, until we have a great *Te Deum*, dominated by two chords of Birth and Victory. "This is the conquest that has conquered the world—the Faith which is of us."

We shall never come to any adequate notion of St. John's conception of the Birth of God, without tracing the place in his Gospel to which his asterisk in this place refers. To one passage only can we turn—our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God—except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The germ of the idea of entrance into the city, the kingdom of God, by means of a new birth, is in that storehouse of theological conceptions, the Psalter. There is one psalm of a Korahite seer, enigmatical it may be, shadowed with the darkness of a divine compression, obscure from the glory that rings it round, and from the gush of joy in its few and broken words. The 87th Psalm is the psalm of the font, the hymn of regeneration. The nations once of the world are mentioned among them that know the Lord. They are counted when He writeth up the peoples. Glorious things are spoken of the City of God. Three times over the burden of the song is the new birth by which the aliens were made free of Sion.

This one was born there,
This one and that one was born in her,
This one was born there.

All joyous life is thus brought into the city of the new-born. "The singers, the solemn dances, the fresh and glancing springs, are in thee." Hence, from the notification of men being born again in order to see and enter into the kingdom, our Lord, as if in surprise, meets the Pharisee's question—"how can these things be?"—with another—"art thou that teacher in Israel, and understandest not these things?" Jesus tells His Church for ever that every one of His disciples must be brought into contact with two worlds, with two influences—one outward, the other inward; one material, the other spiritual; one earthly, the other heavenly; one visible and sacramental, the other invisible and divine. Out of these he must come forth new-born.

Of course it may be said that "the water" here coupled with the Spirit is figurative. But let it be observed first, that from the very constitution of St. John's intellectual and moral being things outward and visible were not annihilated by the spiritual transparency which he imparted to them. Water, literal water, is everywhere in his writings. In his Gospel more especially he seems to be ever seeing, ever hearing it. He loved it from the associations of his own early life, and from the mention made of it by his Master. And as in the Gospel water is, so to speak, one of the three great factors and centres of the book; so now in the Epistle, it still seems to glance and murmur before him. "The water" is one of the three abiding witnesses in the Epistle also. Surely, then, our Apostle would be eminently unlikely to express "the Spirit of God" without the outward water by "water and the Spirit." But above all, Christians should beware of a "licentious and deluding alchemy of interpretation which maketh of anything whatsoever it listeth." In immortal words—"when the letter of the law hath two things plainly and expressly specified, water and the Spirit; water, as a duty required on our part, the Spirit, as a gift which God bestoweth; there is danger in so presuming to interpret it, as if the clause which concerneth ourselves were more than needed. We may by such rare expositions attain perhaps in the end to be thought witty, but with ill advice."

But, it will further be asked, whether we bring the Saviour's saying—"except any one be born again of water and the Spirit"—into direct connection with the baptism of infants? Above all, whether we are not encouraging every baptised person to hold that somehow or other he will have a part in the victory of the regenerate?

We need no other answer than that which is implied in the very force of the word here used by St. John—"all that is born of God conquereth the world." "That is born" is the participle perfect. The force of the perfect is not simply past action, but such action lasting on in its effects. Our text, then, speaks only of those who, having been born again into the kingdom, continue in a corresponding condition, and unfold the life which they have received. The Saviour spoke first and chiefly of the initial act. The Apostle's circumstances, now in his old age, naturally led him to look on from that. St. John is no "idolater of the immediate." Has the gift received by his spiritual children worn long and lasted well? What of the new life which should have issued from the New Birth? Regenerate in the past, are they renewed in the present?

This simple piece of exegesis lets us at once perceive that another verse in this Epistle, often considered of almost hopeless perplexity, is in truth only the perfection of sanctified (nay, it may be said, of moral) common sense; an intuition of moral and spiritual instinct. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." We have just seen the real significance of the words "he that is born of God"—he for whom his past birth lasts on in its effects. "He doeth not sin," is not a sin-doer, makes it not his "trade," as an old commentator says. Nay, "he is not able to be" (to keep on) "sinning." "He cannot sin." He cannot! There is no physical impossibility. Angels will not sweep him away upon their resistless pinions. The Spirit will not hold him by the hand as if with a mailed grasp, until the blood spurts from his finger-tips, that he may not take the wine-cup, or walk out to the guilty assignation. The compulsion of God is like that which is exercised upon us by some pathetic wounded-looking face that gazes after us with a sweet reproach. Tell the honest poor man with a large family of some safe and expeditious way of transferring his neighbour's money to his own pocket. He will answer, "I cannot steal;" that is, "I cannot steal, however much it may physically be within my capacity, without a burning shame, an agony to my nature worse than death." On some day of fierce heat, hold a draught of iced wine to a total abstainer, and invite him to drink. "I cannot," will be his reply. Cannot! He can, so far as his hand goes; he cannot, without doing violence to a conviction, to a promise, to his own sense of truth. And he who continues in the fulness of his God-given Birth "does not do sin," "cannot be sinning." Not that he is sinless, not that he never fails, or does not sometimes fall; not that sin ceases to be sin to him, because he thinks that he has a standing in Christ. But he cannot go on in sin without being untrue to his birth; without a stain upon

that finer, whiter, more sensitive conscience, which is called "spirit" in a son of God; without a convulsion in his whole being which is the precursor of death, or an insensibility which is death actually begun.

How many such texts as these are practically useless to most of us! The armoury of God is full of keen swords which we refrain from handling, because they have been misused by others. None is more neglected than this. The fanatic has shrieked out—"Sin in my case! I cannot sin. I may hold a sin in my bosom; and God may hold me in His arms for all that. At least, I may hold that which would be a sin in you and most others; but to me it is not sin." On the other hand, stupid goodness maunders out some unintelligible paraphrase, until pew and reader yawn from very weariness. Divine truth in its purity and plainness is thus discredited by the exaggeration of the one, or buried in the leaden winding-sheet of the stupidity of the other.

In leaving this portion of our subject we may compare the view latent in the very idea of infant baptism with that of the leader of a well-known sect upon the beginnings of the spiritual life in children.

"May not children grow up into salvation, without knowing the exact moment of their conversion?" asks "General" Booth. His answer is—"Yes, it may be so; and we trust that in the future this will be the usual way in which children may be brought to Christ." The writer goes on to tell us how the New Birth will take place in future. "When the conditions named in the first pages of this volume are complied with—when the parents are godly, and the children are surrounded by holy influences and examples from their birth, and trained up in the spirit of their early dedication—they will doubtless come to know and love and trust their Saviour in the ordinary course of things. The Holy Ghost will take possession of them from the first. Mothers and fathers will, as it were, put them into the Saviour's arms in their swaddling clothes, and He will take them, and bless them, and sanctify them from the very womb, and make them His own, without their knowing the hour or the place when they pass from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. In fact, with such little ones it shall never be very dark, for their natural birth shall be, as it were, in the spiritual twilight, which begins with the dim dawn, and increases gradually until the noonday brightness is reached; so answering to the prophetic description, 'The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"

No one will deny that this is tenderly and beautifully written. But objections to its teaching will crowd upon the mind of thoughtful Christians. It seems to defer to a period in the future, to a new era incalculably distant, when Christendom shall be absorbed in Salvationism, that which St. John in his day contemplated as the normal condition of believers, which the Church has always held to be capable of realisation, which has been actually realised in no few whom most of us must have known. Further, the fountain-heads of thought, like those of the Nile, are wrapped in obscurity. By what process grace may work with the very young is an insoluble problem in psychology, which Christianity has not revealed. We know nothing further than that Christ blessed little children. That blessing was impartial, for it was communicated to all who were brought to Him; it was real, otherwise He would not have blessed them at all. That He conveys to them such grace as they are capable of receiving is all that we can know. And yet again; the Salvationist theory exalts parents and surroundings into the place of Christ. It deposes His sacrament, which lies at the root of St. John's language, and boasts that it will secure Christ's end, apparently without any recognition of Christ's means.

II.

The second great idea in the verses dealt with in this chapter is Victory. The intended issue of the New Birth is conquest—"All that is born of God conquers the world."

The idea of victory is almost exclusively confined to St. John's writings. The idea is first expressed by Jesus—"Be of good cheer: I have conquered the world." The first prelusive touch in the Epistle hints at the fulfilment of the Saviour's comfortable word in one class of the Apostle's spiritual children. "I write unto you, young men, because ye have conquered the wicked one. I have written unto you, young men, because ye have conquered the wicked one." Next, a bolder and ampler strain—"Ye are of God, little children, and have conquered them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Then with a magnificent persistence, the trumpet of Christ wakens echoes to its music all down and round the defile through which the host is passing—"All that is born of God conquereth the world: and this is the conquest that has conquered the world—the Faith which is ours." When, in St. John's other great book, we pass with the seer into Patmos, the air is, indeed, "full of noises and sweet sounds." But dominant over all is a storm of triumph, a passionate exultation of victory. Thus each epistle to each of the seven Churches closes with a promise "to him that conquereth."

The text promises two forms of victory.

1. A victory is promised to the Church universal. "All that is born of God conquereth the world." This conquest is concentrated in, almost identified with "the Faith." Primarily, in this place, the term (here alone found in our Epistle) is not the faith by which we believe, but the Faith which is believed—as in some other places; not faith subjective, but The Faith objectively. Here is the dogmatic principle. The Faith involves definite knowledge of definite principles. The religious knowledge which is not capable of being put into definite propositions we need not trouble ourselves greatly about. But we are guarded from over-dogmatism. The word "of us" which follows "the Faith" is a mediating link between the objective and the subjective. First, we possess this Faith as a common heritage. Then, as in the Apostles' creed, we begin to individualise this common possession by prefixing "I believe" to every article of it. Then the victory contained in the creed, the victory which the creed is (for more truly again than of Duty may it be said of Faith, "thou who art victory"), is made over to each who believes. Each, and each alone, who in soul is ever believing, in practice is ever victorious.

This declaration is full of promise for missionary work. There is no system of error, however ancient, subtle, or highly organised, which must not go down before the strong collective life of the regenerate. No less encouraging is it at home. No form of sin is incapable of being overthrown. No school of antichristian thought is invulnerable or invincible. There are other apostates besides Julian who will cry—"Galilæe, vicisti!"

2. The second victory promised is individual, for each of us. Not only where cathedral-spires lift high the triumphant cross; on battle-fields which have added kingdoms to Christendom; by the martyr's stake, or in the arena of the Coliseum, have these words proved true. The victory comes down to us. In hospitals, in shops, in courts, in ships, in sick-rooms, they are fulfilled for us. We see their truth in the patience, sweetness, resignation, of little children, of old men, of weak women. They give a high consecration and a glorious meaning to much of the suffering that we see. What, we are sometimes tempted to cry—is *this* Christ's Army? are these His soldiers, who can go anywhere and do anything? Poor weary ones! with white lips, and the beads of death-sweat on their faces, and the thorns of pain ringed like a crown round their foreheads; so wan, so worn, so tired, so suffering, that even our love dares not pray for them to live a little longer yet. Are these the elect of the elect, the vanguard of the regenerate, who carry the flag of the cross where its folds are waved by the storm of battle; whom St. John sees advancing up the slope with such a burst of cheers and such a swell of music that the words—"this is the conquest"—spring spontaneously from his lips? Perhaps the angels answer with a voice which we cannot hear—"Whatsoever is born of God conquereth the world." May we fight so manfully that each may render if not his "pure" yet his purified

> "soul unto his captain Christ,
> Under whose colours he hath fought so long:"

—that we may know something of the great text in the Epistle to the Romans, with its matchless translation—"we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"—that arrogance of victory which is at once so splendid and so saintly.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOSPEL AS A GOSPEL OF WITNESS; THE THREE WITNESSES.

1 John v. 6-10.

It has been said that Apostles and apostolic men were as far as possible removed from common sense, and have no conception of evidence in our acceptation of the word. About this statement there is scarcely even superficial plausibility. Common sense is the measure of ordinary human tact among palpable realities. In relation to human existence it is the balance of the estimative faculties; the instinctive summary of inductions which makes us rightly credulous and rightly incredulous, which teaches us the supreme lesson of life, when to say "yes," and when to say "no." Uncommon sense is superhuman tact among no less real, but at present impalpable realities; the spiritual faculty of forming spiritual inductions aright. So St. John, among the three great canons of primary truth with which he closes his Epistle, writes—"we know that the Son of God hath come and is present, and hath given us understanding, that we know Him who is true." So with evidences. Apostles did not draw them out with the same logical precision, or rather not in the same logical form. Yet they rested their conclusions upon the same abiding principle of evidence, the primary axiom of our entire social life, that there is a degree of human evidence which practically cannot deceive. "If we receive the witness of men." The form of expression implies that we certainly do.

Peculiar difficulty has been felt in understanding the paragraph. And one portion of it remains difficult after any explanation. But we shall succeed in apprehending it as a whole only upon condition of taking one guiding principle of interpretation with us.

The word witness is St. John's central thought here. He is determined to beat it into our thoughts by the most unsparing iteration. He repeats it ten times over, as substantive or verb, in six verses. His object is to turn our attention to his Gospel, and to this distinguishing feature of it—its being from beginning to end a Gospel of witness. This witness he declares to be fivefold. (1) The witness of the Spirit, of which the fourth Gospel is pre-eminently full. (2) The witness of the Divine Humanity, of the God-Man, who is not man deified, but God humanified. This verse is no doubt partly polemical, against heretics of the day, who would clip the great picture of the Gospel, and force it into the petty frame of their theory. This is He (the Apostle urges) who came on the stage of the world's and the Church's history as the Messiah, under the condition, so to speak, of water and blood; bringing with him, accompanied by, not the water only, but the water and the blood. Cerinthus separated the Christ, the divine Æon, from Jesus the holy but mortal man. The two, the divine potency and the human existence, met at the waters of Jordan, on the day of the Baptism, when the Christ united himself to Jesus. But the union was brief and unessential. Before the crucifixion, the divine ideal Christ withdrew. The man suffered. The impassible immortal potency was far away in heaven. St. John denies the fortuitous juxtaposition of two accidentally-united existences. We worship one Lord Jesus Christ, attested not only by Baptism in Jordan, the witness of water, but by the death on Calvary, the witness of blood. He came by water and blood, as the means by which His office was manifested; but with the water and with the blood, as the sphere in which He exercises that office. When we turn to the Gospel, and look at the pierced side, we read of blood and water, the order of actual history and physiological fact. Here St. John takes the ideal, mystical, sacramental order, water and blood—cleansing and redemption—and the sacraments which perpetually symbolise and convey them. Thus we have Spirit, water, blood. "Three are they who are ever witnessing." These are three great centres round which St. John's Gospel turns. These are the three genuine witnesses, the trinity of witness, the shadow of the Trinity in heaven. (3) Again the fourth Gospel is a Gos-

pel of human witness, a tissue woven out of many lines of human attestation. It records the cries of human souls overheard and noted down at the supreme crisis-moment, from the Baptist, Philip, and Nathanael, to the everlasting spontaneous creed of Christendom on its knees before Jesus, the cry of Thomas ever rushing molten from a heart of fire—"My Lord and my God." (4) But if we receive, as we assuredly must and do receive, the overpowering and soul-subduing mass of attesting human evidence, how much more must we receive the Divine witness, the witness of God so conspicuously exhibited in the Gospel of St. John! "The witness of God is greater, because this" (even the history in the pages to which he adverts) "is the witness; because" (I say with triumphant reiteration) "He hath witnessed concerning His Son." This witness of God in the last Gospel is given in four forms—by Scripture, by the Father, by the Son Himself, by His works. (5) This great volume of witness is consummated and brought home by another. He who not merely coldly assents to the word of Christ, but lifts the whole burden of his belief on to the Son of God, hath the witness in him. That which was logical and external becomes internal and experimental.

In this ever-memorable passage, all know that an interpolation has taken place. The words—"in heaven the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth"—are a gloss. A great sentence of one of the first of critics may well reassure any weak believers who dread the candour of Christian criticism, or suppose that it has impaired the evidence for the great dogma of the Trinity. "If the fourth century knew that text, let it come in, in God's name; but if that age did not know it, then Arianism in its height was beaten down without the help of that verse; and, let the fact prove as it will, the doctrine is unshaken." The human material with which they have been clamped should not blind us to the value of the heavenly jewels which seemed to be marred by their earthly setting.

It is constantly said—as we think with considerable misapprehension—that in his Epistle St. John may imply, but does not refer directly to any particular incident in, his Gospel. It is our conviction that St. John very specially includes the Resurrection—the central point of the evidences of Christianity—among the things attested by the witness of men. We propose in another chapter to examine the Resurrection from St. John's point of view.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WITNESS OF MEN (APPLIED TO THE RESURRECTION).

1 John v. 9.

At an early period in the Christian Church the passage in which these words occur was selected as a fitting Epistle for the First Sunday after Easter, when believers may be supposed to review the whole body of witness to the risen Lord and to triumph in the victory of faith. It will afford one of the best illustrations of that which is covered by the comprehensive canon —"if we receive the witness of men"—if we consider the unity of essential principles in the narratives of the Resurrection, and draw the natural conclusions from them.

I.

Let us note the unity of essential principles in the narratives of the Resurrection.

St. Matthew hastens on from Jerusalem to the appearance in Galilee. "Behold! He goeth before you into Galilee," is, in some sense, the key of the twenty-eighth chapter. St. Luke, on the other hand, speaks only of manifestations in Jerusalem or its neighbourhood.

Now St. John's Resurrection history falls in the twentieth chapter into four pieces, with three manifestations in Jerusalem. The twenty-first chapter (the appendix-chapter) also falls into four pieces, with one manifestation to the seven disciples in Galilee.

St. John makes no profession of telling us all the appearances which were known to the Church, or even all of which he was personally cognisant. In the treasures of the old man's memory there were many more which, for whatever reason, he did not write. But these distinct continuous specimens of a permitted communing with the eternal glorified life (supplemented on subsequent thought by another in the last chapter) are as good as three or four hundred for the great purpose of the Apostle. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

Throughout St. John's narrative every impartial reader will find delicacy of thought, abundance of matter, minuteness of detail. He will find something more. While he feels that he is not in cloudland or dreamland, he will yet recognise that he walks in a land which is wonderful, because the central figure in it is One whose name is Wonderful. The fact is fact, and yet it is something more. For a short time poetry and history are absolutely coincident. Here, if anywhere, is Herder's saying true, that the fourth Gospel seems to be written with a feather which has dropped from an angel's wing.

The unity in essential principles which has been claimed for these narratives taken together is not a lifeless identity in details. It is scarcely to be worked out by the dissecting-maps of elaborate harmonies. It is not the imaginative unity, which is poetry; nor the mechanical unity, which is fabrication; nor the passionless unity, which is commended in a police-report. It is not the thin unity of plain-song; it is the rich unity of dissimilar tones blended into a figure.

This unity may be considered in two essential agreements of the four Resurrection histories.

1. All the Evangelists agree in reticence on one point—in abstinence from one claim.

If any of us were framing for himself a body of such evidence for the Resurrection as should almost extort acquiescence, he would assuredly insist that the Lord should have been seen and recognised after the Resurrection by miscellaneous crowds—or, at the very least, by hostile individuals. Not only by a tender Mary Magdalene, an impulsive Peter, a rapt John, a Thomas through all his unbelief nervously anxious to be convinced. Let Him be seen by Pilate, by Caiaphas, by some of the Roman soldiers, of the priests, of the Jewish populace. Certainly, if

the Evangelists had simply aimed at effective presentation of evidence, they would have put forward statements of this kind.

But the apostolic principle—the apostolic canon of Resurrection evidence—was very different. St. Luke has preserved it for us, as it is given by St. Peter. "Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest after He rose again from the dead, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us." He shall, indeed, appear again to all the people, to every eye; but that shall be at the great Advent. St. John, with his ideal tenderness, has preserved a word of Jesus, which gives us St. Peter's canon of Resurrection evidence, in a lovelier and more spiritual form. Christ as He rose at Easter should be visible, but only to the eye of love, only to the eye which life fills with tears and heaven with light—"Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. . . . He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will manifest Myself to Him." Round that ideal canon St. John's Resurrection-history is twined with undying tendrils. Those words may be written by us with our softest pencils over the twentieth and twenty-first chapters of the fourth Gospel. There is—very possibly there can be—under our present human conditions, no manifestation of Him who was dead and now liveth, except to belief, or to that kind of doubt which springs from love.

That which is true of St. John is true of all the Evangelists.

They take that Gospel, which is the life of their life. They bare its bosom to the stab of Celsus, to the bitter sneer plagiarised by Renan —"why did He not appear to all, to His judges and enemies? Why only to one excitable woman, and a circle of His initiated?" "The hallucination of a hysterical woman endowed Christendom with a risen God." An apocryphal Gospel unconsciously violates this apostolic, or rather divine canon, by stating that Jesus gave His grave-clothes to one of the High Priest's servants. There was every reason but one why St. John and the other Evangelists should have narrated such stories. There was only one reason why they should not, but that was all-sufficient. Their Master was the Truth as well as the Life. They dared not lie.

Here, then, is one essential accordance in the narratives of the Resurrection. They record no appearances of Jesus to enemies or to unbelievers.

2. A second unity of essential principle will be found in the impression produced upon the witnesses.

There was, indeed, a moment of terror at the sepulchre, when they had seen the angel clothed in the long white garment. "They trembled, and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid." So writes St. Mark. And no such word ever formed the close of a Gospel! On the Easter Sunday evening there was another moment when they were "terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit." But this passes away like a shadow. For man, the Risen Jesus turns doubt into faith, faith into joy. For woman, He turns sorrow into joy. From the sacred wounds joy rains over into their souls. "He showed them His hands and His feet . . . while they yet believed not for joy and wondered." "He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."* Each face of those who beheld Him wore after that a smile through all tears and forms of death. "Come," cried the great Swedish singer, gazing upon the dead face of a holy friend, "come and see this great sight. Here is a woman who has seen Christ." Many of us know what she meant, for we too have looked upon those dear to us who have seen Christ. Over all the awful stillness—under all the cold whiteness as of snow or marble—that strange soft light, that subdued radiance, what shall we call it? wonder, love, sweetness, pardon, purity, rest, worship, discovery. The poor face often dimmed with tears, tears of penitence, of pain, of sorrow, some perhaps which we caused to flow, is looking upon a great sight. Of such the beautiful text is true, written by a sacred poet in a language of which, to many, verbs are pictures. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened."† That meeting of lights without a name it is which makes up what angels call joy. There remained some of that light on all who had seen the Risen Lord. Each might say—"have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

This effect, like every effect, had a cause.

Scripture implies in the Risen Jesus a form with all heaviness and suffering lifted off it—with the glory, freshness, elasticity, of the new life, overflowing with beauty and power. He had a voice with some of the pathos of affection, making its sweet concession to human sensibility: saying, "Mary," "Thomas," "Simon, son of Jonas." He had a presence at once so majestic that they durst not question Him, yet so full of magnetic attraction that Magdalene clings to His feet, and Peter flings Himself into the waters when he is sure that it is the Lord.‡

Now let it be remarked that this consideration entirely disposes of that afterthought of critical ingenuity which has taken the place of the base old Jewish theory—"His disciples came by night, and stole Him away."§ That theory, indeed, has been blown into space by Christian apologetics. And now not a few are turning to the solution that He did not really die upon the cross, but was taken down alive.

There are other, and more than sufficient refutations. One from the character of the august Sufferer, who would not have deigned to receive adoration upon false pretences. One from the minute observation by St. John of the physiological effect of the thrust of the soldier's lance, to which he also reverts in the context.

But here, we only ask what effect the appearance of the Saviour among His disciples, supposing that He had not died, must unquestionably have had.

He would only have been taken down from the cross something more than thirty hours. His brow punctured with the crown of thorns; the wounds in hands, feet, and side, yet unhealed; the back raw and torn with scourges; the frame cramped by the frightful tension of six long hours—a lacerated and shattered man, awakened to agony by the coolness of the sepulchre and by the pungency of the spices; a spectral, trembling, fevered, lamed, skulking thing—could that have seemed the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, the Bright and Morn-

* Luke xxiv. 41; John xx. 20
† Ps. xxxiv. 15.
‡ John xxi. 12, *cf.* 7.
§ Matt. xxviii. 13.

ing Star? Those who had seen Him in Gethsemane and on the cross, and then on Easter, and during the forty days, can scarcely speak of His Resurrection without using language which attains to more than lyrical elevation. Think of St. Peter's anthemlike burst. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Think of the words which St. John heard Him utter. "I am the First and the Living, and behold! I became dead, and I am, living unto the ages of ages."

Let us, then, fix our attention upon the unity of all the Resurrection narratives in these two essential principles. (1) The appearances of the Risen Lord to belief and love only. (2) The impression common to all the narrators of glory on His part, of joy on theirs.

We shall be ready to believe that this was part of the great body of proof which was in the Apostle's mind, when pointing to the Gospel with which this Epistle was associated, he wrote of this human but most convincing testimony—"if we receive," as assuredly we do, "the witness of men"—of evangelists among the number.

II.

Too often such discussions as these end unpractically enough. Too often

> "When the critic has done his best,
> The pearl of price at reason's test
> On the Professor's lecture table
> Lies, dust and ashes levigable."

But, after all, we may well ask: can we afford to dispense with this well-balanced probability? Is it well for us to face life and death without taking it, in some form, into the account?

Now at the present moment, it may safely be said that, for the best and noblest intellects imbued with the modern philosophy, as for the best and noblest of old who were imbued with the ancient philosophy, external to Christian revelation, immortality is still, as before, a fair chance, a beautiful "perhaps," a splendid possibility. Evolutionism is growing and maturing somewhere another Butler, who will write in another, and possibly more satisfying chapter, than that least convincing of any in the "Analogy"—"of a Future State."

What has Darwinism to say on the matter?

Much. Natural selection seems to be a pitiless worker; its instrument is death. But, when we broaden our survey, the sum-total of the result is everywhere advance—what is mainly worthy of notice, in man the advance of goodness and virtue. For of goodness, as of freedom,

> "The battle once begun,
> Though baffled oft, is always won."

Humanity has had to travel thousands of miles, inch by inch, towards the light. We have made such progress that we can see that in time, relatively short, we shall be in noonday. After long ages of strife, of victory for hard hearts and strong sinews, Goodness begins to wipe away the sweat of agony from her brow; and will stand, sweet, smiling, triumphant in the world. A gracious life is free for man; generation after generation a softer ideal stands before us, and we can conceive a day when "the meek shall inherit the earth." Do not say that evolution, if proved *à outrance*, brutalises man. Far from it. It lifts him from below out of the brute creation. What theology calls original sin, modern philosophy the brute inheritance—the ape, and the goat, and the tiger—is dying out of man. The perfecting of human nature and of human society stands out as the goal of creation. In a sense, all creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. Nor need the true Darwinian necessarily fear materialism. "Livers secrete bile—brains secrete thought," is smart and plausible, but it is shallow. Brain and thought are, no doubt, connected—but the connection is of simultaneousness, of two things in concordance indeed, but not related as cause and effect. If cerebral physiology speaks of annihilation when the brain is destroyed, she speaks ignorantly and without a brief.

The greatest thinkers in the Natural Religion department of the new philosophy seem then to be very much in the same position as those in the same department of the old. For immortality there is a sublime probability. With man, and man's advance in goodness and virtue as the goal of creation, who shall say that the thing so long provided for, the goal of creation, is likely to perish? Annihilation is a hypothesis; immortality is a hypothesis. But immortality is the more likely as well as the more beautiful of the two. We may believe in it, not as a thing demonstrated, but as an act of faith that "God will not put us to permanent intellectual confusion."

But we may well ask whether it is wise and well to refuse to intrench this probability behind another. Is it likely that He who has so much care for us as to make us the goal of a drama a million times more complex than our fathers dreamed of, who lets us see that He has not removed us out of his sight, will leave Himself, and with Himself our hopes, without witness in history? History is especially human; human evidence the branch of moral science of which man is master—for man is the best interpreter of man. The primary axiom of family, of social, of legal, of moral life, is that there is a kind and degree of human evidence which we ought not to refuse; that if credulity is voracious in belief, incredulity is no less voracious in negation; that if there is a credulity which is simple, there is an incredulity which is unreasonable and perilous. Is it then well to grope for the keys of death in darkness, and turn from the hand that holds them out; to face the ugly realities of the pit with less consolation than is the portion of our inheritance in the faith of Christ?

"The disciples," John tells us, "went away again unto their own home. But Mary was standing without at the sepulchre weeping." Weeping! What else is possible while we are outside, while we *stand*—what else until we *stoop* down from our proud grief to the sepulchre, humble our speculative pride, and condescend to gaze at the death of Jesus face to face? When we do so, we forget the hundred voices that tell us that the Resurrection is partly invented, partly imagined, partly ideally true. We may not see angels in white, nor hear their "why weepest thou?" But assuredly we shall hear a sweeter voice, and a stronger than theirs; and our name will be on it, and His name will

rush to our lips in the language most expressive to us—as Mary said unto Him in *Hebrew*, "Rabboni." Then we shall find that the grey of morning is passing; that the thin thread of scarlet upon the distant hills is deepening into dawn; that in that world where Christ is the dominant law the ruling principle is not natural selection which works through death, but supernatural selection which works through life; that "because He lives, we shall live also." *

With the reception of the witness of men then, and among them of such men as the writer of the fourth Gospel, all follows. For Christ,

> "Earth breaks up—time drops away;—
> In flows Heaven with its new day
> Of endless life, when He who trod,
> Very Man and very God,
> This earth in weakness, shame, and pain,
> Dying the death whose signs remain
> Up yonder on the accursèd tree;
> Shall come again, no more to be
> Of captivity the thrall—
> But the true God all in all,
> King of kings, and Lord of lords,
> As His servant John received the words—
> 'I died, and live for evermore.'"

For us there comes the hope in Paradise—the connection with the living dead—the pulsation through the isthmus of the Church, from sea to sea, from us to them—the tears not without smiles as we think of the long summer-day when Christ who is our life shall appear—the manifestation of the sons of God, when "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Our resurrection shall be a fact of history, because His is a fact of history; and we receive it as such—partly from the reasonable motive of reasonable human belief on sufficient evidence for practical conviction.

All the long chain of manifold witness to Christ is consummated and crowned when it passes into the inner world of the individual life. "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in him," *i. e.*, in himself! Correlative to this stands a terrible truth. He of whom we must conceive that he believes not God, has made Him a liar—nothing less; for his time for receiving Christ came, and went, and with this crisis his unbelief stands a completed present act as the result of his past; unbelief stretching over to the completed witness of God concerning His Son; human unbelief co-extensive with divine witness.

But that sweet witness in a man's self is not merely in books or syllogisms. It is the creed of a living soul. It lies folded within a man's heart, and never dies—part of the great principle of victory fought and won over again in each true life—until the man dies, and ceasing then only because he sees that which is the object of its witness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIN UNTO DEATH.

1 John v. 17.

The Church has ever spoken of seven deadly sins. Here is the ugly catalogue. Pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, hatred, sloth. Many of us pray often "from fornication and all other deadly sin, Good Lord deliver us." This language rightly understood is sound and true; yet, without careful thought, the term may lead us into two errors.

1. On hearing of deadly sin we are apt instinctively to oppose it to venial. But we cannot define by any quantitative test what venial sin may be for any given soul. To do that we must know the complete history of each soul; and the complete genealogy, conception, birth, and autobiography of each sin. Men catch at the term venial because they love to minimise a thing so tremendous as sin. The world sides with the casuits whom it satirises; and speaks of a "white lie," of a foible, of an inaccuracy, when "the 'white lie' may be that of St. Peter, the foible that of David, and the inaccuracy that of Ananias!"

2. There is a second mistake into which we often fall in speaking of deadly sin. Our imagination nearly always assumes some one definite outward act; some single individual sin. This may partly be due to a seemingly slight mistranslation in the text. It should not run "there is a sin," but "there is sin unto" (*e. g.*, in the direction of, towards) "death."

The text means something deeper and further-reaching than any single sin, deadly though it may be justly called.

The author of the fourth Gospel learned a whole mystic language from the life of Jesus. Death, in the great Master's vocabulary, was more than a single action. It was again wholly different from bodily death by the visitation of God. There are two realms for man's soul co-extensive with the universe and with itself. One which leads towards God is called Life; one which leads from Him is called Death. There is a radiant passage by which the soul is translated from the death which is death indeed, to the life which is life indeed. There is another passage by which we pass from life to death; *i. e.*, fall back towards spiritual (which is not necessarily eternal) death.

There is then a general condition and contexture; there is an atmosphere and position of soul in which the true life flickers, and is on the way to death. One who visited an island on the coast of Scotland has told how he found in a valley open to the spray of the northwest ocean a clump of fir trees. For a time they grew well, until they became high enough to catch the prevalent blast. They were still standing, but had taken a fixed set, and were reddened as if singed by the breath of fire. The island glen might be "swept on starry nights by balms of spring;" the summer sun as it sank might touch the poor stems with a momentary radiance. The trees were still living, but only with that cortical vitality which is the tree's death in life. Their doom was evident; they could have but a few more seasons. If the traveller cared some years hence to visit that islet set in stormy waters, he would find the firs blanched like a skeleton's bones. Nothing remained for them but the sure fall, and the fated rottenness.

The analogy indeed is not complete. The tree in such surroundings must die; it can make for itself no new condition of existence; it can hear no sweet question on the breeze that washes through the grove, "why will ye die?" It cannot look upward—as it is scourged by the driving spray, and tormented by the fierce wind—and cry, "O God of my life, give me life." It has no will; it cannot transplant itself. But

* John xiv. 19.

the human tree can root itself in a happier place. Some divine spring may clothe it with green again. As it was passing from life toward death, so by the grace of God in prayers and sacraments, through penitence and faith, it may pass from death to life.

The Church then is not wrong when she speaks of "deadly sin." The number seven is not merely a mystic fancy. But the seven "deadly sins" are seven attributes of the whole character; seven master-ideas; seven general conditions of a human soul alienated from God; seven forms of aversion from true life, and of reversion to true death. The style of St. John has often been called "senile;" it certainly has the oracular and sententious quietude of old age in its almost lapidary repose. Yet a terrible light sometimes leaps from its simple and stately lines. Are there not a hundred hearts among us who know that as years pass they are drifting further and further from Him who is the Life? Will they not allow that St. John was right when, looking round the range of the Church, he asserted that there is such a thing as "sin unto death"?

It may be useful to take that one of the seven deadly sins which people are the most surprised to find in the list.

How and why is sloth deadly sin?

There is a distinction between sloth as vice and sloth as sin. The deadly sin of sloth often exists where the vice has no place. The sleepy music of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" does not describe the slumber of the spiritual sluggard. Spiritual sloth is want of care and of love for all things in the spiritual order. Its conceptions are shallow and hasty. For it the Church is a department of the civil service; her worship and rites are submitted to, as one submits to a minor surgical operation. Prayer is the waste of a few minutes daily in concession to a sentiment which it might require trouble to eradicate. For the slothful Christian, saints are incorrigibly stupid; martyrs incorrigibly obstinate; clergymen incorrigibly professional; missionaries incorrigibly restless; sisterhoods incorrigibly tender; white lips that can just whisper Jesus incorrigibly awful. For the slothful, God, Christ, death, judgment have no real significance. The Atonement is a plank far away to be clutched by dying fingers in the article of death, that we may gurgle out "yes," when asked "are you happy?" Hell is an ugly word, Heaven a beautiful one which means a sky or an Utopia. Apathy in all spiritual thought, languor in every work of God, fear of injudicious and expensive zeal; secret dislike of those whose fervour puts us to shame, and a miserable adroitness in keeping out of their way; such are the signs of the spirit of sloth. And with this a long series of sins of omission —"slumbering and sleeping while the Bridegroom tarries"—"unprofitable servants."

We have said that the vice of sloth is generally distinct from the sin. There is, however, one day of the week on which the sin is apt to wear the drowsy features of the vice—Sunday. If there is any day on which we might be supposed to do something towards the spiritual world it must be Sunday. Yet what have any of us done for God on any Sunday? Probably we can scarcely tell. We slept late, we lingered over our dressing, we never thought of Holy Communion; after Church (if we went there) we loitered with friends; we lounged in the Park; we whiled away an hour at lunch; we turned over a novel, with secret dislike of the benevolent arrangements which give the postman some rest. Such have been in the main our past Sundays. Such will be our others, more or fewer, till the arrival of a date written in a calendar which eye hath not seen. The last evening of the closing year is called by an old poet, "the twilight of two years, nor past, nor next." What shall we call the last Sunday of our year of life?

Turn to the first chapter of St. Mark. Think of that day of our Lord's ministry which is recorded more fully than any other. What a day! First that teaching in the Synagogue, when men "were astonished," not at His volubility, but at His "doctrine," drawn from depths of thought. Then the awful meeting with the powers of the world unseen. Next the utterance of the words in the sick-room which renovated the fevered frame. Afterwards an interval for the simple festival of home. And then we see the sin, the sorrow, the sufferings crowded at the door. A few hours more, while yet there is but the pale dawn before the meteor sunrise of Syria, He rises from sleep to plunge His wearied brow in the dews of prayer. And finally the intrusion of others upon that sacred solitude, and the work of preaching, helping, pitying, healing closes in upon Him again with a circle which is of steel, because it is duty—of delight, because it is love. Oh, the divine monotony of one of those golden days of God upon earth! And yet we are offended because He who is the same for ever, sends from heaven that message with its terrible plainness—"because thou art lukewarm, I will spew thee out of my mouth." We are angry that the Church classes sloth as deadly sin, when the Church's Master has said —"thou wicked and slothful servant."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TERRIBLE TRUISM WHICH HAS NO EXCEPTION.

1 John v. 17.

Let us begin by detaching awhile from its context this oracular utterance: "all unrighteousness is sin." Is this true universally, or is it not?

A clear, consistent answer is necessary, because a strange form of the doctrine of indulgences (long whispered in the ears) has lately been proclaimed from the housetops, with a considerable measure of apparent acceptance.

Here is the singular dispensation from St. John's rigorous canon to which we refer.

Three such indulgences have been accorded at various times to certain favoured classes or persons. (1) "The moral law does not exist for the elect." This was the doctrine of certain Gnostics in St. John's day; of certain fanatics in every age. (2) "Things absolutely forbidden to the mass of mankind are allowable for people of commanding rank." Accommodating Prelates and accommodating Reformers have left the burden of defending these ignoble concessions to future generations. (3) A yet baser dispensation has been freely given by very vulgar casuists. "The chosen of Fortune"—

the men at whose magic touch every stock seems to rise—may be allowed unusual forms of enjoying the unusual success which has crowned their career.

Such are, or such were, the dispensations from St. John's canon permitted to themselves, or to others, by the elect of Heaven, by the elect of station, and by the elect of fortune.

Another election hath obtained the perilous exception now—the election of genius. Those who endow the world with music, with art, with romance, with poetry, are entitled to the reversion. "All unrighteousness is sin"—except for them. (1) The indulgence is no longer valid for those who affect intimacy with heaven (partly perhaps because it is suspected that there is no heaven to be intimate with). (2) The indulgence is not extended to the men who apparently rule over nations, since it has been discovered that nations rule over them. (3) It is not accorded to the constructors of fortunes; they are too many, and too uninteresting, though possibly figures could be conceived almost capable of buying it. But (generally speaking) men of these three classes must pace along the dust of the narrow road by the signpost of the law, if they would escape the censure of society.

For genius alone there is no such inconvenient restriction. Many men, of course, deliberately prefer the "primrose path," but they can no more avoid indignant hisses by the way than they can extinguish the "everlasting bonfire" at the awful close of their journey. With the man of genius it seems that it is otherwise. He shall "walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes;" but, "for all these things" the tribunals of certain schools of a delicate criticism (delicate criticism can be so indelicate!) will never allow him "to be brought into judgment." Some literary oracles, biographers, or reviewers, are not content to keep a reverential silence, and to murmur a secret prayer. They will drag into light the saddest, the meanest, the most selfish doings of genius. Not the least service to his generation, and to English literature, of the true poet and critic lately taken from us,* was the superb scorn, the exquisite wit, with which his indignant purity transfixed such doctrines. A strange winged thing, no doubt, genius sometimes is; alternately beating the abyss with splendid pinions, and eating dust which is the "serpent's meat." But for all that, we cannot see with the critic when he tries to prove that the reptile's crawling is part of the angel's flight; and the dust on which he grovels one with the infinite purity of the azure distances.

The arguments of the apologists for moral eccentricity of genius may be thus summed up:—The man of genius bestows upon humanity gifts which are on a different line from any other. He enriches it on the side where it is poorest; the side of the Ideal. But the very temperament in virtue of which a man is capable of such transcendent work makes him passionate and capricious. To be imaginative is to be exceptional; and these exceptional beings live for mankind rather than for themselves. When their conduct comes to be discussed, the only question is whether that conduct was adapted to forward the superb self-development which is of such inestimable value to the world. If the gratification of any desire was necessary for that self-development, genius itself being the judge, the cause is ended. In winning that gratification hearts may be broken, souls defiled, lives wrecked. The daintiest songs of the man of genius may rise to the accompaniment of domestic sobs, and the music which he seems to warble at the gates of heaven may be trilled over the white upturned face of one who has died in misery. What matter! Morality is so icy and so intolerant; its doctrines have the ungentlemanlike rigour of the Athanasian Creed. Genius breaks hearts with such supreme gracefulness, such perfect wit, that they are arrant Philistines who refuse to smile.

We who have the text full in our mind answer all this in the words of the old man of Ephesus. For all that angel-softness which he learned from the heart of Christ, his voice is as strong as it is sweet and calm. Over all the storm of passion, over all the babble of successive sophistries, clear and eternal it rings out—"all unrighteousness is sin." To which the apologist, little abashed, replies—"of course we all know that; quite true as a general rule, but then men of genius have bought a splendid dispensation by paying a splendid price, and so their inconsistencies are not sin."

There are two assumptions at the root of this apology for the aberrations of genius which should be examined. (1) The temperament of men of genius is held to constitute an excuse from which there is no appeal. Such men indeed are sometimes not slow to put forward this plea for themselves. No doubt there are trials peculiar to every temperament. Those of men of genius are probably very great. They are children of the sunshine and of the storm; the grey monotony of ordinary life is distasteful to them. Things which others find it easy to accept convulse their sensitive organisation. Many can produce their finest works only on condition of being sheltered where no bills shall find their way by the post; where no sound, not even the crowing of cocks, shall break the haunted silence. If the letter comes in one case, and if the cock crows in the other, the first may possibly never be remembered, but the second is never forgotten.

For this, as for every other form of human temperament—that of the dunce, as well as of the genius—allowance must in truth be made. In that one of the lives of the English Poets, where the great moralist has gone nearest to making concessions to this fallacy of temperament, he utters this just warning: "No wise man will easily presume to say, had I been in Savage's condition I should have lived better than Savage." But we must not bring in the temperament of the man of genius as the standard of his conduct, unless we are prepared to admit the same standard in every other case. God is no respecter of persons. For each, conscience is of the same texture, law of the same material. As all have the same cross of infinite mercy, the same judgment of perfect impartiality, so have they the same law of inexorable duty.

(2) The necessary disorder and feverishness of high literary and artistic inspiration is a second postulate of the pleas to which I refer. But, is it true that disorder creates inspiration; or is a condition of it?

All great work is ordered work; and in pro-

* Mr. Matthew Arnold.

ducing it the faculties must be exercised harmoniously and with order. True inspiration, therefore, should not be caricatured into a flushed and dishevelled thing. Labour always precedes it. It has been prepared for by education. And that education would have been painful but for the glorious efflorescence of materials collected and assimilated, which is the compensation for any toil. The very dissatisfaction with its own performances, the result of the lofty ideal which is inseparable from genius, is at once a stimulus and a balm. The man of genius apparently writes, or paints, as the birds sing, or as the spring colours the flowers; but his subject has long possessed his mind, and the inspiration is the child of thought and of ordered labour. Destroying the peace of one's own family or of another's, being flushed with the preoccupation of guilty passion, will not accelerate, but retard the advent of those happy moments which are not without reason called creative. Thus, the inspiration of genius is akin to the inspiration of prophecy. The prophet tutored himself by a fitting education. He became assimilated to the noble things in the future which he foresaw. Isaiah's heart grew royal; his style wore the majesty of a king, before he sang the King of sorrow with His infinite pathos, and the King of righteousness with His infinite glory. Many prophets attuned their spirits by listening to such music as lulls, not inflames passion. Others walked where "beauty born of murmuring sound" might pass into their strain. Think of Ezekiel by the river of Chebar, with the soft sweep of waters in his ear, and their cool breath upon his cheek. Think of St. John with the shaft of light from heaven's opened door upon his upturned brow, and the boom of the Ægean upon the rocks of Patmos around him. "The note of the heathen seer" (said the greatest preacher of the Greek Church) "is to be contorted, constrained, excited, like a maniac; the note of a prophet is to be wakeful, self-possessed, nobly self-conscious." We may apply this test to the distinction between genius and the dissipated affectation of genius.

Let us then refuse our assent to a doctrine of indulgences applied to genius on the ground of temperament or of literary and artistic inspiration. "Why," we are often asked, "why force your narrow judgment upon an angry or a laughing world?" What have you to do with the conduct of gifted men? Genius means exuberant. Why "blame the Niagara River" because it will not assume the pace and manner of "a Dutch canal"? Never indeed should we force that judgment upon any, unless they force it upon us. Let us avoid, as far as we may, posthumous gossip over the grave of genius. It is an unwholesome curiosity which rewards the blackbird for that bubbling song of ecstasy in the thicket, by gloating upon the ugly worm which he swallows greedily after the shower. The pen or pencil has dropped from the cold fingers. After all its thought and sin, after all its toil and agony, the soul is with its Judge. Let the painter of the lovely picture, the writer of the deathless words, be for us like the priest. The washing of regeneration is no less wrought through the unworthy minister; the precious gift is no less conveyed when a polluted hand has broken the bread and blessed the cup. But if we are forced to speak, let us refuse to accept an *ex post facto* morality invented to excuse a worthless absolution. Especially so when the most sacred of all rights is concerned. It is not enough to say that a man of genius dissents from the received standard of conduct. He cannot make fugitive inclination the only principle of a connection which he promised to recognise as paramount. A passage in the Psalms,* has been called "The catechism of Heaven." "The catechism of Fame" differs from "the catechism of Heaven." "Who shall ascend unto the hill of Fame?" "He that possesses genius." "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?" "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; He that hath sworn to his neighbour and disappointeth him not" (or disappointeth her not) "though it were to his own hindrance"—aye, to the hindrance of his self-development. Strange that the rough Hebrew should still have to teach us chivalry as well as religion! In St. John's Epistle we find the two great axioms about sin, in its two essential aspects. "Sin is the transgression of the law:" there is its aspect chiefly Godward. "All unrighteousness" (mainly injustice, denial of the rights of others) "is sin:" there is its aspect chiefly manward.

Yes, the principle of the text is rigid, inexorable, eternal. Nothing can make its way out of those terrible meshes. It is without favour, without exception. It gives no dispensation, and proclaims no indulgences, to the man of genius, or to any other. If it were otherwise, the righteous God, the Author of creation and redemption, would be dethroned. And that is a graver thing than to dethrone even the author of "Queen Mab," and of "The Epipsychidion." Here is the jurisprudence of the "great white Throne" summed up in four words: "all unrighteousness is sin."

So far, in the last chapter, and in this, we have ventured to isolate these two great principles from their context. But this process is always attended with peculiar loss in St. John's writings. And as some may think perhaps that the promise † is falsified we must here run the risk of bringing in another thread of thought. Yet indeed the whole paragraph has its source in an intense faith in the efficacy of prayer, specially as exercised in intercessory prayer.

(1) The efficacy of prayer. This is the very sign of contrast with, of opposition to, the modern spirit, which is the negation of prayer.

What is the real value of prayer?

Very little, says the modern spirit. Prayer is the stimulant, the Dutch courage of the moral world. Prayer is a power, not because it is efficacious, but because it is believed to be so.

A modern Rabbi, with nothing of his Judaism left but a rabid antipathy to the Founder of the Church, guided by Spinoza and Kant, has turned fiercely upon the Lord's prayer. He takes those petitions which stand alone among the liturgies of earth in being capable of being translated into every language. He cuts off one pearl after another from the string. Take one specimen. "Our Father which art in Heaven." Heaven! the very name has a breath of magic, a suggestion of beauty, of grandeur, of purity in it. It moves us as nothing else can. We instinctively lift our heads; the brow grows proud of that splendid home, and the eye is wetted with a tear and lighted with a ray, as it looks into those depths of golden sunset which are full

* See Ps. xv. *Cf.* Ps. xxiv. 3-7. † 1 John v. 15.

for the young of the radiant mystery of life, for the old of the pathetic mystery of death. Yes, but for modern science Heaven means air, or atmosphere, and the address itself is contradictory. "Forgive us." But surely the guilt cannot be forgiven, except by the person against whom it is committed. There is no other forgiveness. A mother (whose daughter went out upon the cruel London streets) carried into execution a thought bestowed upon her by the inexhaustible ingenuity of love. The poor woman got her own photograph taken, and a friend managed to have copies of it hung in several halls and haunts of infamy with these words clearly written below—"come home, I forgive you." The tender subtlety of love was successful at last; and the poor haggard outcast's face was touched by her mother's lips. "But the heart of God," says this enemy of prayer, "is not as a woman's heart." (Pardon the words, O loving Father! Thou who hast said "Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Pardon, O pierced Human Love! who hast graven the name of every soul on the palms of Thy hands with the nails of the crucifixion.) Repentance subjectively seems a reality when mother and child meet with a burst of passionate tears, and the polluted brow feels purified by their molten downfall; but repentance objectively is seen to be an absurdity by every one who grasps the conception of law. The penitential Psalms may be the lyrics of repentance, the Gospel for the third Sunday after Trinity its idyll, the cross its symbol, the wounds of Christ its theology and inspiration. But the course of Nature, the hard logic of life is its refutation —the flames that burn, the waves that drown, the machine that crushes, the society that condemns, and that neither can, nor will forgive.

Enough, and more than enough of this. The monster of ignorance who has never learnt a prayer has hitherto been looked upon as one of the saddest of sights. But there is something sadder—the monster of over-cultivation, the wreck of schools, the priggish fanatic of godlessness. Alas! for the nature which has become like a plant artificially trained and twisted to turn away from the light. Alas! for the heart which has hardened itself into stone until it cannot beat faster, or soar higher, even when men are saying with happy enthusiasm, or when the organ is lifting upward to the heaven of heavens the cry which is at once the creed of an everlasting dogma and the hymn of a triumphant hope—"with Thee is the well of Life, and in Thy light shall we see light." Now having heard the answer of the modern spirit to the question "What is the real value of prayer?" think of the answer of the spirit of the Church as given by St. John in this paragraph. That answer is not drawn out in a syllogism. St. John appeals to our consciousness of a divine life. "That ye may know that ye have eternal life." This knowledge issues in confidence, *i. e.*, literally. the sweet possibility of saying out all to God. And this confidence is never disappointed for any believing child of God. "If we know that He hear us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

On the sixteenth verse we need only say, that the greatness of our brother's spiritual need does not cease to be a title to our sympathy. St. John is not speaking of all requests, but of the fulness of brotherly intercession.

One question and one warning in conclusion; and that question is this. Do we take part in this great ministry of love? Is our voice heard in the full music of the prayers of intercession that are ever going up to the Throne, and bringing down the gift of life? Do we pray for others?

In one sense all who know true affection and the sweetness of true prayer do pray for others. We have never loved with supreme affection any for whom we have not interceded, whose names we have not baptised in the fountain of prayer. Prayer takes up a tablet from the hand of love written over with names; that tablet death itself can only break when the heart has turned Sadducee.

Jesus (we sometimes think) gives one strange proof of the love which yet passeth knowledge. "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus;" "when He had heard therefore" [O that strange therefore!] "that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was." Ah! sometimes not two days, but two years, and sometimes evermore, He seems to remain. When the income dwindles with the dwindling span of life; when the best beloved must leave us for many years, and carries away our sunshine with him; when the life of a husband is in danger—then we pray; "O Father, for Jesu's sake spare that precious life; enable me to provide for these helpless ones; bless these children in their going out and coming in, and let me see them once again before the night cometh, and my hands are folded for the long rest." Yes, but have we prayed at our Communion "because of that Holy Sacrament in it, and with it," that He would give them the grace which they need—the life which shall save them from sin unto death? Round us, close to us in our homes, there are cold hands, hearts that beat feebly. Let us fulfil St. John's teaching, by praying to Him who is the life that He would chafe those cold hands with His hand of love, and quicken those dying hearts by contact with that wounded heart which is a heart of fire.

SECTION X.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Οἴδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ' ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν, καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἅπτεται αὐτοῦ. οἴδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται. οἴδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἥκει, καὶ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διανοίαν, ἵνα γινώσκωμεν	Scimus quoniam omnis qui natus est ex Deo non peccat, sed generatio Dei conservat eum et malignus non tangit eum. Scimus quoniam ex Deo sumus et mundus totus in maligno positus est. Et scimus quoniam Filius Dei venit, et dedit nobis sensum ut	We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. *And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath	We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given	WE KNOW that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but the Begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. WE KNOW that we are from God and the world lieth wholly in the evil one. WE KNOW moreover that the Son of God hath *come and* is here,

SECTION X.—*Continued.*

GREEK.

τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς Θεὸς καὶ ἡ ζωὴ αἰώνιος. Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων. ἀμήν.

LATIN.

cognoscamus verum Deum et simus in vero, Filio eius; hic est verus et vita æterna. Filioli, custodite vos a simulachris.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

REVISED VERSION.

us an understanding that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, *even* in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. *My* little children, guard yourselves from idols.

ANOTHER VERSION.

and hath given us understanding that we know Him that is the Very God: and in His Son Jesus Christ (this is the Very God and eternal life), we are in the Very (*God*). Children, guard yourselves from the idols.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

II. EPISTLE.

GREEK.

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη, παρὰ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ. Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὗρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός. καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν γράφων σοι καινὴν, ἀλλὰ ἣν εἴχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους. καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ. αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε· ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος· βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν ἃ εἰργασάμεθα, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν. πᾶς ὁ παραβαίνων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει. εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν, καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε· ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς. Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἠβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος· ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη. Ἀσπάζεταί σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς ἐκλεκτῆς. ἀμήν.

LATIN.

Senior electæ dominæ et natis eius, quos ego diligo in veritate, et non ego solus sed et omnes qui cognoverunt veritatem, propter veritatem quæ permanet in nobis et nobiscum erit in æternum. Sit nobiscum gratia, misericordia, pax a Deo Patre et Christo Iesu Filio Patris in veritate et caritate. Gavisus sum valde quoniam inveni de filiis tuis ambulantes in veritate sicut mandatum accepimus a Patre. Et nunc rogo te, domina, non tanquam mandatum novum scribens tibi, sed quod habuimus ab initio, ut diligamus alterutrum. Et hæc est caritas, ut ambulemus secundum mandata eius. Hoc mandatum est ut quemadmodum audistis ab initio in eo ambuletis. Quoniam multi seductores exierunt in mundum qui non confitentur Iesum Christum venientem in carne. Hic est seductor et antichristus. Videte vosmet ipsos, ne perdatis quæ operati estis, sed ut mercedem plenam accipiatis. Omnis qui præcedit et non manet in doctrina Christi, Deum non habet: qui permanet in doctrina, hic et Filium et Patrem habet. Si quis venit ad vos, et hanc doctrinam non adfert, nolite recipere eum in domum, nec ave ei dixeritis: qui enim dicit illi ave, communicat operibus illius malignis. Plura habens vobis scribere, nolui per cartam et atramentum: spero enim me futurum apud vos et os ad os loqui, ut gaudium vestrum sit plenum. Salutant te filii sororis tuæ electæ.

AUTHORISED VERSION.

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

REVISED VERSION.

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth; for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever: Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into *your* house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works. Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write them* with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister salute thee.

ANOTHER VERSION.

The Elder unto the excellent Kyria and her children whom I love in truth, (and not I only, but also all they that know the truth) for the truth's sake which abideth in us—yea, and with us it shall be for ever. There shall be with you grace, mercy, peace from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I was exceeding glad that I found of thy children walking in truth even as we received commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, Kyria, not as though writing a fresh commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is the love, that we should walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment as ye heard from the beginning that ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are gone out into the world, *even* they who are not confessing Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver, and the antichrist. Look to yourselves that you lose not the things which ye have worked, but that ye receive reward in full. Every one leading forward and not abiding in the doctrine which is Christ's hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine, the same hath both the Son and the Father. If there come unto you any and bringeth not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, and no good speed wish him. For he that wisheth him good speed partaketh in his works which are evil. Having many things to write unto you I would not write with paper and ink, but I hope to be with you and speak face to face, that our joy may be fulfilled. The children of thine elect sister greet thee.

CHAPTER XX.

THEOLOGY AND LIFE IN KYRIA'S LETTER.

2 JOHN 3.

OF old God addressed men in tones that were, so to speak, distant. Sometimes He spoke with the stern precision of law or ritual; sometimes in the dark and lofty utterances of prophets; sometimes through the subtle voices of history, which lend themselves to different interpretations. But in the New Testament He whom no man hath seen at any time, "interpreted" * Himself with a sweet familiarity. It is of a piece with the dispensation of condescendence, that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven should come to us in such large measure through epistles. For a letter is just the result of taking up one's pen to converse with one who is absent, a familiar talk with a friend.

Of the epistles in our New Testament, a few are addressed to individuals. The effect of three of these letters upon the Church, and even upon the world, has been great. The Epistles to Timothy and Titus, according to the most prevalent interpretation of them, have been felt in the outward organisation of the Church. The Epistle to Philemon, with its eager tenderness, its softness as of a woman's heart, its chivalrous courtesy, has told in another direction. With all its freedom from the rashness of social revolution; its almost painful abstinence (as abolitionists have sometimes confessed to feeling) from actual invective against slavery in the abstract; that letter is yet pervaded by thoughts whose issue can only be worked out by the liberty of the slave. The word emancipation may not be pronounced, but it hovers upon the Apostle's lips.

The second Epistle is, in our judgment, a letter to an individual. Certainly we are unable to find in its whole contents any probable allusion to a Church personified as a lady. It is, as we read it, addressed to Kyria, an Ephesian lady, or one who lived in the circle of Ephesian influence. It was sent by the Apostle during an absence from Ephesus. That absence might have been for the purpose of one of the visitations of the Churches of Asia Minor, which (as we are told by ancient Church writers) the Apostle was in the habit of holding. Possibly, however, in the case of a writer so brief and so reserved in the expression of personal sentiment as St. John, the gush and sunshine of anticipated joy at the close of this note might tempt us to think of a rift in some sky that had been long darkened; of the close of some protracted separation, soon to be forgotten in a happy meeting. "Having many things to write unto you, I would not do so by means of paper and ink; but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face that our joy may be fulfilled." † The expression might not seem unsuitable for a return from exile. Several touches of language and feeling in the letter point to the conclusion that Kyria was a widow. There is no mention of her husband, the father of her children. In the case of a writer who uses the names of God with such subtle and tender suitability, the association of Kyria's "children walking in truth" with "even as we received commandment from the Father," may well point to Him who was for them the Father of the fatherless. We need not with some expositors draw the sad conclusion that St. John affectionately hints that there were others of the family who could not be included in this joyful message. But it would seem highly probable from the language used that there were several sons, and also that Kyria had no daughters. Over these sons who had lost one earthly parent, the Apostle rejoices with the heart of a father in God. He bursts out with his *eureka*, the *eureka* not of a philosopher, but of a saint. "I rejoiced exceedingly that I found * certain of the number of thy children walking in truth."

While we may not trace in this little Epistle the same fountain of wide-spreading influence as in others to which we have referred; while we feel that, like its author, its work is deep and silent rather than commanding, reflection will also lead us to the conclusion that it is worthy of the Apostle who was looked upon as one of the "pillars" of the faith.

1. Let us reflect that this letter is addressed by the aged Apostle to a widow, and concerns her family.

It is significant that Kyria was, in all probability, a widow of Ephesus.

Too many of us have more or less acquaintance with one department of French literature. A Parisian widow is too often the questionable heroine of some shameful romance, to have read which is enough to taint the virginity of the young imagination. Ephesus was the Paris of Ionia. Petronius was the Daudet or Zola of his day. An Ephesian widow is the heroine of one of the most cynically corrupt of his stories.

But "where sin abounded, grace did more than abound." Strange that first in an epistle to a Bishop of the Church of Ephesus, St. Paul should have presented us with that picture of a Christian widow—"she that is a widow, indeed, and desolate, who hath her hope set on God, and continueth in prayer night and day"—yet who, if she has the devotion, the almost entire absorption in God, of Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, leaves upon the track of her daily road to heaven the trophies of Dorcas—"having brought up children well, used hospitality to strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, diligently followed every good work." Such widows are the leaders of the long procession of women, veiled or unveiled, with vows or without them, who have ministered to Jesus through the ages. Christ has a beautiful art of turning the affliction of His daughters into the consolation of suffering. When life's fairest hopes are disappointed by falsehood, by cruel circumstances, by death; the broken heart is soothed by the love of Christ, the only love which is proof against death and change. The consolation thus received is the most unselfish of gifts. It overflows, and is lavishly poured out upon the sick and weary. With St. Paul's picture of a widow of this kind, contrast another by the same hand which hangs close beside it. The younger Ephesian widow, such as Petronius described, was known by St. Paul also. If any count the Apostle as a fanatic, destitute of all knowledge of the world because he lived above it, let them look at those lines, which are full of such caustic power, as they hit off the characteristics of certain idle and wanton affecters of a sorrow which they never felt. † What a distance

* John i. 18. † Ver. 12.

* εὕρηκα, ver. 4. † 1 Tim. v. 6-11, 12, 13.

between such widows and Kyria, "beloved for the truth's sake which abideth in us!" *

But the short letter of St. John is addressed to Kyria's family, as well as to herself. "The elder to the excellent Kyria and her children." †

There is one question which we naturally ask about every school and form of religion. It is the question which a great English Professor of Divinity used to ask his pupils to put in a homely form about every religious scheme and mode of utterance—"will it *wash* well?" Is it an influence which seems to be productive and lasting? Does it abide through time and trials? Is it capable of being passed on to another generation? Are plans, services, organisations, preachings, classes, vital or showy? Are they fads to meet fancies, or works to supply wants? Is that which we hold such sober, solid truth, that wise piety can say of it, half in benediction, half in prophecy—"the truth which abideth in us; yea, and with us it shall be for ever"?

2. We turn to the contents of the Epistle.

We shall be better able to appreciate the value of these, if we consider the state of Christian literature at that time.

What had Christians to read and carry about with them? The excellent work of the Bible Society was physically impossible for long centuries to come. No doubt the LXX. version of the Old Testament was widely spread. In every great city of the Roman Empire there was a vast population of Jews. Many of these were baptised into the Church, and carried into it with them their passionate belief in the Old Testament. The Christians of the time and place to which we refer could, probably, with little trouble, if not read, yet hear the Old Covenant and able expositions of it. But they had not copies of the entire New Testament. Indeed, if all the New Testament was then written, it certainly was not collected into one volume, nor constituted one supreme authority. "Many barbarous nations," says a very ancient Father, "believe in Christ without written record, having salvation impressed through the Spirit in their hearts, and diligently preserving the old tradition." Possibly a Church or single believer had one synoptical Gospel. At Ephesus Christians had doubtless been catechised in, and were deeply imbued with, St. John's view of the Person, work, and teaching of our Lord. This had now been moulded into shape, and definitely committed to writing in that glorious Gospel, the Church's Holy of Holies, St. John's Gospel. For them and for their contemporaries there was a living realisation of the Gospel. They had heard it from eye-witnesses. They had passed into the wonderland of God. The earth on which Jesus trod had blossomed into miracle. The air was haunted by the echoes of His voice. They had, probably, also a certain number of the Epistles of St. Paul. The Christians of Ephesus would have a special interest in their own Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the two which were written to their first Bishop, Timothy. They had also (whether written or not) impressed upon their memories by their weekly Eucharist, the liturgical Canon of consecration according to the Ephesian usage—from which, and not the Roman, the Spanish and Gallican seem to be derived. The Ephesian Christians had also the first Epistle of St. John, which in some form accompanied the Gospel, and is, indeed, a picture of spiritual life drawn from it. But let us remember that the Epistle is not of a character to be very quickly or readily learned by heart. Its subtle, latent links of connection do not present many grappling hooks for the memory to fasten itself to. Copies also must have been comparatively few.

Now let us see how the second Epistle may well have been related to the first.

Supremely, and above all else, the first Epistle contained three warnings, very necessary for those times. (1) There was a danger of losing the true Christ, the Word made Flesh, Who for the forgiveness of our sins did shed out of His most precious side both water and blood—in a false, because shadowy and ideal Christ. (2) There was danger of losing true love, and therefore spiritual life, with truth. (3) With the true Christ and true love there was a danger of losing the true commandment—love of God and of the brethren. Now in the second Epistle these very three warnings were written on a leaflet in a form more calculated for circulation and for remembrance. (1) Against the peril of faith, of losing the true Christ. "Many deceivers are gone out into the world—they who confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist." With the true Christ, the true doctrine of Christ would also vanish, and with it all living hold upon God. Progress was the watchword; but it was in reality regress. "Every one who abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." (2) Against the peril of losing love. "I beseech thee, Kyria . . . that we love one another." (3) Against the peril of losing the true commandment (the great spiritual principle of charity), or the true commandments (that principle in the details of life). "And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, that even as ye heard from the beginning ye should walk in it."

Here then were the chief practical elements of the first Epistle contracted into a brief and easily remembered shape.

Easily remembered, too, was the stern, practical prohibition of the intimacies of hospitality with those who came to the home of the Christian, in the capacity of emissaries of the antichrist above indicated. "Receive him not into your house, and good speed salute him not with."

Many are offended with this. No doubt Christianity is the religion of love—"the epiphany of the sweet-naturedness and philanthropy of God." We very often look upon heresy or unbelief with the tolerance of curiosity rather than of love. At all events, the Gospel has its intolerance as well as tolerance. St. John certainly had this. It is not a true conception of art which invests him with the mawkish sweetness of perpetual youth. There is a sense in which he was a son of Thunder to the last. He who believes and knows must formulate a dogma. A dogma frozen by formality, or soured by hate, or narrowed by stupidity, makes a bigot. In reading the Church History of the first four centuries we are often tempted to ask, why all this subtlety, this theology-spinning, this dogma-hammering? The answer stands out clear above the mists of controversy. Without all this the Church would have lost the conception of Christ, and thus finally Christ Himself. St. John's denuncia-

* 2 John 2. † Ver. 1.

tions have had a function in Christendom as well as his love.

3. There are two most precious indications of the highest Christian truth with which we may conclude.

We have prefixed to this Epistle that beautiful Apostolic salutation which is found in two only among the Epistles of St. Paul. After that simple, but exquisite expression of blessing merged in prophecy—"the truth which abideth in us—yes! and with us it shall be for ever"—there comes another verse in the same key. "There shall be with us grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father, in truth" of thought, "and love" of life.

This rush and reduplication of words is not very like the usual reserve and absence of emotional excitement in St. John's style. Can it be that something (possibly the glorious death of martyrdom by which Timothy died) led St. John to use words which were probably familiar to Ephesian Christians?

However this may be, let us live by, and learn from, those lovely words. Our poverty wants grace, our guilt wants mercy, our misery wants peace. Let us ever keep the Apostle's order. Do not let us put peace, our feeling of peace, first. The emotionalists' is a topsy-turvy theology. Apostles do not say "peace and grace," but "grace and peace."

Once more—in an age which substitutes an ideal something called the spirit of Christianity for Christ, let us hold fast to that which is the essence of the Gospel and the kernel of our three creeds. "To confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh." Couple with this a canon of the First Epistle—"confesseth Jesus Christ come in flesh." The second is the Incarnation fact with its abiding consequences; the first, the Incarnation principle ever living in a Person, Who will also be personally manifested. This is the substance of the Gospels; this the life of prayers and sacraments; this the expectation of the saints.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

III. EPISTLE.

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Γαΐῳ τῷ ἀγαπητῷ, ὃν ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ. Ἀγαπητέ, περὶ πάντων εὔχομαί σε εὐοδοῦσθαι καὶ ὑγιαίνειν, καθὼς εὐοδοῦταί σου ἡ ψυχή. ἐχάρην γὰρ λίαν ἐρχομένων ἀδελφῶν καὶ μαρτυρούντων σου τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς σὺ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατεῖς. μειζοτέραν τούτων οὐκ ἔχω χαράν, ἵνα ἀκούω τὰ ἐμὰ τέκνα ἐν ἀληθείᾳ περιπατοῦντα. Ἀγαπητέ, πιστὸν ποιεῖς ὃ ἐὰν ἐργάσῃ εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ εἰς τοὺς ξένους, οἳ ἐμαρτύρησάν σου τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐνώπιον ἐκκλησίας, οὓς καλῶς ποιήσεις προπέμψας ἀξίως τοῦ Θεοῦ. ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον μηδὲν λαμβάνοντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν. ἡμεῖς, οὖν ὀφείλομεν ἀπολαμβάνειν τοὺς τοιούτους, ἵνα συνεργοὶ γινώμεθα τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Ἔγραψα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ· ἀλλ' ὁ φιλοπρωτεύων αὐτῶν Διοτρεφὴς οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται ἡμᾶς. διὰ τοῦτο, ἐὰν ἔλθω, ὑπομνήσω αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα ἃ ποιεῖ λόγοις πονηροῖς φλυαρῶν ἡμᾶς, καὶ μὴ ἀρκούμενος ἐπὶ τούτοις οὔτε αὐτὸς ἐπιδέχεται τοὺς ἀδελφούς, καὶ τοὺς βουλομένους κωλύει καὶ ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐκβάλλει. Ἀγαπητέ, μὴ μιμοῦ τὸ κακὸν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ὁ ἀγαθοποιῶν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ κακοποιῶν οὐχ ἑώρακεν τὸν Θεόν. Δημητρίῳ μεμαρτύρηται ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας· καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστι.	Senior Gaio carissimo, quem ego diligo in veritate. Carissime, de omnibus orationem facio prospere te ingredi et valere, sicut prospere agit anima tua. Gavisus sum valde venientibus fratribus et testimonium perhibentibus veritati tuæ sicut tè in veritate ambulas. Maiorem horum non habeo gratiam quam ut audiam filios meos in veritate ambulantes. Carissime, fideliter facias quidquid operaris in fratres, et hoc in peregrinos; qui testimonium reddiderunt caritati tuæ in conspectu ecclesiæ; quos bene facies ducens digna Deo. Pro nomine enim profecti sunt nihil accipientes a gentibus. Nos ergo debemus suscipere huiusmodi ut cooperatores simus veritatis. Scripsissem sitan ecclesiæ: sedis qui amat primatum gerere in eis Diotripes non recipit nos. Propter hoc, si venero, commoneam eius opera quæ facit verbis malignis garriens in nos, et quasi non ei ista sufficiant, nec ipse suscipit fratres, et eos qui cupiunt prohibet et de ecclesia eicit. Carissime, noli imitari malum, sed quod bonum est. Qui bene facit, ex Deo est: qui male facit, non videt Deum. Demetrio testimonium redditur ab omnibus et ab ipsa veritate: et	The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for His namesake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth. I wrote unto the Church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church. Beloved,	The elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when brethren came and bare witness unto thy truth, even as thou walkest in truth. Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, thou doest a faithful work in whatsoever thou doest toward them that are brethren and strangers withal; who bare witness to thy love before the church: whom thou wilt do well to set forward on their journey worthily of God: because that for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers with the truth. I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth, and casteth	The Elder unto Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth. Beloved, in all things I pray that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I was exceeding glad of brethren coming and witnessing to thy truth, even as thou truly walkest. Greater joys than these *joys* I have not, that I should hear of my own children walking truly. Beloved, thou doest in faithful wise whatsoever thou art working towards the brethren who are moreover strangers; which witness to thy charity before the Church; whom thou wilt do well to speed forward on their journey worthily of God: because that for the sake of the Name they went out taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore are bound to take up such that we may become fellow-workers with the truth. I wrote somewhat unto the Church: but Diotrephes who loveth to have primacy over them receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come I will bring to remembrance his works which he is doing, prating against us with wicked words: and not contented hereupon neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he hindereth, and casteth them out of

III. EPISTLE.—*Continued.*

GREEK.	LATIN.	AUTHORISED VERSION.	REVISED VERSION.	ANOTHER VERSION.
Πολλὰ εἶχον γράφειν, ἀλλ' οὐ θέλω διὰ μέλανος καὶ καλάμου σοι γράψαι· ἐλπίζω δὲ εὐθέως ἰδεῖν σε, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσομεν. Εἰρήνη σοι. Ἀσπάζονταί σε οἱ φίλοι· ἀσπάζου τοὺς φίλους κατ' ὄνομα.	nos testimonium perhibemus, et nosti quoniam testimonium nostrum verum est. Multa habui scribere tibi, sed nolui per atramentum et calamum scribere tibi: spero autem protinus te videre, et os ad os loquimur. Pax tibi. Salutant te amici. Saluta amicos per nomen.	follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath good report of all *men*, and of the truth itself; yea, and we *also* bear record; and ye know that our record is true. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: but I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* to thee. *Our* friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.	*them* out of the church. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Demetrius hath the witness of all *men*, and of the truth itself: yea, we also bear witness; and thou knowest that our witness is true. I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write *them* to thee with ink and pen: but I hope shortly to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace *be* unto thee. The friends salute thee. Salute the friends by name.	the Church. Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He who is doing good is from God; he that is doing evil hath not seen God. To Demetrius witness stands given of all men and of the truth itself; yea, and we also are witnessing, and ye know that our witness is true. Many things I had to have written, but I am not willing to be writing unto thee with ink and pen: but I am hoping straightway to see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace unto thee. The friends greet thee. Greet the friends by name.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE QUIETNESS OF TRUE RELIGION.

3 John i. 11.

The mere analysis of this note must necessarily present a meagre outline. There is a brief expression of pleasure at the tidings of the sweet and gracious hospitality of Gaius which was brought by certain missionary brethren to Ephesus, coupled with the assurance of the truth and consistency of his whole walk. The haughty rejection of Apostolic letters of communion by Diotrephes is mentioned with a burst of indignation. A contrast to Diotrephes is found in Demetrius, with the threefold witness to a life so worthy of imitation. A brief greeting—and we have done with the last written words of St. John which the Church possesses.

I.

Let us first see whether, without passing over the bounds of historical probability, we can fill up this bare outline with some colouring of circumstance.

To two of the three individuals named in this Epistle we seem to have some clue.

The Gaius addressed is, of course, Caius in Latin, a very common prænomen, no doubt.

Three persons of the name appear in the New Testament—unless we suppose St. John's Caius to be a fourth. But the generous and beautiful hospitality adverted to in this note is entirely of a piece with the character of him of whom St. Paul had written, "Gaius, mine host, and of the whole Church." We know further, from one of the most ancient and authentic documents of Christian literature, that the Church of Corinth (to which this Caius belonged) was, just at the period when St. John wrote, in a lamentable state of schismatic confusion. Diotrephes may, at such a period, have been aspiring to put forward his claim at Corinth; and may, in his ambitious proceedings, have rejected from communion the brethren whom St. John had sent to Caius. A yet more interesting reflection is suggested by a writing of considerable authority. The writer of the "Synopsis of Holy Scripture," which stands amongst the Works of Athanasius, says—"the Gospel according to John was both dictated by John the Apostle and beloved when in exile at Patmos, and by him was published in Ephesus, through Caius the beloved and friend of the Apostles, of whom Paul also writing to the Romans saith, Caius mine host, and of the whole Church." * This would give a very marked significance to one touch in this Third Epistle of St. John. The phrase here "and we bear witness also, and ye know that our witness is true"—clearly points back to the closing attestation of the Gospel—"and we know that his witness is true." † He counts upon a quick recognition of a common memory.‡

Demetrius is, of course, a name redolent of the worship of Demeter the Earth-Mother, and of Ephesian surroundings. No reader of the New Testament needs to be reminded of the riot at Ephesus, which is told at such length in the history of St. Paul's voyages by St. Luke. The conjecture that the agitator of the turbulent guild of silversmiths who made silver shrines of Diana may have become the Demetrius, the object of St. John's lofty commendation, is by no means improbable. There is a peculiar fulness in the narrative of the Acts, and an amplitude and exactness in the reports of the speeches of Demetrius and of the town-clerk which betray both unusually detailed information, and a feeling on the part of the writer that the subject was one of much interest for many readers. The very words of Demetrius about Paul evince that uneasy sense of the powers of fascination possessed by the Apostle which is often the first timid witness of reluctant conviction.§ The

* "Synopsis S. S." '76. (S. Athanas., "Opp.," iv. 433. Edit. Migne.)

† Read together 3 John 12, and John xxi. 24.

‡ The writer had worked out his conclusions about Caius independently before he happened to read Bengel's note. "Caius *Corinthi* de quo Rom. xvi. 23, vel huic Caio, Johannis amico, fuit *simillimus* in hospitalitate—vel *idem*; —si idem, ex Achaia in Asiam migravit, vel Corinthum Johannes hanc epistolam misit."

§ "Almost throughout all Asia this Paul hath persuaded

whole story would be of thrilling interest to those who, knowing well what Demetrius had become, were here told what he once had been. In a very ancient document (the so-called "Apostolic Constitutions") * we read that "Demetrius was appointed Bishop of Philadelphia by me," *i. e.*, by the Apostle John. To the Bishop of that city, so often shaken by the earthquakes of that volcanic city, came the commendation—"I know thy works that thou didst keep My word;" and the assuring promise that he should, when the victory was won, have the solidity and permanence of "a pillar" in a "temple"† that no convulsion could shake down. The witness, then, which stands on record for the Bishop of Philadelphia, is threefold; the threefold witness of the First Epistle on a reduced scale—the witness of the world;‡ the witness of the Truth itself, even of Jesus;§ the witness of the Church—including John.‖

II.

We may now advert to the contents and general style of this letter.

1. As to its contents: It supplies us with a valuable test of Christian life, in what may be called the Christian instinct of missionary affection, possessed in such full measure by Caius.¶

This, indeed, is an ingredient of Christian character. Do we admire and feel attracted by missionaries? They are knight-errants of the Faith; leaders of the "forlorn hope" of Christ's cause; bearers of the flag of the cross through the storms of battle. Do we wish to honour and to help them, and feel ennobled by doing so? He who has no almost enthusiastic regard for missionaries has not the spirit of primitive Christianity within his breast.

The Church is beset with different dangers from very different quarters. The Second Epistle of St. John has its bold unmistakable warning of danger from the philosophical atmosphere which is not only round the Church, but necessarily finds its way within. Those who assume to be leaders of intellectual and even of spiritual progress sometimes lead away from Christ. The test of scientific truth is accordance with the proposition which embodies the last discovery; the test of religious truth is accordance with the proposition which embodies the first discovery, *i. e.*, "the doctrine of Christ." Progress outside this is regress; it is desertion first of Christ, ultimately of God.** As the Second Epistle warns the Church of peril from speculative ambition, so the third Epistle marks a danger from personal ambition,†† arrogating to itself undue authority within the Church. Diotrephes in all probability was a bishop. At Rome there has been a permanent Diotrephes in the office of the Papacy; how much this has had to say to the dislocation of Christendom, God knows. But there are other smaller and more vulgar continuators of Diotrephes, who occupy no Vatican. Priests! But there are priests in different senses. The priest who stands to minister in holy things, the true Leitourgos, is rightly so called. But there is an arrogant priestship which would do violence to conscience, and interpose rudely between God and the soul. Priests in this sense are called by different names. They are clad in different dresses—some in chasubles, some in frock-coats, some in petticoats. "Down with priestcraft," is even the cry of many of them. The priest who stands to offer sacrifice may or may not be a priest in the evil sense; the priest (who abjures the name) who is a master of religious small-talk of the popular kind, and winds people to his own ends round his little finger by using them deftly, is often the modern edition of Diotrephes.

This brief Epistle contains one of those apparently mere spiritual truisms, which make St. John the most powerful and comprehensive of all spiritual teachers. He had suggested a warning to Caius, which serves as the link to connect the example of Diotrephes which he has denounced, with that of Demetrius which he is about to commend. "Beloved!" he cries "imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good." A glorious little "Imitation of Christ," a compression of his own Gospel, the record of the Great Example in three words!"* Then follows this absolutely exhaustive division, which covers the whole moral and spiritual world. "He that doeth good" (the whole principle of whose moral life is this) "is of," has his origin from "God;" "He that doeth evil hath not seen God," sees him not as a consequence of having spiritually looked upon Him. Here, at last, we have the flight of the eagle's wing, the glance of the eagle's eye. Especially valuable are these words almost at the close of the Apostolic age and of the New Testament Scripture. They help us to keep the delicate balance of truth; they guard us against all abuse of the precious doctrines of grace. Several texts are mutilated; more are conveniently dropped out. How seldom does one see the whole context quoted, in tracts and sheets, of that most blessed passage—"if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin?" How often do we see these words at all—"he that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God?" Perhaps it may be a lingering suspicion that a text which comes out of a very short Epistle is worth very little. Perhaps doctrinalism *à outrance* considers that the sentiment "savours of works." But, at all events, there is terrible decisiveness about these antithetic propositions. For each life is described in section and in plan by one or other of the two. The whole complicated series of thought, actions, habits, purposes, summed up in the words life and character, is a continuous stream issuing from the man who *does* every moment of his existence. The stream is either pure, bright, cleansing, gladdening, capable of being tracked by a thread of emerald wherever it flows; or it carries with it on its course, blackness, bitterness, and barrenness. Men must be plainly dealt with. They may hold any creed, or follow any round of religious practices. There are creeds which are nobly true, others which are false and feeble—practices which are beautiful and elevating, others which are petty and unprofitable. They may repeat the shibboleth ever so accu

and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods, which are made with hands."—Acts xix. 26.

* vii. 46.

† Apoc. iii. 7, 8, 12.

‡ "All men."

§ Καὶ ὑπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας, *i. e.*, Jesus (Apoc. iii. 7, 12).

‖ "And we also bear witness." 3 John 12.

¶ 3 John 5, 6, 7.

** 2 John 9.

†† 3 John 9, 10.

* μιμοῦ . . . τὸ ἀγαθόν, 3 John 11.

rately; and follow the observances ever so closely. They may sing hymns until their throats are hoarse, and beat drums until their wrists are sore.

But St. John's propositions ring out, loud and clear, and syllable themselves in questions, which one day or other the conscience will put to us with terrible distinctness. Are you one who is ever doing good; or one who is not doing good? "God be merciful to me a sinner!" may well rush to our lips. But that, when opportunity is given, must be followed by another prayer. Not only—"wash away my sins." Something more. "Fill and purify me with Thy Spirit, that, pardoned and renewed, I may become good, and be doing good." It is sometimes said that the Church is full of souls "dying of their morality." Is it not at least equally true to say that the Church is full of souls dying of their spirituality? That is—souls dying in one case of unreal morality; in the other of unreal spirituality, which juggles with spiritual words, making a sham out of them. Morality which is not spiritual is imperfect; spirituality which is not moralised through and through is of the spirit of evil.

It is a great thing in these last sentences, written with a trembling hand, which shrank from the labour of pen and ink, the Apostle should have lifted a word (probably current in the social atmosphere of Ephesus among spiritualists and astrologers) from the low associations with which it was undeservedly associated; and should have rung out high and clear the Gospel's everlasting justification, the final harmony of the teaching of grace—"he that doeth good is of God."

2. The style of the Third Epistle of St. John is certainly that of an old man. It is reserved in language and in doctrine. God is thrice and thrice only mentioned.* Jesus is not once expressly uttered. But

> "... They are not empty-hearted whose low sound
> Reverbs no hollowness."

In religion, as in everything else, we are earnest, not by aiming at earnestness, but by aiming at an object. Religious language should be deep and real, rather than demonstrative. It is not safe to play with sacred names. To pronounce them at random for the purpose of being effective and impressive is to take them in vain. What a wealth of reverential love there is in that—"for the sake of the Name!"† Old copyists sometimes thought to improve upon the impressiveness of Apostles by cramming in sacred names. They only maimed what they touched with clumsy hand. A deeper sense of the Sacramental Presence is in the hushed, awful, reverence of "not discerning the Body," than in the interpolated "not discerning of the Lord's Body." Even so "The Name," perhaps, speaks more to the heart, and implies more than "His Name." It is, indeed, the "beautiful Name," by the which we are called. And sometimes in sermons, or in Eucharistic "Gloria in Excelsis," or in hymns that have come from such as St. Bernard, or in sick-rooms, it shall go up with our sweetest music, and waken our tenderest thoughts, and be "as ointment poured forth." But what an underlying Gospel, what an intense suppressed flame there is behind these quiet words! This letter says nothing of rapture, of prophecy, of miracle. It lies in the atmosphere of the Church, as we find it even now. It has a word for friendship. It seeks to individualise its benediction. A hush of evening rests upon the note. May such an evening close upon our old age!

* "Worthily of God" ver. 6; "is of God—hath not seen God" ver. 11.

† Ver 7.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PREFATORY NOTE.

In ordinary circumstances one who undertakes to comment upon a book of the New Testament may be justly expected to make every effort to explain each successive clause and each difficult expression of the book on which he writes. My aim in the following Commentary is rather to catch the general import and object of the Revelation of St. John considered as a whole. The latter purpose indeed cannot be attained unless the commentator has himself paid faithful attention to the former; but it is not necessary that the results of these inquiries should in every case be presented to the English reader. To him this book is for the most part a perplexity and enigma, and he would only be embarrassed by a multitude of details. It seemed well, therefore, to treat the book in its sections and paragraphs rather than verse by verse; and this is the course pursued in the following pages. The translation used is for the most part that of the Revised Version. An examination of the words and clauses of the book, conducted upon a plan different from that here adopted, and much more minute in its character, will be found in the Author's Commentary on the Apocalypse, in the Commentary upon the books of the New Testament, edited by Professor Schaff, and published by Messrs. Clark, Edinburgh. The principles upon which the Author has proceeded have been fully discussed in his Baird Lectures.

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THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D. D.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROLOGUE.

REVELATION i. 1-20.

THE first chapter of Revelation introduces us to the whole book, and supplies in great measure the key by which we are to interpret it. The book is not intended to be a mystery in the sense in which we commonly understand that word. It deals indeed with the future, the details of which must always be dark to us; and it does this by means of figures and symbols and modes of speech far removed from the ordinary simplicity of language which marks the New Testament writers. But it is not on that account designed to be unintelligible. The figures and symbols employed in it are used with perfect regularity; its peculiar modes of speech are supposed to be at least not unfamiliar to the reader; and it is taken for granted that he understands them. The writer obviously expects that his meaning, so far from being obscured by his style, will be thereby illustrated, enforced, and brought home to the mind, with greater than ordinary power. The word "Revelation," by which he describes to us the general character of his work, is of itself sufficient to show this. "Revelation" means the uncovering of that which has hitherto been covered, the drawing back of a veil which has hung over a person or thing, the laying bare what has been hitherto concealed; and the book before us is a revelation instead of a mystery.

Again, the book is a revelation of Jesus Christ; not so much a revelation of what Jesus Christ Himself is, as one of which He is the Author and Source. He is the Head of His Church, reigning supreme in His heavenly abode. He is the Eternal Son, the Word without whom was not anything made that was made, and who executes all the purposes of the Father, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He is at the same time "Head over all things to the Church." He regulates her fortunes. He controls in her behalf the events of history. He fills the cup which He puts into her hand with prosperity or adversity, with joy or sorrow, with victory or defeat. Who else can impart a revelation so true, so weighty, and so precious?

Yet again, the revelation to be now given by Jesus Christ is one which God gave Him, the revelation of the eternal and unchangeable plan of One who turneth the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, who saith and it is done, who commandeth and it stands fast.

Finally, the revelation relates to things that must shortly come to pass, and thus has all the interest of the present, and not merely of a far-distant future.

Such is the general character of that revelation which Jesus Christ sent and signified through His angel unto His servant John. And that Apostle faithfully recorded it for the instruction and comfort of the Church. Like his Divine Master, with whom throughout all this book believers are so closely identified, and who is Himself, "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," the disciple whom He loved stands forth to bear witness of "the word of God" thus given him, of "the testimony of Jesus" thus signified to him, "even of all things that he saw." He places himself in thought at the end of the visions he had witnessed, and re-traces for others the elevating pictures which had filled, as he beheld them, his own soul with rapture.

Therefore may he now, ere yet he enters upon his task, pronounce a blessing upon those who shall pay due heed to what he is to say. Does he think of the person by whom the apostolic writings were read aloud in the midst of the Christian congregation? then, "Blessed is he that readeth." Does he think of those who listen? then, Blessed are "they that hear the words of the prophecy." Or, lasting, does he think not merely of reading and hearing, but of that laying up in the heart to which these were only preparatory? then, Blessed are they that "keep the things which are written therein, for the season," the short season in which everything shall be accomplished, "is at hand."

The Introduction to the book is over; and it may be well to mark for a moment that tendency to divide his matter into three parts which peculiarly distinguishes St. John, and to which, as supplying an important rule of interpretation, we shall often have occasion to refer. There are obviously three parts in the Introduction,—the Source, the Contents, and the Importance of the revelation; and each of these is again divided into three. Three persons are mentioned when the Source is spoken of,—God, Jesus Christ, and the servants of Jesus; three when the Contents are referred to,—the Word of God, the Testimony of Jesus, and All things that he saw; and three when the Importance of the book is described,—He that readeth, They that hear, and They that keep the things written therein.

(Chap. i. 4-8) From the Introduction we pass to the Salutation, extending from ver. 4 to ver. 8. Adopting a method different from that of the fourth Gospel, which is also the production of his pen, the writer of Revelation names himself. The difference is easily explained. The fourth Gospel is original not only in its contents but its form. The Apocalypse is moulded after the fashion of the ancient prophets, and of the numerous apocalyptic authors of the time; and it was the practice of both these classes of writers to place their names at the head of what they wrote. The fourth Gospel was also intended to set forth in a purely objective manner the glory of the Eternal Word made flesh, and that too in such a way that the glory exhibited in Him should authenticate itself, independently of human testimony. The Apocalypse needed a voucher from one known and trusted. It came through the mind of a man, and we naturally ask, Who is the man through whom it came? The enquiry is satisfied, and we are told that it comes from John. In telling us this St. John speaks with the authority which belongs to him. By-and-by

we shall see him in another light, occupying a position similar to ours, and standing on the same level with us in the covenant of grace. But at this moment he is the Apostle, the Evangelist, the Minister of God, a consecrated priest in the Christian community who is about to pronounce a priestly blessing on the Church. Let the Church bow her head and reverently receive it.

The Salutation is addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia." On this point it is enough to say that by the Asia spoken of we are to understand neither the continent of that name, nor its great western division, Asia Minor, but only a single district of the latter, of which Ephesus, where St. John spent the later years of his life and ministry, was the capital. There the aged Apostle tended all those portions of the flock of Christ that he could reach, and all the churches of the neighbourhood were his peculiar care. We know that these were in number more than seven. We know that to no church could the Apostle be indifferent. The conclusion is irresistible that here, as so often in this book, as well as in other parts of Scripture, the number seven is not to be literally understood. Seven churches are selected, the condition of which appeared most suitable to the purpose which the Apostle has in view; and these seven represent the Church of Christ in every country of the world, down to the very end of time. The universal Church spreads itself out beneath his gaze; and before he instructs he blesses it.

The blessing is, "Grace to you, and peace;" grace first, the Divine grace, in its enlightening, quickening, and beautifying power; and then peace, peace with God and man, peace that in the deep recesses of the heart remains undisturbed by outward trouble, the peace of which it is said by Him who is the Prince of peace, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."

The source of the blessing is next indicated,—the Triune God, the three Persons of the glorious Trinity, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son. Probably we should have thought of a different order; but the truth is that it is the Son, as the manifestation of the Godhead, who is mainly in the Apostle's mind. Hence the peculiarity of the first designation, "Him which is, and which was, and which is to come," a designation specially applicable to our Lord. Hence also the peculiarity of the second designation, "The seven Spirits which are before His throne;" not so much the Spirit viewed in His individual personality, in the eternal relations of the Divine existence, as that Spirit in the manifoldness of His operation in the Church, the Spirit of the glorified Redeemer,—not one, therefore, but seven. Hence, again, the peculiar designation of Christ, "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth;" not so much the Son in His metaphysical relation to the Godhead, as in attributes connected with His redemptive work. And hence, finally, the fact that when these three Persons have been named, the Seer fills up the remaining verses of his Salutation with thoughts, not of the Trinity, but of Him who has already redeemed us, and who will in due time come to perfect our salvation.

Now, therefore, the Church, reflecting upon all that has been done, is done, and shall be done for her, is able to raise the song of triumphant thanksgiving, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins in His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen." In these words the possession of complete redemption is implied. The true reading of the original is not that of our Authorised Version, "Unto Him that washed," but "Unto Him that loosed" us from our sins. We have received not merely the pardon of sin, but deliverance from its power. "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." The chains in which Satan held us captive have been snapped asunder and we are free. Again, this loosing has taken place "in" rather than "by" the blood of Christ, for the blood of Christ is living blood, and in that life of His we are enfolded and enwrapped, so that it is not we that live, but Christ that liveth in us. Once more they who are thus spoken of are "a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father," the former being the lower stage, the latter the higher. The word "kingdom" has reference less to the splendour of royalty than to victory over foes. Christians reign in conquering their spiritual enemies; and then, in possession of the victory that overcometh the world, they enter into the innermost sanctuary of the Most High and dwell in the secret of His Tabernacle. There their great High-Priest is one with "His God and Father," and there they also dwell with His Father and their Father, with His God and their God.

The statement of these verses, however, reveals not only what the Christian Church is to which the Apocalypse is addressed; it reveals also what the Lord is from whom the revelation comes. He is indeed the Saviour who died for us, the witness faithful unto death: but He is also the Saviour who rose again, who is the firstborn of the dead, and who has ascended to the right hand of God, where He lives and reigns in glory everlasting. It is the glorified Redeemer from whom the book of His revelation comes; and He has all power committed to Him both in heaven and on earth. More particularly, He is "the ruler of the kings of the earth." This is not a description of such honour as might be given by a crowd of loyal nobles to a beloved prince. It rather gives expression to a power by which "the kings of the earth," the potentates of a sinful world, are subdued and crushed.

Lastly, the Salutation includes the thought that He who is now hidden in heaven from our view will yet appear in the glory that belongs to Him. He is the Lord who "is to come"; or, as it is expanded in the words immediately following the doxology, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail over Him. Even so, Amen." It is of importance to ask what the glory is in which the glorified Lord is thus spoken of as coming. Is it that of one who shall be the object of admiration to every eye, and who, by the revelation of Himself, shall win all who behold Him to godly penitence and faith? The context forbids such an interpretation. The tribes "of the earth" are like its kings in ver. 5, the tribes of an ungodly world, and the "wailing" is that of chap. xviii. 9, where the same word is used, and where

the kings of the earth weep and wail over the fall of guilty Babylon, which they behold burning before their eyes. The tones of that judgment which is to re-echo throughout the book are already heard: "Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's Son. He shall judge the people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment"; "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, He is a God that judgeth in the earth."

And now the glorified Redeemer Himself declares what He is: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord, God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." It will be observed that after the word "Lord" we have interposed a comma not found in either the Authorised or the Revised Version. On various other occasions we shall have to do the same, and the call to do so arises partly from the connection of the thought, partly from St. John's love of that tripartite division of an idea which has been already spoken of. The former does not lead us to the Father; it leads us, on the contrary, to the Son. He it is Who has been described immediately before, and with Him the description which follows is to be occupied. No doubt the thought of God, of the Father, lies immediately behind the words. No doubt also "the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing"; yet "what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner."* By the Son the Father acts. In the Son the Father speaks. The Son is the manifestation of the Father. The same Divine attributes, therefore, which are to be seen in the Father are to be seen in the Son. Let us hear Him as He seals His intimations of coming judgment with the assurance that He is God, who has come, who is, and who is to come, the Almighty.

(Chap. i. 9-20.) After the Introduction and Salutation the visions of the book begin, the first being the key to all that follow. The circumstances amidst which it was given are described, not merely to satisfy curiosity, or to afford information, but to establish such a connection between St. John and his readers as shall authenticate and vivify its lessons.

"I John," he begins, "your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." It is no longer only the Apostle, the authoritative messenger of God, who speaks; it is one who occupies the same ground as other members of the Church, and is bound to them by the strong, deep tie of common sorrow. The aged and honoured Evangelist, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is one with them, bears the same burden, drinks the same cup, and has no higher consolation than they may have. He is their "brother," a brother in adversity, for he is a partaker with them of the "tribulation" that is in Jesus. The reference is to outward suffering and persecution; for the words of the Master were now literally fulfilled: "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you;" "Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God."† The scorn, the hatred, the persecution of the world! for such as were exposed to these things was the Apocalypse written, by such was it understood; and if, in later times, it has often failed to make its due impression on the minds of men, it is because it is not intended for those who are at ease in Zion. The more Christians are compelled to feel that the world hates them, and that they cannot be its friends, the greater to them will be the power and beauty of this book. Its revelations, like the stars of the sky, shine most brightly in the cold, dark night.

"Tribulation" is the chief thing spoken of, but the Apostle, with his love of groups of three, accompanies it with other two marks of the Christian's condition in the world,—the "kingdom" and "patience" that are in Jesus. St. John therefore was in tribulation. He had been driven from Ephesus, we know not why, and had been banished to Patmos, a small rocky island of the Ægean Sea. He had been banished for his faith, for his adherence to "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," the former expression leading our thoughts to the revelation of the Old Testament, the latter to that of the New; the former to those prophets, culminating in the Baptist, of whom the same Apostle who now writes tells us in the beginning of his Gospel, that they "came for witness that they might bear witness of the light;"* the latter to "the true light, even the light which lighteth every man coming into the world."† Driven from the society of his friends and "children," we cannot doubt that St. John would be drawn even more closely than was his wont to the bosom of his Lord; would feel that he was still protected by His care; would remember the words uttered by Him in the most sublime and touching moment of His life, "And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me;"‡ and would share the blessed experience of knowing that, on every spot of earth however remote, and amidst all trials however heavy, he was in the hands of One who stills the tumults of the people as well as the waves of the sea beating upon the rock-bound coast of Patmos.

Animated by feelings such as these, the Apostle knew that, whatever appearances to the contrary might present themselves, the time now passing over his head was the time of the Lord's rule, and not of man's. No thought could be more inspiring, and it was the preparation in his soul for the scene which followed.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." The "Lord's day" here referred to may have been the Sunday, the first day of the Christian week, the day commemorative of that morning when He who had been "crucified through weakness, yet lived through the power of God."§ If so, there was a peculiar fitness in that vision, now to be granted, of the risen and glorified Redeemer. But it seems doubtful if this is the true interpretation. Proof is wanting that the first day of the week had yet received the name of "The Lord's Day," and it is more in accordance with the prophetic tone of the book before us to think that by St. John the whole of that brief season which was to pass

* John v. 19. † John xv. 20; xvi. 2.

* John i. 7. † John i. 9. ‡ John xvii. 11. § 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

before the Church should follow her Lord to glory was regarded as "The Lord's Day." Whichever interpretation we adopt, the fact remains that, meditating in his lonely isle upon the glory of his Lord in heaven and the contrasted fortunes of His Church on earth, St. John passed into a state of spiritual ecstasy. Like St. Paul, he was caught up into the third heavens; but, unlike him, he was permitted, and even commanded, to record what he heard and saw. *

"And I heard behind me," he says, "a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." We need not dwell now upon these churches. We shall meet them again. They are "the seven churches which are in Asia" already spoken of in ver. 4; and they are to be viewed as representative of the whole Christian Church in all countries of the world, and throughout all time. In their condition they represented to St. John what that Church is, in her Divine origin and human frailty, in her graces and defects, in her zeal and lukewarmness, in her joys and sorrows, in the guardianship of her Lord, and in her final victory after many struggles. Not to Christians in these cities alone is the Apocalypse spoken, but to all Christians in all their circumstances: "He that hath an ear, let him hear." The Apostle heard.

"And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man." It was a splendid vision which was thus presented to his eyes. The golden candlestick, first of the Tabernacle and then of the Temple, was one of the gorgeous articles of furniture in God's holy house. It was wrought, with its seven branches, after the fashion of an almond tree, the earliest tree of spring to hasten (whence also it was named) into blossom; and, as we learn from the elaborateness and beauty of the workmanship, from the sybolical numbers largely resorted to in its construction, and from the analogy of all the furniture of the Tabernacle, it represented Israel when that people, having offered themselves at the altar, and having been cleansed in the laver of the court, entered as a nation of priests into the special dwelling-place of their heavenly King. Here, therefore, the seven golden candlesticks, or, as in ver. 4, the one in seven, represent the Church, as she burns in the secret place of the Most High.

But we are not invited to dwell upon the Church. Something greater attracts the eye,—He who is "like unto a Son of man." The expression of the original is remarkable. It occurs only once in any of the other books of the New Testament, in John v. 27, although there, both in the Authorised and Revised Versions, it is unhappily translated "the Son of man." It is the humanness of our Lord's Person more than the Person Himself, or rather it is the Person in His humanness, to which the words of the original direct us. Amidst all the glory that surrounds Him we are to think of Him as man; but what a man!

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass as if it had been refined in a furnace; and His voice as the voice of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The particulars of the description indicate the official position of the Person spoken of, and the character in which He appears. (1) He is a priest, clothed with the long white garment reaching to the feet that was a distinguishing part of the priestly dress, but at the same time so wearing the girdle at the breasts, not at the waist, as to show that He was a priest engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. (2) He is a king, for, with the exception of the last mentioned particular, all the other features of the description given of Him point to kingly rather than to priestly power, while the prophetic language of Isaiah, as he looks forward to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, language which we may well suppose to have been now in the Seer's thoughts leads to the same conclusion: "And I will clothe Him with Thy robe and strengthen Him with Thy girdle, and I will commit Thy government into His hand." * The "Son of man," in short, here brought before us in His heavenly glory, is both Priest and King.

Not only so. It is even of peculiar importance to observe that the attributes with which the Priest-King is clothed are not so much those of tenderness and mercy as those of power and majesty, inspiring the beholder with a sense of awe and with the fear of judgment. Already we have had some traces of this in considering ver. 7: now it comes out in all its force. That hair of a glistering whiteness which, like snow on which the sun is shining, it almost pains the eye to look upon; those eyes penetrating like a flame of fire into the inmost recesses of the heart; those feet which, like metal raised to a white heat in a furnace, consume in an instant whatever they tread upon in anger; that voice loud and continuous, like the sound of the mighty sea as it booms along the shore; that sword sharp, two-edged, issuing from the mouth, so that no one can escape it when it is drawn to slay; and lastly, that countenance like the sun in the height of a tropical sky, when man and beast cower from the irresistible scorching of his beams,—all are symbolical of judgment. Eager to save, the exalted High-Priest is yet also mighty to destroy. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O ye Kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

The Apostle felt all this; and, believer as he was in Jesus, convinced of his Master's love, and one who returned that love with the warmest affections of his heart, he was yet overwhelmed with terror. "And when I saw Him," he tells us, "I fell at His feet as one dead." In circumstances somewhat similar to the present, a somewhat similar effect had been produced upon other saints of God. When Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean

* Compare 2 Cor. xii. 4.

* Isa. xxii. 21; comp. also ver. 22 with Rev. iii. 7.

lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When Ezekiel beheld a vision of the same kind, he tells us that he "fell upon his face." When the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel in order to explain the vision which had been shown him, the prophet says, "I was afraid, and fell upon my face." Here the effect was greater than in any of these instances, corresponding to the greater glory shown; and the Apostle fell at the feet of the glorified Lord as one "dead." But there is mercy with the Lord that He may be feared; and "He laid His right hand upon me," adds St. John, "saying, Fear not": and then follows in three parts that full and gracious declaration of what He is, in His eternal pre-existence, in that work on behalf of man which embraced not only His being lifted on high upon the cross, but His Resurrection and Ascension to His Father's throne, and in the consummation of His victory over all the enemies of our salvation,—1. "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One; 2. And I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore; 3. And I have the keys of death and of Hades."

A few more words are spoken by the glorified Person who thus appeared to St. John, but at this point we may pause for a moment, for the vision is complete. It is the first vision of the book, and it contains the key-note of the whole. As distinguished from the fourth Gospel, in which Jesus, clothed as He is with His humanity, is yet pre-eminently the Son of God, the Saviour, while here retaining His Divinity, is yet pre-eminently a Son of man. In other words, He is not merely the Only Begotten who was from eternity in the bosom of the Father: He is also Head over all things to His Church. And He is this as the glorified Redeemer who has finished His work on earth, and now carries it on in heaven. This work too He carries on, not only as a High-Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but as One clothed with judgment. He is a man of war, and to Him the words of the Psalmist may be applied:

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One,
Thy glory and Thy majesty.
And in Thy majesty ride prosperously,
Because of truth and meekness and righteousness:
And Thy right hand shall teach Thee terrible things.
Thine arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under Thee;
They are in the heart of the King's enemies."

Yet we cannot separate the body of Christ from the head, who is Son of man as well as Son of God. With the Head the members are one, and they too, therefore, are here contemplated as engaged in a work of judgment. With their Lord they are opposed by an ungodly world. In it they also struggle, and war, and overcome. The tribulation, and the kingdom, and patience "in Jesus," are their lot; but living a resurrection life, and escaped from the power of death and Hades, salvation has been in principle made theirs, and they have only to wait for the full manifestation of that Lord with whom, when He is manifested, they also shall be manifested in glory.

Thus we are taught what to expect in the book of Revelation. It will record the conflict of Christ and His people with the evil that is in the world, and their victory over it. It will tell of struggle with sin and Satan, but of sin vanquished and Satan bruised beneath their feet. It will be the story of the Church as she journeys through the wilderness to the land of promise, encountering many foes, but more than conqueror through Him that loved her, and often raising to heaven her song of praise, "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider He hath cast into the sea."

Now then we are prepared to listen to the closing words of the glorious Person who had revealed Himself to St. John, as He repeats His injunction to him to write, and gives him some explanation of what he had seen: "Write, therefore, the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest upon My right hand. and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches." The golden candlesticks and the stars, the churches and the angels of the churches, will immediately meet us when we proceed to the next two chapters of the book. Meanwhile it is enough to know that we are about to enter upon the fortunes of that Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world which embraces within it the execution of the final purposes of the Almighty, and the accomplishment of His plans for the perfection and happiness of His whole creation.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH ON THE FIELD OF HISTORY.

Revelation ii., iii.

The fortunes of the Church are to be traced in the Revelation of St. John; and the first thing necessary, therefore, is that we shall learn what the Church is. To accomplish this is the leading aim of the second and third chapters of the book. An object precisely similar appears to determine the arrangement of the fourth Gospel. The Introduction or Prologue of that Gospel is found in chapter i. 1-18; and there can be no doubt that we meet there, in brief and compendious form, the ideas afterwards illustrated and enforced by its selection of incidents from the life of Jesus. After the Prologue follows a section, extending from chap. i. 19 to chap. ii. 11, in which it is obvious that that struggle of Jesus with the world, together with His victory over it. which it is the chief purpose of the Evangelist to relate, has not yet begun. The question thus arises, What is the aim of that section? and the answer is, that it is to set forth the Redeemer with whom the Gospel is to be occupied as He enters upon the field of history. Thus also here. The first chapter of Revelation is the Introduction or Prologue of the book, containing the ideas to be afterward illustrated in the history of the Church. The struggle of the Church with the world does not yet begin, nor will it begin until we come to chap. vi. In the meantime we are to see in chaps. ii. and iii. that Body of Christ the struggle and victory of which are to engage our thoughts.

These chapters consist of seven epistles addressed to the churches of the seven cities of Asia named in chap. i. 11, and now written to in the same order, beginning with Ephesus and ending with Laodicea. Each epistle contains much that is peculiar to it, but we shall fail to understand the picture presented by the two chapters as a whole

if we look only at the individual parts. General considerations, therefore, regarding the seven epistles first demand our notice.

Each epistle, it will be observed, is addressed to the "angel" of the church named. The object of this commentary, as explained in the prefatory note, renders an examination of the meaning of the word "angel" here used a point of subordinate importance. A few remarks, however, can hardly be avoided. The favourite interpretations of the term are two: that the "angels of the churches" are either the guardian angels to whom they are severally committed, or their bishops or chief pastors. Both interpretations may be unhesitatingly rejected. For as to the first, there is a total absence of proof that it was either a Jewish or an early Christian idea that each Christian community had its guardian angel; and as to the second, if there was, as there seems to have been, in the synagogues of the Jews, an official known as the "angel" or "messenger," he occupied an altogether inferior position, and possessed none of the authoritative control here ascribed to the several "angels" mentioned. Besides this, both interpretations are set aside by the single consideration that, keeping in view what has been said of the number seven in its relation to the number one, the seven angels, like the seven churches, must be capable of being regarded as a unity. But this cannot be the case with seven guardian angels, for such a universal guardianship can be predicated of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church, alone. Nor can seven bishops or chief pastors be reasonably resolved into one universal bishop or the moderator of one universal presbytery. The true idea seems to be that the "angels" of the churches are a symbolical representation in which the active, as distinguished from the passive, life of the Church finds expression. To St. John every person, every thing, has its angel. God proclaims and executes His will by angels. He addresses even the Son by an angel. The Son acts and reveals His truth by an angel. The waters have an angel. Fire has an angel. The winds have an angel. The abyss has an angel. On all these occasions the "angel" is interposed when the persons or things spoken of are represented as coming out of themselves and as taking their part in intercourse or in action. In like manner the "angels of the churches" are the churches themselves, with this mark of distinction only,—that, when they are thus spoken of, they are viewed not merely as in possession of inward vigour, but as exercising it towards things without.

The interpretation now given is confirmed by the fact that the "angels," as appears from the words of chap. i. 20, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches," are not different from the "stars," for it is the province of the star, instead of hiding itself in some secret chamber, to shine, and from its place in the firmament to shed light upon the earth. The uniformity of treatment, too, which must be claimed for the number seven when used both with the churches and the stars, is thus rendered possible; for if the former may represent the universal Church in what she is, the latter will represent the same Church in what she does. Thus, then, in the seven "golden candlesticks" and in the seven "stars" or "angels" we have a double picture of the Church; and each of the two figures employed points to a different aspect of her being. It is possible also that the double designation may have been chosen in conformity with a rule, often observed in the Apocalypse, which leads the writer to speak of the same thing, first under an emblem taken from Judaism, and then under one from the wider sphere of the great Gentile Church. The "golden candlestick" burning in the secret of God's Tabernacle gives the former, the "star" shining in the firmament the latter.

Such then being the case, the seven epistles being addressed to the seven churches, and not to any individual in each, the following particulars with regard to them ought to be kept in view:

1. They are intended to set before us a picture of the universal Church. At first sight indeed it may seem as if they were only to be looked at individually and separately. The different churches are addressed by name. In what is said of each there is nothing out of keeping with what we may easily suppose to have been its condition at the time. There is as much reason to believe that each epistle contains an actual historical picture as there is to believe this in the case of the Epistles of St. Paul to Rome, or Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi. Any other supposition would convey a false idea of the principles upon which the Apocalypse is framed, would destroy the reality of the Apostle's writing, and would compel us to think that his words must have been unintelligible to those for whom, whatever their further application, they were primarily designed. The question, however, is not thus exhausted; for it is perfectly possible that both certain churches and certain particulars in their state may have been selected rather than others, because they afforded the best typical representation of the universal Church. Several reasons may satisfy us that this was actually done.

(1) We have good ground for believing that, besides these seven churches of Asia, there were other churches in existence in the same district at the time when the Apostle wrote. One of the early fathers speaks of churches at Magnesia and Tralles. It is also possible that there were churches at Colossæ and Hierapolis, although these cities had suffered from an earthquake shortly after the days of St. Paul. Yet St. John addressed himself not to seven, but to "the seven churches which are in Asia," as if there were no more churches in the province.* More, however, there certainly were; and he cannot, therefore, have intended to address them all. He makes a selection without saying that he does so; and it is a natural supposition that his selection is designed to represent the universal Church.

(2) Importance must be attached to the number seven. Every reader of the Book of Revelation is familiar with the singular part played by that number in its structure, and with the fact that (unless chap. xvii. 9 be an exception) it never means that numeral alone. It is the number of unity in diversity, of unity in that manifoldness of operation which alone entitles it to the name of unity. Such expressions, therefore, as the "seven Spirits of God" or the "seven eyes of the Lamb," are evidently symbolical. The same idea must be carried through all the notices of the number, unless there be something in the context clearly leading to a different conclusion. Nothing of that kind exists here. Were these two chapters indeed out of harmony with the

* Chap. i. 4.

rest of the book, or had they little or no relation to it, it might be urged that they were simply historical, and that no deeper meaning was to be sought in them than that lying on the surface. We have already seen, however, that their connection with the other chapters is of the closest kind; and we cannot, therefore, avoid bringing them under the scope of the same principles of interpretation as are elsewhere applicable. Their number—seven—must thus be regarded as typical of unity, and the seven churches as representative of the one universal Church.

(3) The nature of the call to the hearers of each epistle to give heed to the words addressed to them leads to the same conclusion. Had each epistle been designed only for those to whom it was immediately sent, that call would probably have been addressed to them alone. Instead of this it is couched in the most general form: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

(4) The character in which the Saviour speaks to each of the seven churches is always taken from the vision of the Son of man beheld by St. John in the first chapter of his book. It is true that in the case of one or two of the particulars mentioned this is not at once apparent; but in that of by far the larger number it is so clear that we are entitled to infer the existence of some secret link of connection in the mind of the sacred writer, even when it may not be distinctly perceptible to us. The descriptions, too, of the epistles are no doubt fuller and more elaborate than those of the vision; but this circumstance is easily accounted for when we remember that the seven different delineations of our Lord contained in the second and third chapters are in the first chapter combined in one. Keeping these considerations in view, the main point is incontestable that the germ of the epistolary description is to be found in every case in the preliminary vision.

Thus to the first church—that of Ephesus—Jesus introduces himself as "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"; and the description is evidently that of chap. i. 12, 13, 16, where the Seer beheld "seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of man; and He had in His right hand seven stars." To the second—the Church of Smyrna—Jesus introduces Himself with the words, "These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again"; and the description is taken from chap. i. 17, 18: "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." To the third—the Church of Pergamum—the introduction is, "These things saith He that hath a sharp two-edged sword"; and the original of the description is found in chap. i. 16: "and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." To the fourth—the Church of Thyatira—the Saviour begins, "These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass"; and we see the source whence the words are drawn when we read in chap. i. 14, 15, "And His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." Of the latter part of the salutation to the fifth church—that of Sardis—which runs, "These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars," it is unnecessary to speak; but the first part is more difficult to trace. Comparing chap. v. 6 and chap. iv. 5, we learn that the seven Spirits of God are the possession of the Redeemer, and that they are symbolised by seven lamps burning before the throne of God. Turning now to chap. i., we find the Seer speaking in ver. 4 of "the seven Spirits which are before the throne," those very spirits which in chap. v. 6 he tells us that the Redeemer "hath." This latter thought therefore he is accustomed to associate with them; and though in chap. i. 4 he does not expressly say that the seven Spirits there referred to are the possession of Jesus, this view of them is obviously a part of his general conception of the matter. In chap. i. 4, therefore, the source of the words addressed to Sardis is to be found. To the sixth church—that of Philadelphia—it is said, "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth"; and we can have no difficulty in recognising the germ of the extended description in chap. i. 14, 18, where we are told that Jesus Christ, in token of His holiness, hath "His head and His hair white as white wool, white as snow," and that He hath "the keys of death and of Hades." Lastly, we have the introductory address to the seventh church—that of Laodicea—"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God"; and the origin of it is to be seen in chap. i. 5, where we are told of "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." Each salutation of the seven epistles is thus part of the description of the Son of man in the first chapter of the book; and it is a legitimate inference that the contents of the epistles are, like the salutations, only portions of one whole.

(5) Many expressions are to be met with in the seven epistles which find their explanation only in those later chapters of the book where a reference to the Church universal cannot be denied. The "tree of life" of the first epistle meets us again, more fully spoken of, in the description of the new Jerusalem. The "second death," mentioned in the second epistle, is not explained till judgment upon the Church's enemies is complete. The writing upon believers of the "new name," promised in the third epistle, is almost unintelligible until we behold the hundred and forty-four thousand upon Mount Zion. The "authority over the nations," and more especially the gift of the "morning star," referred to in the fourth epistle, cannot be comprehended until we are introduced to the vision of the thousand years and the last utterances of the glorified Redeemer. The "white garments" of the fifth epistle can hardly be rightly understood until we see the white-robed company standing before the throne and before the Lamb. The mention in the sixth epistle of "the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God," remains a mystery until we actually witness her descent. And, finally, the "sitting in Christ's throne" of the seventh epistle is only elucidated by the reign of the thousand years with Him.

(6) It is worthy of notice that the descriptions of our Lord given in the first and last epistles have a wider application than to the churches of

Ephesus and Laodicea, to which they are immediately addressed, thus making it evident that, while each of these epistles has its own place in the series, it is at the same time treated as the first or last member of a group which is to be regarded as a whole.

To the church of Ephesus the Saviour describes Himself as "He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"; * and the description has no more reference to Ephesus than to any other of the churches named. In like manner to the church of Laodicea He describes Himself as "the Amen, the Witness faithful and true, the Beginning of the creation of God." † The first of these appellations is no doubt derived from Isa. lxv. 16, where we have twice repeated in the same verse the formula "God Amen;" and the meaning of the name as applied to Jesus is, not that all the Divine promises shall be accomplished by Him, but that He is Himself the fulfilment of every promise made by the Almighty to His people. The second appellation reminds us of John xviii. 37, where Jesus replies to Pilate's question in the words, "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." His whole mission is summed up by Him in the idea of "witnessing." He is the perfect, the true, the real Witness to eternal truth in its deepest sense, in its widest and most comprehensive range. The third appellation, again, cannot be limited to the thought of the mere material creation, as if equivalent to the statement that by the Word were all things made. It would thus fail to correspond with the two appellations preceding it, which undoubtedly apply to the work of redemption, while at the same time the addition of the words "of God" would be meaningless or perplexing. Let us add to this that in chap. i. 5, immediately after Jesus has been called the "faithful Witness," He is described as the "first-begotten of the dead," and we shall not be able to resist the conviction that the words before us refer primarily to the new creation, the Christian Church, that redeemed humanity which has its true life in Christ. It may not indeed be necessary to exclude the thought of the material universe; but, in so far as it is alluded to, it is only as redeemed, in its ideal condition of rest and glory, when the new Jerusalem has come down out of heaven, and when the Church's enemies have been cast into the lake of fire.‡ The three appellations, it will be observed, have thus a general rather than a special aspect; and the salutation containing them is to be distinguished from the salutations of the other epistles, all of which, with the exception of the last, exhibit the closest possible connection with the contents of the epistles to which they respectively belong. It is no mere fancy, therefore, when we say that we have in this a proof that the first and last epistles are not simply members of a continuous series, the last of which may leave the first far behind, but that they are binding terms which gather up all the members of the series and group them into one.

(7) It ought to be noticed that all the cities to which the seven epistles are addressed were situated beyond the boundaries of the Holy Land, and that the Christian Church in each was certainly composed, at least in large measure, of Gentile converts. These churches cannot therefore represent the Jewish Church alone, but must embody that wider idea of the Christian Church which was brought in when the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and when both were reconciled in one body by the Cross, becoming one Church in the Son and in the Father. Were we dealing with the Jewish-Christian Church, we should unquestionably find it located in Jerusalem or in some of the cities of Palestine. When we are taken to heathen soil, and to churches known to have been at least for the most part Gentile, it is a proof that we have before us that great Gentile Church in the very conception of which lies the thought of universality.

(8) The view now taken is confirmed by the general nature of the Apocalypse. That book is symbolical. It begins with a symbolical representation in the first chapter. Symbolism, by the admission of all, is resumed in the fourth chapter, and is continued from that point to the end. Now it is certainly possible that between these two groups of symbols a passage only strictly historical might be introduced. But if there be reason on independent grounds to think that here also we have facts used at least to a certain extent to serve a higher than a simply historic thought, it cannot fail to be allowed that the general unity of the book is thus preserved, and that a completeness is lent to it which we are entitled to expect, but which would be otherwise wanting.

The seven churches then of chaps. ii. and iii. are thus intended to represent the one universal Church. The Seer selects such particular churches of Asia and such special features of their condition as afford the best illustration of that state of God's kingdom in the world which is to be the great subject of his prophetic words. He is to keep in view throughout all his revelation certain aspects of the Church in herself and in her relation to the world. But these aspects were not merely in the bosom of the future. Still less are they an ideal picture drawn from the resources of the writer's own imagination. To his enlightened eye, looking abroad over that part of the world in which his lot was cast, they were also present, one in one church, another in another. St. John therefore groups them together. They are "the things which are," and they are types of "the things which shall come to pass hereafter."

The universalism of the Apocalypse is from the first apparent.

2. A second characteristic of the epistles addressed to the seven churches demands our notice, for these epistles are clearly divisible into two portions, the first consisting of the first three, the second of the other four. Every inquirer admits the fact, the proof resting upon the difference of place assigned in the two portions to the call, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." In the first three this call comes in as a central part of the epistle, immediately before the promise to "him that overcometh"; in the last four it closes the epistle. There is a still more interesting difference, though the Authorised English Version conceals it from view. According to the best attested readings of the original, the second and third epistles—those to Smyrna and Pergamum—omit the words, found in all the others, "I know thy works." The circumstance is at least remarkable, and it seems to admit of only

* Chap. ii. 1. † Chap. iii. 14.
‡ Comp. Rom. viii. 21, 22; James i. 18.

one explanation. In the mind of the writer the first three epistles were so closely associated together—more closely perhaps than even the seven or the last four—that these words occurring in the first epistle were thought by him to extend their influence over the second and third, much in the same way as the description of the exalted Lord in the same epistle sent its voice forward, and that in the last epistle its voice backward, through the rest. At all events, it is impossible not to see that the first three epistles and likewise the last four, to whatever extent they form parts of one whole, constitute in each case a special unity. What, we have now to ask, is the ground of the distinction? In what light is the Church viewed in each of the two portions spoken of?

There are two aspects of the Church which may be said to pervade the whole Apocalypse: first, as she is in herself, in her own true nature; and secondly, as she is engaged in, and affected by, a struggle with the world. The distinction between the two may be traced in the grouping of which we speak. The first three epistles lead us to the thought of the Church in the former, the remaining four to the thought of her in the latter, aspect. In the first three she is the pure bride of Christ; in the last four she has yielded to the influences of the world; and the faithful remnant within her is separated from her professing, but unfaithful members.

The numbers into which the two portions of the seven epistles are distributed illustrate this. Three is the number of the Divine; four, as appears from many passages of this book, is the number of the world. The simple fact that we have a group of three as distinguished from one of four epistles is sufficient to lead to the impression that, in one way or another, the thought of the Divine is more closely associated with the former, and the thought of the world with the latter.

This impression is confirmed when we look at the contents of the epistles. Let us take the first three, and we shall find that in not one of them is a contrast drawn between the whole Church and any faithful remnant within her borders, that in not one of them is the Church represented as yielding to the influences of the world. No doubt she has evil in her midst; and evil always springs from the world, not from God. But she is not yet conscious of the sin by which she is surrounded. She has not yet begun to traffic with the world, to accommodate herself to it, or to lust after what it bestows. The great charge against the church in Ephesus is that she has left her first love.* She has passed out of the bright and joyous feelings which marked the time of her espousals to the heavenly Bridegroom. But from sin the Church as she actually exists in the world can never be wholly free; and, so far in particular as the Nicolaitans are concerned, she shares in Ephesus the feelings of her Lord, and views them with the hatred which they deserve. No reproach is directed against the church in Smyrna. She is rather the object of her Lord's perfect confidence; and He is only preparing trial for her in correspondence with the law by which He trains His people: "Every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit." Remarks of a similar kind apply to the church in Pergamum. There is no charge against the church there that she is allowing the world to gain dominion over her. She has certainly persons in her midst who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans, but they are few in number; they are no more than "some," and she lends them no countenance. On the contrary, though dwelling in the place where Satan has his throne, she has remained true to her Lord, and has been purified in the fires of persecution then raging even unto death. In none of the three cases is the church perfect, but in none is she really faithless to her trust. She is in danger; she needs to be perfected by suffering; by suffering she is perfected: but she knows that he who will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God, and the enemies of God are her enemies.

When we turn to the second group of the seven epistles, we at once breathe a different atmosphere; and the contrast is rendered more striking by the fact that in the first of the four we have the very sins spoken of which have already twice crossed our path in the epistles to Ephesus and to Pergamum. According to the best critical reading of chap. ii. 20, the charge against Thyatira is, "Thou sufferest" (Thou lettest alone; thou toleratest) "thy wife Jezebel." Jezebel was a heathen princess, the first heathen queen who had been married by a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. She was therefore peculiarly fitted to represent the influences of the world; and the charge against Thyatira is thus that, in the persons not of a few only, but of her united membership, she tolerated the world, with its heathen thoughts and practices. She knew it to be the world that it was; but notwithstanding this she was content to be at peace, or even to ally herself, with it. The church in Sardis is not less blamable. There are a few names in her that have not defiled their garments; but the church as a whole has deeply sinned. She has reproduced the Pharisaic type with which the Gospels have made us acquainted, substituting the outward for the inward in religion, and then yielding to the sins of the flesh to which she has thus given the supremacy. The church in Philadelphia, like that in Smyrna, is not blamed, and it is well that there should be one church, even in the midst of the world, of which this can be said; yet even Philadelphia has only "a little power,"* while the exhortation, "Hold fast that which thou hast,"† appears to indicate that she has been losing much. Lastly, no one can mistake the willing identification of herself with the world on the part of the church in Laodicea. She says that she is "rich," that she has "gotten riches," that she has "need of nothing."‡ Her members are well-to-do and in easy circumstances, and they have found so much comfort in their worldly goods that they have become blind to the fact that man needs something better and higher for his portion. In all these four churches, in short, we have an entirely different relation between the Church and the world from that set before us in the first three. There is not simply danger of decay within, and the need of trial with the benefit resulting from it. There is actual conflict with the world; sometimes, it may be, a victory over it, at other times a yielding to its influences and an adoption of its spirit. In the first three churches all, or all with few exceptions, are on the side of Christ; in the last four the "remnant" alone is true to Him.

Attention to the promises "to him that overcometh" in the different epistles seems to con-

* Chap. ii. 4.

* Chap. iii. 8. † Chap. iii. 11. ‡ Chap. iii. 17.

firm what has been said. There is a marked contrast between the tone of these promises as they are given in the two groups of epistles; and even where a certain amount of similarity exists, the promises in the second group will be found to be fuller and richer than in the first. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, and at Pergamum "he that overcometh" is rewarded much as one still in a simple and childlike state would be. The first promise made to him is that he shall "eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God"; the second, that he shall "not be hurt of the second death"; the third, that he shall "eat of the hidden manna," and be like the high-priest in the innermost recesses of the sanctuary. All is quiet. The appeal of Him who promises is to the gentler susceptibilities of the soul. The privileges and enjoyments spoken of are adapted to the condition of those who have not yet experienced the struggle of life.

When we turn to the second group of epistles there is a different tone. We enter upon rewards conceived in bolder and more manly figures. The first promise now is, "He that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron; as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers." This is the reward of victory after well-fought fields. The warrior thus crowned must have braved the strife and won with difficulty. The second promise is not less marked in its character. "He that overcometh" shall not simply, as in the case of Smyrna, receive the reward of not being "hurt of the second death;" he shall be "arrayed in white garments," and Jesus will "confess his name before His Father, and before His angels." * The third promise is at least a large extension of that given to Pergamum, for of "him that now overcometh" it is said, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall come no more forth"—that is, shall come no more forth to a struggle with the world similar to that in which he has been engaged—"and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name." † Finally, the fourth promise is the noblest of all: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." ‡ All the promises of the second group of epistles are clearly distinguished in tone and spirit from those of the first group. They presuppose a fiercer struggle, a hotter conflict; and they are therefore full of a more glorious reward.

Such seems to be the relation to one another of the two groups into which the seven epistles naturally divide themselves. In the first group the Church has stood firm against the world. She is full of toil and endurance; in her poverty she is rich; and the troubles of the future she does not fear. She holds fast the name of Christ, and openly confesses Him. Seeds of evil are indeed within her, which will too soon develop themselves; but she has the Divine life within her in as much perfection as can be expected amidst the infirmities of our present state. She walks with God and hears His voice in her earthly paradise. In the second group the evil seed sown by the enemy has sprung up. The Church tolerates the sins that are around her, makes her league with the world, and yields to its influence. She rallies indeed at times to her new and higher life, but she finally submits to the world and is satisfied with its goods. There are many faithful ones, it is true, in her midst. As in the Jewish Church there was a "remnant according to the election of grace," so in her there are those who listen to the Saviour's voice and follow Him. Yet they are the smaller portion of her members, and they shall eventually come forth out of her. It is the same sad story which has marked all the previous dispensations of the Almighty with His people, and which will continue to be repeated until the Second Coming of the Lord. That story culminates in this book of the Revelation of St. John, when the bride, allying herself with the world, becomes a harlot, and when the Seer hears "another voice out of heaven, saying, Come forth, My people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." *

We have considered the epistles contained in these chapters as a unity representative of the universal Church in the two main aspects of her condition in the world; but before leaving them it will be well to look at them individually, and to mark the peculiar condition of each Church addressed.

1. The first epistle is that to Ephesus, the central or metropolitan city of the district to which all the seven churches belonged, and with which the almost unanimous voice of antiquity associates the later years of the pastorate of St. John himself. Hence, in part at least, as we have already seen, the general nature of the salutation with which the glorified Lord presents Himself to that church. He does not merely hold its star in His right hand, nor does He merely walk in the midst of it alone. "He holdeth the seven stars in His right hand. He walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." He is present in every part of His Church on earth. To every part of it He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the consummation of the age." †

The church at Ephesus is faithful as a whole. "I know," is the language of her Lord to her, "thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them which call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; and thou hast patience and didst bear for My name's sake, and hast not grown weary." The tribute is a noble one. The church is not only working, but toiling, in her Master's service; she is firm amidst trial, whether from within or from without; she views with abhorrence all workers of iniquity; she tries, only in order to reject, those pretended messengers of Christ who would have preached another gospel than that the power of which she knew. Amidst all the speciousness of their claims, she had "found" them false. Then she turned again to her steadfast endurance until it became a settled principle in her life, and it could be said to her, with the strong force of the word in the writings of St. John, that she "had" it. The spirit of all this, too, had been found in the "name" of Jesus, the revelation of the love and grace of God given her in Him. Finally, she had not grown weary. Seven marks of faithfulness appear to be mentioned; and, if so, the fourth—her judgment of false teachers—occupies the central position. Nor does it seem fanciful to say

* Chap. iii. 5. † Chap. iii. 12. ‡ Chap. iii. 21.

* Chap. xviii. 4. † Matt. xxviii. 20.

this when we notice that of all the seven points the fourth is the only one returned to, and that in a more specific form, at a later point in the epistle: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." In other words, doctrinal faithfulness was the peculiar distinction of the Ephesian church. She knew that the revelation of God in Christ must be kept pure, or toil would lose its spring, patience its encouragement, shrinking from evil men its intensity, and perseverance its support. Therefore she valued the doctrinal truth which had been committed to her, and held fast the "form of sound words" which she had received, for the sake of the life to which it led.

Amidst all this the church at Ephesus was not wholly what she ought to have been. "I have this against thee," had to be said to her, "that thou didst leave thy first love"; and she needed words of exhortation and warning: "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." The church had declined from the bright and joyous feelings of her first condition. Might her very zeal for the purity of Christian doctrine have had anything to do with this? It is not impossible. Eager defence of truth against error, notwithstanding its importance, is apt to shift the centre of the soul's inner life. The strifes of theologians, and the cry "First purity, then peace," translated into "Purity without peace," have been in every age the scandal and the weakness of the Church. Well might even David speak of it as one of the most signal instances of God's goodness to them that fear Him, "Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues;"* and never, alas! have tongues been sharper or more contentious than in the maintenance of the faith. There is something without which even zeal for truth may be but a scorching and devouring flame; and that is the "first love," the love ever fresh and tender for Him who first loved us, the love which teaches us to win and not to alienate, to raise and not to crush, those who may only be mistaken in their views, and are not determined enemies of God.

Possessed of this spirit, we shall "overcome;" and the first love will meet its first reward. "To him that overcometh," says the Lord, recalling the blessedness of Eden, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

2. The second epistle is that to Smyrna, a rich, prosperous, and dissolute city, and largely inhabited by Jews bitterly opposed to Christ and Christianity. Here, therefore, persecution of those leading the pure and holy life of the Gospel might be peculiarly expected, as indeed it also peculiarly appeared. The church at Smyrna thus becomes the type of a suffering church, the representative of that condition of things foretold in the words of Christ, and constantly fulfilled in the history of His people, "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."†

It will be observed that at Smyrna the church is still faithful, and that against her no word of reproach is uttered. Hence the aspect under which the Redeemer presents Himself to that church is purely animating and consolatory, the same as that which, in the introductory vision in chap. i., followed the action of the Lord when He laid His right hand upon the Apostle, who had fallen to the ground as dead, and when He said to him, "Fear not."* So now: "These things saith the first and the last, which became dead, and lived again." Death and resurrection are the two great divisions of the work of Christ on our behalf, and the Gospel is summed up in them. Just as St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians when he would remind them of the substance of his preaching in their midst, "For I declared unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,"† in like manner here the same two facts include all the truth which Smyrna held fast, and with which come the life that conquers sin and the joy that triumphs over sorrow.

The state of the church is then described: "I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Tribulation, persecution, the blasphemy of men calling themselves the only people of God and denying to Christians any portion in His covenant, are alone alluded to, though the church is at the same time cheered with the remark that if she had no share in worldly wealth and splendour, she was "rich." "God had chosen them that were poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to them that love Him."‡

The church then was in the midst of suffering. Was not that enough; and shall she not be told that her sufferings were drawing to an end, that the night of weeping has gone by, and that the morning of joy was about to dawn? So we might think; but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways, and we are like children bathing on the shore,

> "Buried a wave beneath;
> The second wave succeeds before
> We have had time to breathe."

How often does it happen in the Christian's experience that one burden is laid upon another, and that one wave succeeds another, till he seems left desolate and alone upon the earth. Yet even then he has no assurance that his sufferings are at a close. The consolation afforded to him is, not that there shall be a short campaign, but only that, whether long or short, he shall be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. Thus our Lord does not now say to His church at Smyrna, Fear none of those things that thou art suffering, but "Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." It is hardly necessary to say to any intelligent reader of the Apocalypse that the "ten days" here spoken of are neither ten literal days, nor ten years, nor ten successive persecutions of indefinite length. In conformity with the symbolical use of numbers in this book, "ten days" expresses no more than a time which, though troubled, shall be definite and short, a time which may be otherwise denoted by the language of St. Peter when he says of believers that "now for a little while they have been put to grief in manifold temptations."§ Encompassed by affliction,

* Ps. xxxi. 20. † John xv. 20.

* Chap. i. 17.
† 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.
‡ James ii. 5.
§ 1 Pet. i. 6.

therefore, those who are thus tried have only to be "faithful unto death," or to the last extremity of martyrdom. He who died and lived again will bestow upon them "the crown of life," the crown of the kingdom, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

3. The third epistle is that to Pergamum, a city at the time devoted to the worship of Æsculapius, the god of medicine, and in particular largely engaged with those parts of medical science which are occupied with inquiries into the springs of life. That the wickedness of the city was both greater and more widespread than was common even in the dark days of heathenism is borne witness to by the fact that the first words addressed to it by Him "that hath the sharp two-edged sword" were these: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is." The word "throne" (not as the Authorised Version "seat") is intentionally selected by the Seer; and its use affords an illustration of one of his principles of style, the remembrance of which is not unfrequently of value in interpreting his book. Everywhere it is his wont to see over against the good its mocking counterpart of evil, over against the light a corresponding darkness. Thus because God occupies a throne, Satan does the same; and inasmuch as in Pergamum sin was marked by a refinement of greater than ordinary depth, Satan might be said to have his "throne" there. This circumstance, combined with the promise to the Church contained in the seventeenth verse, "To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it," may help us to understand the main thought of this epistle as distinguished from the others. We have seen reason to believe that there was some secret mystery of evil in the city; and, contrasted with this, we have now the promise of a secret mystery of life to the faithful church. The Church then in the secret of her Divine preservation is here before us. She lives a life the springs of which no one sees, a life that is hid with Christ in God.

It will be observed, accordingly, that whatever may be said against the condition of the city, nothing is said against the church within it. There is no hint that she has yielded to the influences of the world. She has certainly evil-doers in her midst; but these, though in her, are not of her; and the Christianity of a great majority of her members remains sound and sweet. Let us listen to the words of commendation: "And thou holdest fast My name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent, therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." Those who are described in these words as "holding the teaching of Balaam" and those who are here called "the Nicolaitans" are the same, denoted in the first instance by a description taken from the history of Balaam in the Old Testament, and in the second by a word formed in Greek after the fashion of Balaam's name in Hebrew. That the church in her corporate capacity had not yielded to the sinfulness referred to is manifest from this, that they who had done so are described as "some," and that in the threatening of the sixteenth verse it is not said, I will war against "thee," but I will war against "them." The sin therefore found in the bosom of the church was not, as we shall find it to have been at Thyatira, with her consent. She failed, not because she encouraged it, but because she did not take more vigorous steps for its extinction. She did not sufficiently realise the fact that she was a part of the Body of Christ, and that, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. Believers in her community were too easily satisfied with working out their own salvation, and thought too little of presenting the whole church "as a pure virgin to Christ." * Therefore it was that, even amidst much faithfulness, they needed to repent, to feel more deeply than they did that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," † and that in the Church of the Lord Jesus we are to large extent responsible, not only for our own, but for our neighbours', sins. By keeping up the Christian tone of the whole Church the tone of each member of the Church is heightened.

We thus reach the close of the first three epistles "to the churches;" and we see that, while each is accommodated to the particular circumstances of the Christian community to which it is sent, the three taken together present to us the three leading considerations upon which, when we think of Christ's Church in this world, we naturally dwell. First, she is in the main true to her Divine Master, even when compelled to confess that she has left her first love. Secondly, she is exposed for her further cleansing to many trials. Lastly, she is sustained by the unseen influences of Divine love and grace. She eats of the hidden manna. She has within her breastplate a white, glistering stone, upon which is inscribed the new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. She dwells, like the high-priest of old at the moment of his greatest dignity and honour, in the secret place of the Most High. She abides under the shadow of the Almighty. As a child she has entered into the garden of the Lord; and yet, in all the simplicity of her childhood, she is both king and priest.

Such is the Church of Christ in Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. Happy days of innocence and bliss! We may well linger over them for a little. Too soon will they pass away, and too soon will the Church's conflict with the world and her yielding to it begin.

4. With the fourth epistle we enter upon the second group of epistles, where the Church is brought before us less as she is in herself, than as she fails to maintain her true position in the world, and as that separation between a faithful remnant and the whole body which meets us at every step of her history, throughout both the Old Testament and the New, begins to show itself. Now therefore there is a change of tone.

The first of the four, the fourth in the series of seven, is that to Thyatira; and to the church there the Lord presents Himself in all the penetrating power of those eyes that as a flame of fire search the inmost recesses of the heart, and in all the resistless might of those feet that are as "pil-

* 2 Cor. xi. 2. † 1 Cor. v. 6.

lars of fire:" * "These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass."

The commendation of the church follows, what is good being noted before defects are spoken of: "I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first." The commendation is great. There was not only grace, but growth in grace, not only work, but work in Christ's cause abounding more and more. Yet there was also failure. To understand this it is necessary, as already noticed, to adopt the translation of the Revised Version, founded on the more correct reading of the later critical editions of the Greek. Even in that version, too, the translation, given in the margin, of one important expression has to be substituted for that of the text. Keeping this in view, the Saviour thus addresses Thyatira: "But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest" (that thou toleratest, that thou lettest alone) "thy wife Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I do cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto each one of you according to your works." In these words "Jezebel" is clearly a symbolical name. It is impossible to think that the "angel" of the church was the chief pastor, and that the woman named Jezebel, spoken of as she is, was his wife. We have before us the notorious Jezebel of Old Testament history. Her story is so familiar to every one that it is unnecessary to dwell on it; and we need only further call attention to the fact that the sentence in which her name is mentioned is complete in itself. The sin of the church at Thyatira was that she "suffered" her. In other words, the church tolerated in her midst the evil of which Ahab's wife was so striking a representative. She knew the world to be what it was; but, instead of making a determined effort to resist it, she yielded to its influences. She repeated the sin of the Corinthian Church: "It is actually reported that there is fornication among you. . . . And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you." † The world, in short, was in the church, and was tolerated there. Of the threatened punishment, the "bed" of tribulation and sorrow instead of that of guilty pleasure, nothing need be said. It is of more consequence to observe the change in the manner of address which meets us after that punishment has been described: "But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, which know not the deep things of Satan, as they say; I cast upon you none other burden. Howbeit that which ye have, hold fast till I come." For the first time in these epistles we meet with those who are spoken of as "the rest," the remnant, who are to be carefully distinguished from the great body of the Church's professing members. The world has penetrated into the Church; the Church has become conformed to the world: and the hour is rapidly approaching when the true disciples of Jesus will no longer find within her the shelter which she has hitherto afforded them, and when they will have to "come forth out of her" in her degenerate condition.* It is a striking feature of these apocalyptic visions which has been too much missed by commentators. We shall meet it again and again as we proceed. In the meantime it is enough to say that the moment of withdrawal has not yet come. The faithful "rest," who had rejected the false teaching and shunned the sinful life, are to continue where they were; and the Lord will "cast upon them none other burden." Well for them that they had such a promise! Their burden of suffering was heavy enough already. Hard to contend with under any circumstances, suffering rises nearer to the height of the sufferings of Christ when the Christian is "wounded," not by open foes, but "in the house of his friends." "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my companion, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together; we walked in the house of God with the throng." †

The trial was great; so is the consolation: "And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and as a shepherd he shall tend them with a sceptre of iron, as the vessels of the potter are they broken to shivers; as I also have received of My Father: and I will give him the morning star." It was a heathen element that clouded the sky of the church at Thyatira. That element, nay, "the nations" out of which it springs, shall be crushed beneath the iron sceptre of the King who shall "reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." ‡ The clouds shall disappear; and Jesus, "the bright, the morning star," § having given Himself to His people, He and they together shall shine with its clear but peaceful light when it appears in the heavens, the harbinger of day.

5. The fifth epistle is that to Sardis, and in the superscription He who sends it describes Himself as One "that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." Both expressions have already met us, the former in chap i. 4, the latter in chap. ii. 1. A different word from that used in the address to Ephesus is indeed used here to indicate the relation of the Lord to these stars or angels of the churches. There the glorified Lord "holdeth the seven stars in His right hand;" here He "hath" them. Like every other change, even of the slightest kind, in this book, the difference is instructive. To "hold" them is to hold them fast for their protection; to "have" them is to have them for a possession, to have them not only outwardly and in name, but inwardly and in reality, as His own. Thus Christ "hath" the Holy Spirit, who in all His varied or sevenfold influences is, as He proceedeth from the Father and the Son, not only God's, but His. Thus also Christ "hath" the seven stars or churches, here spoken of in immediate connection with the Spirit, and therefore viewed chiefly in that spirituality of feeling and of life which ought to be the great mark distinguishing them from the world. It was the mark in which Sardis failed. Let her take heed to Him with whom she has to do.

* Chap. x. 1. † 1 Cor. v. 1, 2.

* Comp. chap. xviii. 4. ‡ Isa. xxiv. 23.
† Ps. lv. 12-14. § Chap. xxii. 16.

"I know," are the words addressed to her, "thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead. Be thou watchful, and stablish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine fulfilled before My God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." The world had been tolerated in Thyatira, the first of the last four churches; in Sardis, the second, it is more than tolerated. Sardis has substituted the outward for the inward. She has been proud of her external ordinances and has thought more of them than of living in the Spirit and walking in the Spirit. True piety has declined; and, as a natural consequence, sins of the flesh, alluded to in the immediately following words of the epistle, have asserted their supremacy. More even than this, Sardis had a "name" that she lived while she was dead. She was renowned among men. The world looked, and beheld with admiration what was to it the splendour of her worship; it listened, and heard with enthusiasm the music of her praise. And the church was pleased that it should be so. Not in humility, lowliness, and deeds of self-sacrificing love did she seek her "name," but in what the world would have been equally delighted with though the inspiring soul of it all had been folly or sin. A stronghold had been established by the world in Sardis.

Yet there also the Good Shepherd had His little flock, and there again we meet them. "But thou hast a few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments." These were to Sardis what "the rest" were to Thyatira. They were the "gleanings left in Israel, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree." * They were the "new wine found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." † To them therefore great promises are given: "They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels." It is the glorified Lord who, as the High-Priest of His Church, "walketh" in the midst of the golden candlesticks; and, as priests, these shall "walk with" Him in a similar glory. Upon earth they were despised, but beyond the earth they shall be openly acknowledged and vindicated. They shall be arrayed in those garments of glistering purity which were with difficulty kept white in the world, but which in the world to come Divine favour shall keep free from every stain.

6. The sixth epistle is to Philadelphia; and the remarkable circumstance connected with this church is that, though spoken of as having but "a little power," it is not seriously blamed. In this respect it resembles the church at Smyrna in the first group of these seven epistles. What has mainly to be noticed, however, is that it is not simply, like that at Smyrna, a suffering church. It has been engaged in an earnest and hot struggle with the world, as the superscription, the commendation, and the promises of the epistle combine to testify.

The superscription is, "These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and none shall shut, and that shutteth, and none openeth." The figure is taken from the Old Testament; and both there and here the context shows us that it is neither the key of knowledge, nor the key of discipline, nor the key of the treasures of the kingdom that is spoken of, but the key of power to open the Lord's house as a sure refuge from all evil, and to preserve safe for ever those who are admitted to it. "I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah," says the Almighty by His prophet, "and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." * Whoever be our adversaries, we know that in the hollow of the Lord's hand we are safe.

The commendation of the epistle tells the same tale: "I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep My word, and didst not deny My name." The Church had "a little power," and she had shown this in the struggle.

So also with the promises: "Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them which say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall no more come forth: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and Mine own new name." How fierce the struggle of Philadelphia had been with the world we learn from these words, in which the enemies of the Church—"Jews" they call themselves, the people of God, but "they are not"—are brought before us like vanquished nations at her feet, as she sits in the heavenly places, paying homage to her against whom they had so long, but vainly, struggled. It is impossible not to see the difference between this church and that at Smyrna. No doubt there had been "blasphemy of them which say they are Jews" in the latter case, but worse trials were only spoken of as about to come. Here the trials have come, and the church has risen triumphantly above them. Therefore will the Lord admit her to His heavenly mansions, and will make her a pillar in His Father's house, whence she shall come forth no more. He Himself "went forth" from His Father that He might be the Captain of our salvation and might die on our behalf. He returned to His Father, and never again "comes forth" as He came in the days of His flesh. Having died once, He dieth no more; and they who have borne His cross shall wear, when victors in His cause, His crown of victory.

7. The seventh epistle is to Laodicea, and here there can be no doubt that we have the picture

* Isa. xvii. 6. † Isa. lxv. 8. * Isa. xxii. 21, 22.

of a church in which the power of the world carries almost all before it. The church is addressed by Him who describes Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God," upon which immediately follows a charge as to her condition in which there is no redeeming point. Only later do we see that there is hope. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent." To interpret the boasting of the church given in these words as if it referred to spiritual rather than material riches is entirely to mistake the meaning. Worldly wealth is in the writer's view. The members of the church generally have aimed at riches, and have gotten them. Possession of riches has also been followed by its usual effects. The seen and the temporal have usurped in their minds the place of the unseen and the eternal. Perhaps they have even regarded their worldly prosperity as a token of the Divine favour, and are soothing themselves with the reflection that they have made the best of both worlds, when they have really sacrificed everything to one world, and that the lower of the two. The last picture of the Church is the saddest of all.

Yet is Laodicea not altogether without hope. "Behold," says He whose every word is truth, "I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Even in Laodicea there are some who, inasmuch as they have fought the hardest battle, shall be welcomed to the highest reward. "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." Beyond that neither hope nor imagination can rise.

The epistles to the seven churches are over. They present the Church to us as she appears on the field of history. They set before us the leading characteristics of her condition partly as she was in "Asia" at the moment when the Apostle wrote, partly as she shall be throughout all time and on the widest as well as the narrowest scale. These characteristics may be shortly summed up as—in the first group of three, love to the Redeemer, yet love liable, and even beginning, to grow cold; persecution and trials of many kinds; preservation by the secret grace of God and in the hidden life: in the second group of four, yielding on the part of the majority to sins associated with unchristian doctrine; formalism in religion; weakness in the midst of trial, even though not accompanied by faithlessness; and lukewarmness, springing from a preference of the things of time to those of eternity. To these characteristics, however, have to be added, as more or less accompanying them, many of the active graces of the Christian life: labour, and patience, and faith, and charity, and works, whatever makes the Christian Church a light in the world and the object of her Lord's care and watchfulness. In reading the seven epistles we behold a lively picture of the Church of Christ in her graces and in her failings, in her strength and in her weakness, in her joys and in her sorrows, in her falls under the influence of temptation and in her returns to the path of duty. The characteristics thus spoken of are not peculiar to any particular age, but may mark her at one time less, at another more, at one time individually, at another in combination. Taken as a whole, they present her to us in her Divine ideal marred by human blemishes; we are prepared to acknowledge the necessity, the wisdom, and the mercy of the trials that await her; and we learn to anticipate with gladness her final and glorious deliverance.

One brief concluding remark ought to be made. The epistles now considered ought to be sufficient in themselves to show that the Apocalypse is not a series of visions intended only to illustrate one or two ideas which had taken a strong hold of the Apostle's mind, or one or two great principles of the Divine government in general. St. John starts from the realities around him as much as any writer of the New Testament. It is true that he sees in them "eternal" principles at work, and that he rises to the thought of ideal good and of ideal evil; but he is not on that account less true to fact, less impressed by fact. On the contrary, his very depth of insight into the meaning of the facts makes him what he is. He who would write a philosophy of history is not less, but more, dependent upon the facts of history than he to whom a fact is valuable simply in its individual and isolated form. It is the present, therefore, that stirs the writer of this book, but stirs him the more because he beholds in it principles and issues connected with Him who was, and is, and is to come, the covenant-keeping God, the judge of men, the unchangeable I Am.

Hence also the mistake sometimes made of thinking that the purpose of unfolding the principles of the Divine government could not be a sufficient motive to St. John to write. Every cruelty to the saints of God which he witnessed, every cry of oppression which he heard, supplied a motive. We may not feel these things now, but the iron of them entered into the soul of the disciple whom Jesus loved. We need more prophets like him to make it ring in the ears of selfish wealth and of ease indifferent to the ills festering around it, "For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER III.

ANTICIPATIONS OF THE CHURCH'S VICTORY.

REVELATION iv., v.

WE have seen in considering the first chapter of the Apocalypse that the book as a whole is to be occupied with the Church's struggle in the world; and in the second and third chapters the Church herself has been placed before us as she occupies her position upon the field of history. But the struggle has not yet begun, nor will it begin until we reach the sixth chapter. Chaps. iv. and v. are therefore still to be regarded as in

a certain measure introductory. They form a separate—the third—section of the book; and the first questions that meet us in connection with them are, What is their relation to the main purpose of the author? What is their leading conception? and Why are they placed where they are?

In answering these questions we are aided by the strictly parallel structure of the fourth Gospel. The Prologue of that book, contained in chap. i. 1-18, suggests the object which the writer has in view. The next section—chap. i. 19-ii. 11—places before us the Redeemer whose glory he is to describe. The struggle of the Son of God with the world does not begin till we come to chap. v. Between chap. ii. 12 and chap. iv. 54 there is thus a considerable interval, in which we have the cleansing of the Temple and the victory of Jesus over the unbelief of the Jew Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the king's officer of Galilee, who was probably a Gentile. In this intervening space the leading thought seems to be that of victory, not indeed of victory *in* the struggle, but of victory which prepares us *for* it, and fills the mind with hope before it begins. In like manner the two chapters upon which we are about to enter are occupied with songs of victory. Catching their spirit, we shall boldly accompany the Church into the struggle which follows, and shall be animated by a joyful confidence that, whatever her outward fortunes, He that is with her is more than they that be with her enemies.*

While such is the general conception of the third and fourth chapters viewed as one, we have further to ask whether, subordinate to their united purpose, there is not a difference between them. Such a difference there appears to be; and words of our Lord in the fourth Gospel, spoken upon an occasion which had deeply impressed itself upon the mind of the Evangelist, may help us to determine what it is. In the fourteenth chapter of that Gospel Jesus encourages His Apostles as He sends them forth to fight His battle in the world. "Let not," He says, "your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me." The section of the Apocalypse upon which we are about to enter embraces a similar thought in both its parts. Chap. iv. conveys to the Church the assurance that He who is the ultimate source of all existence is on her side; chap. v. that she may depend upon Christ and His redeeming work. The two chapters taken together are a cry to the Church from her glorified Head, before she enters into the tribulation that awaits her, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me."

(Chap. iv. 1-5.) The "first voice" here spoken of is the voice of chap. i. 10: "And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet;" and it is well to remember that that voice introduced the vision of a Son of man who, while both King and Priest, was King and Priest in judgment. It is impossible to doubt that the sound of the same voice is intended to indicate the same thing here, and that the King whom we are about to behold is One who has "prepared His throne for judgment."†

The Seer is introduced to a scene which we first recognise as the glorious audience-chamber of a great King. Everything as yet speaks of royalty, and of royal majesty, power, and judgment. The "jasper-stone," as we learn from a later passage of this book, in which it is said to be "clear as crystal,"* was of a bright, sparkling whiteness; and it fitly represents the holiness of Him of whom the seraphim in Isaiah cry one to another, "'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,"† and who in this very chapter is celebrated by the unresting cherubim with the words, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come." The "sardius," again, was of a fiery red colour, and can denote nothing but the terror of the Almighty's wrath. "Out of the throne" also—not merely out of the atmosphere surrounding it, but out of the throne itself—"proceed lightnings and voices and thunders," always throughout the Apocalypse emblems of judgment; while the use of the word "burn" in other parts of the same book, and the fact that what the Seer beheld was not so much lamps as torches, leads to the belief that these torches as they burned before the throne sent out a blazing and fierce rather than a calm and soft light. It is true that the "rainbow round about the throne" points to the Divine covenant of grace and promise, and that its "emerald" greenness, absorbing, or at least throwing into the shade, its other and varied hues, tells with peculiar force of something on which the eye loves, and does not fear, to rest. But the mercy of God does not extinguish His righteousness and judgment. Different as such qualities may seem to be, they are combined in Him with whom the Church and the world have to do. In the New Testament not less than in the Old the Almighty reveals Himself in the awakening terrors of His wrath as well as in the winning gentleness of His love. St. Peter speaks of our Lord as not only the chief corner-stone laid in Zion, elect, precious, so that he that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame, but as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence;‡ and when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us his loftiest description of the privileges of the Christian Church, he closes it with the words, "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."§ So also here. Would we conceive of God aright, even after we have been brought into the full enjoyment of all the riches of His grace and love, we must think of Him as represented by the jasper and the sardius as well as by the emerald.

The "four-and-twenty elders" occupying "thrones" (not seats) around the throne are to be regarded as representatives of the glorified Church; and the number, twice twelve, seems to be obtained by combining the number of the patriarchs of the Old Testament with that of the Apostles of the New.

The description of the heavenly scene is now continued.

(Chap. iv. 6-8.) Up to this point we have been beholding a royal court; in the words now discussed the priestly element comes in. The "glassy sea" naturally leads the thoughts to the great brazen laver known as the brazen sea which stood in the court of Solomon's temple between the altar and the

* Comp. 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8. † Ps. ix. 7.

* Chap. xxi. 11. † Isa. vi. 3. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8. § Heb. xii. 28, 29.

sanctuary, and at which the priests cleansed themselves before entering upon the discharge of their duties within the precincts of God's holy house. The resemblance is not indeed exact; and were it not for what follows, there might be little upon which to rest this supposition. We know, however, from many examples, that the Seer uses the figures of the Old Testament with great freedom; and as the Temple source of the "living creatures" next introduced to us cannot be mistaken, it becomes the more probable that the brazen sea of the same building, whatever be the actual meaning of the figure—a point that will meet us afterwards—suggests the "glassy sea."

When we turn to the "living creatures," there can be no doubt whatever that we are in the midst of Temple imagery. These are the cherubim, two of which, fashioned in gold, were placed above the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, so that, inasmuch as that mercy-seat was regarded as peculiarly the throne of God, Israel was invited to think of its King as "sitting between the cherubim." * These figures, however, were not confined to that particular spot, nor were they fashioned only in that particular way, for the curtain and the veil which formed the sides of the Most Holy Place were wrought with cherubim of cunning work,† so that one entering that sacred spot was surrounded by them.

In the midst of the cherubim spoken of in these verses we are thus in the midst of Temple figures and of priestly thoughts. It is impossible here to trace the history of the cherubim throughout the Bible; and we must be content with referring to two points connected with them, of importance for the interpretation of this book: the representative nature of the figures and the aspect under which we are to see them.

As to the first of these, the human element in the cherubim is at once intelligible. It can be nothing but man; while the fact that they occupy so large a position in the most sacred division of the Tabernacle is sufficient to prove that man, so represented, is thought of as redeemed and brought to the highest stage of spiritual perfection. The other elements referred to certainly do not indicate either new qualities added to humanity or an intensification of those already possessed by it, as if we might cherish the prospect of a time when the physical qualities of man shall equal in their strength those of the animals around him, when he shall possess the might of the lion, the power of the ox, and the swiftness of the eagle. They represent rather the different departments of nature as these are distributed into the animate and inanimate creation. Taking the "living creatures" together in all their parts, they are thus an emblem of man, associated on the one hand with the material creation, on the other with the various tribes of animals by which it is inhabited, but all redeemed, transfigured, perfected, delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into "the liberty of the glory of the children of God." They have a still wider and more comprehensive meaning than the "twenty-four elders," the latter setting before us only the Church, but the former all creation, glorified.

The second point above mentioned—the aspect worn by the living creatures—demands also a few remarks, for the view commonly entertained upon it seems to be erroneous. Misled by the mention of the "calf," which is supposed to be the ox, and not the bull-calf, interpreters have allowed the mode in which they understood this particular to rule their interpretation of the others. It has been regarded as the emblem of endurance and of patient labour rather than of power and rage; while, following the same line of thought, the "eagle" has been treated as the king of birds soaring in the blue vault of heaven rather than as hastening (like the vulture) to his prey.* The whole conception of the cherubim has thus been modified and shaped in the minds of men under a form altogether different from that in which it is really presented to us in Scripture. The cherubim of the Old Testament and the "living creatures" of the New are supposed to represent "majesty and peerless strength," "patient and productive industry," and "soaring energy and nimbleness of action." In reality they rather represent qualities that strike terror into the hearts of men, and suggest the idea of an irresistibly destructive force. With this view all that is elsewhere said of them corresponds. They are not simply spoken of as partakers of the favour of God. They are instruments in the execution of His wrath. When our first parents were driven from the garden of Eden, they were placed "at the east of the garden," along with "a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." † When we are introduced to them in Ezekiel, it is said that "their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning." Similar associations are connected with them throughout the Apocalypse. The opening of each of the first four seals, the four that deal with judgments upon the earth, is immediately followed by a voice, "as it were the noise of thunder," from one of the four living creatures, saying, Come. One of them gives to the seven angels "seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God." And after the destruction of Babylon, when her smoke is ascending up for ever and ever, and the voice of much people in heaven calls for praise to Him who hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand, they "fall down and worship God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen; Hallelujah." There can be little doubt, then, as to the meaning of these four living creatures. They are sharers of the Almighty's holiness, and of that holiness in its more awful form, as a holiness that cannot look on sin but with abhorrence. They are the vicegerents of His kingdom. They are assessors by His side. Their aspect is not that of the sweetness associated with the word "cherub," but that of sternness, indignant power, and judgment. Thus also it is that in the Tabernacle they looked toward the mercy-seat. By what they saw there they were restrained from executing wrath upon the guilty. That mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, told them of pardon and of a new life for the sinner. Their sternness was softened; mercy rejoiced over judgment; and the storm-wind upon which God flew swiftly, when

* Ps. xcix. 1. † Exod. xxvi. 1.

* Job ix. 26. † Gen. iii. 24.

"He rode upon a cherub, and did fly," sank into a calm.

The Seer has beheld the audience-chamber of the Godhead in itself. He has seen also the Divine Being who is there clothed with majesty, and those who wait upon Him. He next passes to another thought (iv. 9-11).

In his beautiful comments upon the Revelation Isaac Williams says, "The four living creatures, or the Church of the redeemed, give thansgiving to God for their redemption; and then the twenty-four elders fall down and attribute all glory to God alone, inasmuch as prophets, Apostles, and all the ministering priesthood, rejoicing in the salvation of the elect, attribute it not to their own instrumentality, but to God." In thus interpreting the passage, however, that commentator can hardly be regarded as correct. It is true that the living creatures are the representatives of the redeemed creation, and the twenty-four elders representatives of the glorified Church. But in the song of praise here put into their mouths they have not yet advanced to the thought of salvation. That is reserved for the next chapter. Here they think of creation, with all its wonders; of the heavens which declare God's glory, and the firmament which shows forth His handiwork; of sun, and moon, and stars in their manifold and resplendent glories; of the mountains and the valleys; of the rivers and the fountains of waters; of the rich exuberance of vegetable life, which covers the earth with a gorgeous carpet of every hue; and of all those animals upon its surface which "run races in their mirth:" and for them they praise. To God all creatures owe their origin. In Him they live, and move, and have their being. Because of His will they were—let the reading be considered and remembered: "were," not "are"—because of His will they were in His idea from eternity; and when the appointed moment came, they were created. Wherefore let them praise. We are reminded of the Psalms of the Old Testament, though it is ours to put into their words a still deeper and richer meaning than they possessed when first uttered by the Psalmist:—

"Praise ye the Lord.
Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
Praise Him in the heights.
Praise ye Him, all His angels:
Praise ye Him, all His host.
Praise ye Him, sun and moon.
Praise Him, all ye stars of light.
Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that be above the heavens.
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
For He commanded, and they were created;
He hath also established them for ever and ever:
He hath made a decree which shall not pass away.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour;
Stormy wind fulfilling His word:
Mountains, and all hills;
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle;
Creeping things, and flying fowl:
Kings of the earth, and all peoples;
Princes, and all judges of the earth:
Both young men, and maidens;
Old men, and children:
Let them praise the name of the Lord:
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory is above the earth and heaven."*

Such, then, in chap. iv. is the call addressed by the Seer to the Church before she enters upon her struggle, a call similar to that of Jesus to His disciples, "Believe in God."

The fifth chapter continues the same general subject, but with a reference to Christ the Redeemer rather than God the Creator.

(Chap. v. 1-5.) We can easily form to ourselves a correct idea of the outward form of the symbol resorted to in these words. The same symbol is used by the prophet Ezekiel, and in circumstances in some respects precisely analogous to those of the Seer. Ezekiel had just beheld his first vision of the cherubim. "And when I looked," he says, "behold, an hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and He spread it before me; and it was written within and without."* In both cases it is not a "book," but a "roll," like the sacred rolls of the synagogue, that is presented to the prophet's eye, the difference being that in the Apocalypse we read of the roll being "close sealed with seven seals." This addition is due to the higher, more sublime, and more momentous nature of the mysteries contained in it. That it is "written within and on the back," so that there is no space for further writing, shows that it contains the whole counsel of God with regard to the subject of which it treats. It is the word of Him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last; and the seven seals are so fastened to the roll that one of them may be broken at a time, and no more of the contents disclosed than belonged to that particular seal. What also the contents of the roll are we learn from the contents of the seals as they are successively disclosed in the following chapters. As yet the Seer does not know them. He knows only that they are of the deepest interest and importance; and he looks anxiously around to see if any one can be found who may break the seals and unfold their mysteries. No such person can be discovered either "in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth." No one will even dare to look upon the roll; and the sorrow of the Seer was so deepened by this circumstance that he "wept much."

At that moment one of the elders, the representatives of the glorified Church, advanced to cheer him with the tidings that what he so much desired shall be accomplished. One who had had a battle to fight and a victory to win had "overcome," not only to look upon the roll, but to "open it and to loose the seven seals thereof," so as to make its contents known. This was "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David." The description is taken partly from the law and partly from the prophets, for is not this "He of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write?" †; the former in the blessings pronounced by the dying patriarch Jacob upon his son Judah: "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as a lioness; who shall rouse him up?" ‡; the latter in such words as those of Isaiah, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots shall bear fruit;" § while, in the language alike of the prophet and of the Seer, the words set forth the Messiah, not as the root out of which David sprang, but as a shoot which, springing from him, was to grow up into

* Ps. cxlviii. 1-3.

* Ezek. ii. 9, 10.
† John i. 45.
‡ Gen. xlix. 9.
§ Isa. xi. 1.

a strong and stately tree. In Him the conquering might of David, the man of war, and of Judah, "chosen to be the ruler," * comes forth with all the freshness of a new youth. He is "the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath been manifested to the saints." † In Him "the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth." ‡ "After two days will He revive us: on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him. And let us know, let us follow on to know, the Lord: His going forth is sure as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth." § Thus then was it now. Like Daniel of old, the Seer had wept in order that he might understand the vision; and the elder said to him, "Weep not."

The eagerly desired explanation follows (v. 6-7).

A strange and unlooked-for spectacle is presented to the Seer. He had been told of a lion; and he beholds a lamb, nay not only a lamb, the emblem of patience and of innocence, but, as we learn from the use of the word "slaughtered" (not "slain," as in both the Authorised and Revised Versions), a lamb for sacrifice, and that had been sacrificed. Nor can we doubt for a moment, when we call to mind the Gospel of St. John and its many points of analogy with the Apocalypse, what particular lamb it was. It was the Paschal Lamb, the Lamb beheld in our Lord by the Baptist when, pointing to Jesus as He walked, he said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God," and again beheld by the writer of the fourth Gospel on the Cross, when in the fact that the soldiers broke not the legs of Jesus, as they broke those of the malefactors hanging on either side of Him, he traced the fulfilment of the Scripture, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." This therefore was the true Lamb "that taketh away the sin of the world," the Lamb that gives us His flesh to eat, so that in Him we may have eternal life.

The Lamb has "seven horns," the emblem of perfected strength, and "seven eyes," which are explained to be the Spirit of God, sent forth in all His penetrating and searching power, so that none even in the very ends of the earth can escape His knowledge. Further the Lamb is "standing as though it had been slaughtered," and there never has been a moment's hesitation as to the interpretation of the figure. The words "as though" do not mean that the slaughtering had been only in appearance. It had been real. The Saviour, pierced with cruel wounds, "bowed His head" on Calvary, "and gave up His spirit." ‖ "The first and the last and the Living One became dead," ¶ and had been laid in the tomb in the garden. But He had risen from that tomb on the third morning; and, "behold, He is alive for evermore." ** He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high; and there He "stands," living and acting in all the plenitude of endless and incorruptible life.

One thing more has to be noticed: that this Lamb is the central figure of the scene before us, "in the midst of the throne and of the living creatures, and of the elders." To Him all the works of God, both in creation and redemption, turn. To Him the old covenant led; and the prophets who were raised up under it searched "what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." * From Him the new covenant flowed, and those who under it are called to the knowledge of the truth recognise in Him their "all and in all." † The Lamb slaughtered, raised from the grave, ascended, being the impersonation of that Divine love which is the essence of the Divine nature, is the visible centre of the universe. He is "the image of the invisible God, the First-born of all creation: for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things have been created through Him, and unto Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the Body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." ‡

Such is the Lamb; and He now comes, "and hath taken the roll out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne." Let us note the words "hath taken." It is not "took." St. John sees the Lamb not only take the roll, but keep it. It is His,—His as the Son, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; His by right of the victory He has won; His as the First-born of all creation and the Head of the Church. It is His to keep, and to unfold, and to execute, "who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." §

Therefore is He worthy of all praise, and to Him all praise is given.

(Chap. v. 8-10.) It is not necessary to dwell upon the figures that are here employed; the "harp," as connected with the Temple service, being the natural emblem of praise, and the "bowls full of incense" the emblem of prayer. But it is of importance to observe the universality of the praises and the prayers referred to, for as the language used here of these "men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," when they are said to have been made "a kingdom and priests unto our God," is the same as that of chap. i. 6, we seem entitled to conclude that, even from its very earliest verses, the Apocalypse has the universal Church in view.

The song sung by this great multitude, including even the representatives of nature, now "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," ‖ is wholly different from that of chap. iv. It is a "new song," for it is the song of the "new creation"; and its burden, it will be observed, is not creation, but redemption by the blood of the Lamb, a redemption through which all partaking of it are raised to a higher glory and a fairer beauty than that enjoyed and ex-

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 4.
† Col. i. 26.
‡ 1 John ii. 8.
§ Hos. vi. 2, 3.
‖ John xix. 30.
¶ Chap. i. 18.
** Chap. i. 18.

* 1 Pet. i. 11.
† Col. iii. 11.
‡ Col. i. 15-20.
§ Rom. ix. 5.
‖ Rom. viii. 21.

hibited before sin had as yet entered into the world, and when God saw that all that He had made was good.

The song was sung, but no sooner was it sung than it awoke a responsive strain from multitudes of which we have not yet heard (v. 11, 12).

These are the angels, who are not within the throne, but "round about the throne and the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders." Their place is not so near the throne, so near the Lamb. "For not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we speak." * He subjected it to man, to Him first of all who, having taken upon Him our human nature, and in that nature conquered, was "crowned with glory and honour," but then also to the members of His Body, who shall in due time be exalted to a similar dignity and shall "reign over the earth." Yet angels rejoice with man and with creation redeemed and purified. They "desire to look into" † these things: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." ‡ He who was God manifested in flesh "appeared" after His resurrection "to angels" § and, although they have not been purchased with the blood of the slaughtered Lamb, their hearts are filled with livelier ecstasy and their voices swell out into louder praise while the "manifold wisdom of God is made known" to them in their heavenly places. ‖

Even this is not all. There is a third stage in the ascending scale, a third circle formed for the widening song (v. 13).

What a sublime conception have we here before us! The whole universe, from its remotest star to the things around us and beneath our feet, is one,—one in feeling, in emotion, in expression; one in heart and voice. Nothing is said of evil. Nor is it thought of. It is in the hands of God, who will work out His sovereign purposes in His own good time and way. We have only to listen to the universal harmony, and to see that it move us to corresponding praise (v. 14).

The redeemed creation is once more singled out for special mention. At chap. iv. 8, 10, they began the song; now we return to them that they may close it. All creation, man included, cries, Amen. The glorified Church has her heart too full to speak. She can only fall down and worship.

The distinction between chap. iv. and chap. v. must now be obvious, even while it is allowed that the same general thought is at the bottom of both chapters. In the one the Church when about to enter on her struggle has the call addressed to her: "Believe in God." In the other that call is followed up by the glorified Redeemer: "Believe also in Me."

Having listened to the call, there is no enemy that she need fear, and no trial from which she need shrink. She is already more than conqueror through Him that loved her. As we enter into the spirit of these chapters we cry,—

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.
There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.
The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge." *

* Heb. ii. 5. † 1 Pet. i. 12. ‡ Luke xv. 10.
§ 1 Tim. iii. 16. ‖ Eph. iii. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEALED ROLL OPENED.

REVELATION vi.

WITH the sixth chapter of the Apocalypse the main action of the book may be said properly to begin. Three sections of the seven into which it is divided have already passed under our notice. The fourth section, extending from chap. vi. 1 to chap. xviii. 24, is intended to bring before us the struggle of the Church, the judgment of God upon her enemies, and her final victory. No detail of historical events in which these things are fulfilled need be looked for. We are to be directed rather to the sources whence the trials spring, and to the principles by which the victory is gained. At this point in the unfolding of the visions it is generally thought that there is a pause, an interval of quietness however brief, and a hush of expectation on the part both of the Seer himself and of all the heavenly witnesses of the wondrous drama. But there seems to be no foundation for such an impression in the text; and it is more in keeping alike with the language of this particular passage and with the general probabilities of the case to imagine that the "lightnings and voices and thunders," spoken of in chap. iv. 5 as proceeding out of the throne, continue to re-echo over the scene, filling the hearts of the spectators with that sense of awe which they are naturally fitted to awaken. We have to meet the Lord in judgment. We are to behold the Lamb as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and when He so appears, "the mountains flow down at His presence." †

The Lamb then, who had, in the previous chapter, taken the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, is now to open it, part by part, seal by seal.

(Chap. vi. 1.) Particular attention ought to be paid to the fact that the true reading of the last clause of this verse is not, as in the Authorised Version, "Come and see," but simply, as in the Revised Version, "Come." The call is not addressed to the Seer, but to the Lord Himself; and it is uttered by one of the four living creatures spoken of in chap. iv. 6, who are "in the midst of the throne and round about the throne," and who in ver. 8 of the same chapter are the first to raise the song from which they never rest, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come." The word "Come" therefore embodies the longing of redeemed creation that the Lord, for the completion of whose work it waits, will take to Him His great power and reign. Not so much for the perfecting of its own happiness, or for deliverance from the various troubles by which it is as yet

* Ps. xlvi. 1–7. † Isa. lxiv. 1.

beset, and not so much for the manifestation of its Lord in His abounding mercy to His own, does the creation delivered from the bondage of corruption wait, as for the moment when Christ shall appear in awful majesty, King of kings and Lord of lords, when He shall banish for ever from the earth the sin by which it is polluted, and when He shall establish, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, His glorious kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

This prospect is inseparably associated with the Second Coming of Him who is now concealed from our view; and therefore the cry of the whole waiting creation, whether animate or inanimate, to its Lord is "Come." The cry, too, and that not only in the case of the first living creature, but (according to a rule of interpretation of which in this book we shall often have to make use) in the case of the three that follow, is uttered "with a voice of thunder;" and thunder is always an accompaniment and symbol of the Divine judgments.

No sooner is the cry heard than it is answered (vi. 2).

Few figures of the Apocalypse have occasioned more trouble to interpreters than that contained in these words. On the one hand, the particulars seem unmistakably to point to the Lord Himself; but, on the other hand, if the first rider be the glorified Redeemer, it is difficult to establish that harmonious parallelism with the following riders which appears to be required by the well-ordered arrangement of the visions of this book. Yet it is clearly impossible to regard the first rider as merely a symbol of war, for the second rider would then convey the same lesson as the first; nor is there anything in the text to establish a distinction, frequently resorted to, by which the first rider is thought to denote foreign, and the second civil, war. Every attempt also to separate the white horse of this vision from that of the vision at chap. xix. 11 fails, and must fail. Probably it is enough to say that not one of the four riders is a person. Each is rather a cause, a manifestation of certain truths connected with the kingdom of Christ when that kingdom is seen to be, in its own nature, the judgment of the world. Even war, famine, and death, and Hades, which follow, are not literally these things. They are simply used, as scourges of mankind, to give general expression to the judgments of God. Thus also under the first rider the cause rather than the person of Christ is introduced to us, in the earliest stage of its victorious progress, and with the promise of its future triumph. The various points of the description hardly need to be explained. The colour of the horse is white, for throughout these visions that colour is always the symbol of heavenly purity. The rider has a "crown given" him, a crown of royalty. He has in his hand a "bow," the instrument of war, by which he scatters his enemies like stubble.* Finally, he "comes forth conquering and to conquer," for his victorious march knows no interruption, and at last leaves no foe unvanquished. In the first rider we have thus the cause of Christ in its essence, as that cause of light which, having already drawn to it the sons of light, has become darkness to the sons of darkness. By the opening of the first Seal we learn that this cause is in the world, that this kingdom is in the midst of us, and that they who oppose it shall be overwhelmed with defeat.

The interpretation now given of the first rider as one who rides forth to judgment on a sinful world is confirmed by what is said of the three that follow him. In them too we have judgment, and judgment only, while the three judgments spoken of—war, famine, and death—are precisely those with which the prophets in the Old Testament and the Saviour Himself in the New have familiarised our thoughts.* They are not to be literally understood. Like all else in the visions of St. John, they are used symbolically; and each of them expresses in a general form the calamities and woes, the misfortunes and sorrows, brought by sinful men upon themselves through rejection of their rightful King.

The second Seal is now broken, and the second rider follows (vi. 3, 4).

The second horse is "red," the colour of blood, for it is the horse of war: and slaughter follows it as its rider passes over "the earth"; that is, not over the earth in general, but over the ungodly. Two things in this vision are particularly worthy of notice. In the first place, the war spoken of is not between the righteous and the wicked, but among the wicked alone. The wicked "slaughter one another." All persons engaged in these internecine conflicts have cast aside the offers of the Prince of peace; and, at enmity with Him who is the only true foundation of human brotherhood, they are also at enmity among themselves. Of the righteous nothing is yet said. We are left to infer that they are safe in their dwellings, in peaceable habitations, and in quiet resting-places. By-and-by we shall learn that they are not only safe, but surrounded with joy and plenty. In the second place, the original word translated "slay" both in the Authorised and Revised Versions deserves attention. It is a sacrificial term, the same as that found in chap. v. 6, where we read of the "slaughtered Lamb"; and here therefore, as there, it ought to be rendered, not "slay," but "slaughter." The instant we so translate, the whole picture rises before our view in a light entirely different from that in which we commonly regard it. What judgment, nay, what irony of judgment, is there in the ways of God when He visits sinners with the terrors of His wrath! The very fate which men shrink from accepting in the form of a blessing overtakes them in the form of a curse. They think to save their life, and they lose it. They seek to avoid that sacrifice of themselves which, made in Christ, lies at the root of the true accomplishment of human destiny; and they are constrained to substitute for it a sacrifice of an altogether different kind: they sacrifice, they slaughter, one another.

The third Seal is now broken, and the third rider follows (vi. 5, 6).

The third living creature cries as the two before it had done; and a third horse comes forth, the colour of which is "black," the colour of gloom and mourning and lamentation. Nor can there be any doubt that this condition of things is produced by scarcity, for the figure of the balance and of measuring bread by weight is on different occasions employed in the Old Testament to express the idea of famine. Thus among the threatenings denounced upon Israel,

* Isa. xli. 2.

* Ezek. vi. 11; Matt. xxiv. 6–8.

should it prove faithless to God's covenant, we read, "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied."* And so also, when Ezekiel would describe the miseries of the coming siege of Jerusalem, he exclaims, "Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: that they may want bread and water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their iniquity."† To give out corn by weight instead of measure was thus an emblem of scarcity. The particulars of the scarcity here described are obscured to the English reader by the unfortunate translation, both in this passage and elsewhere, and in the Revised as well as the Authorised Version, of the Greek *denarius* by the English penny. That coin was of the value of fully eightpence of our money, and was the recognised payment of a labourer's full day's work.‡ In ordinary circumstances it was sufficient to purchase eight of the small "measures" now referred to, so that, when it could buy one "measure" only, the quantity needed by a single man for his own daily food, it is implied that wheat had risen eight times in price, and that all that could be purchased by means of a whole day's toil would suffice for no more than one individual's sustenance, leaving nothing for his other wants and the wants of his family. No doubt "three measures of barley" could be purchased for the same sum, but barley was a coarser grain, and to be dependent upon it was in itself a proof that there was famine in the land. Again, as in the previous judgment, the words of the figure are not to be literally understood. What we have before us is not famine in its strict sense, but the judgment of God under the form of famine; and this second judgment is climactic to the first. Men say to themselves that they will live at peace with one another, and sow, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. But in doing this they are mastered by the power of selfishness; the too eager pursuit of earthly interests defeats its end; and, under the influence of deeper and more mysterious laws than the mere political economist can discover, fields that might have been covered with golden harvests lie desolate and bare.

Nothing has yet been said of the last clause of this judgment: "The oil and the wine hurt thou not." The words are generally regarded as a limitation of the severity of the famine previously described, and as a promise that even in judging God will not execute all His wrath. The interpretation can hardly be accepted. Not only does it weaken the force of the threatening, but the meaning thus given to the figure is entirely out of place. Oil and wine were for the mansions of the rich, not for the habitations of the poor, for the feast and not for the supply of the common wants of life. Nor would a sufferer from famine have found in them a substitute for bread. The meaning of the words therefore must be looked for in a wholly different direction. "Thou preparest a table before me," says the Psalmist, "in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."* This is the table the supply of which is now alluded to. It is prepared for the righteous in the midst of the struggles of the world, and in the presence of their enemies. Oil is there in abundance to anoint the heads of the happy guests, and their cups are so filled with plenty that they run over. In the words under consideration, accordingly, we have no limitation of the effects of famine. The "wine" and the "oil" alluded to express not so much what is simply required for life as the plenty and the joy of life; and, thus interpreted, they are a figure of the care with which God watches over His own people and supplies all their wants. While His judgments are abroad in the earth they are protected in the hollow of His hand. He has taken them into His banqueting house, and His banner over them is love. The world may be hungry, but they are fed. As the children of Israel had light in their dwellings while the land of Egypt lay in darkness, so while the world famishes the followers of Jesus have all and more than all that they require. They have "life, and that abundantly."† Thus we learn the condition of the children of God during the trials spoken of in these visions. Under the second Seal we could only infer from the general analogy of this book that they were safe. Now we know that they are not only safe, but that they are enriched with every blessing. They have oil that makes the face of man to shine, and bread that strengtheneth his heart.‡

The fourth Seal is now broken, and the fourth rider follows (vi. 7-8).

The colour of the fourth horse is "pale;" it has the livid colour of a corpse, corresponding to its rider, whose name, Death, is in this case given. "Hades followed with him," not after him, thus showing that a gloomy and dark region beyond the grave is his inseparable attendant, and that it too is an instrument of God's wrath. In chap. i. 18 these two dire companions had also been associated with one another; and it is important to notice the combination, as the fact will afterwards throw light upon one of the most difficult visions of the book. "Death" is not neutral death, that separation between soul and body which awaits every individual of the human family until the Saviour comes. It is death in the deeper meaning which it so often bears in Scripture, and especially in the writings of St. John,—death as judgment. In like manner Hades is not the neutral grave where the rich and the poor meet together, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. It is the region occupied by those who have not found life in Christ; and, not less than death, it is judgment. "Death" and "Hades" then are the culminating judgments of God upon "the earth," that is, upon the wicked; and they execute their mission in a fourfold manner: by the "sword, and famine, and death, and the wild beasts of the earth." The world, the symbolic number of which is four, instead of blessing such as submit themselves to its sway, turns round upon them with all the powers at its command and kills them. The wicked "are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken."§

* Lev. xxvi. 26. † Ezek. iv. 16, 17.
‡ Comp. Matt. xx. 2.

* Ps. xxiii. 5. ‡ Ps. civ. 15.
† John x. 10. § Ps. ix. 15.

It is not easy to say why authority is given death and Hades over no more than "the fourth part" of the earth, when we might rather have expected that their dominion would be extended over the whole. The question may be asked whether it is possible so to understand the Seer as to connect a "fourth part" of the earth, not with all the instruments together, but with each separate instrument of judgment afterwards named—one fourth to be killed with the sword, a second with famine, a third with death, and a fourth by wild beasts. Should such an idea be regarded as untenable, the probability is that a fourth part is mentioned in order to make room for the climactic rise to a "third part" afterwards met under the trumpet judgments.

The end of the first four Seals has now been reached, and at this point there is an obvious break in the hitherto harmonious progress of the visions. No fifth rider appears when the fifth Seal is broken, and we pass from the material into the spiritual, from the visible into the invisible world. That the transition is not accidental, but deliberately made, appears from this, that the very same principle of division marks the series of the trumpets at chap. ix. 1, and of the bowls at chap. xvi. 10. We have thus the number seven divided into its two parts four and three, while in chaps. ii. and iii. we had it divided into three and four. The difference is easily accounted for, three being the number of God, or the Divine, and therefore taking precedence when we are concerned with the existence of the Church, four being the number of the world, and therefore coming first when judgment on the world is described. It is of more consequence, however, to note the fact than to explain it, for it helps in no small degree to illustrate that artificial structure of the Apocalypse which is so completely at variance with the supposition that it describes in its successive paragraphs the successive historical events of the Christian age.

Passing then into a different region of thought, the fifth Seal is now broken (vi. 9, 11).

The vision contained in these verses is unquestionably a crucial one for the interpretation of the Apocalypse, and it will be necessary to dwell upon it for a little. The minor details may be easily disposed of. By the consent of all commentators of note, the "altar" referred to is the brazen altar of sacrifice, which stood in the outer court both of the Tabernacle and the Temple; the "souls," or lives, seen under it are probably seen under the form of blood, for the blood was the life: and the law of Moses commanded that when animals were sacrificed the blood should be poured out "at the bottom of the altar of burnt-offering, which is before the tabernacle of the congregation;" * while the "little time" mentioned in ver. 11 can mean nothing else than the interval between the moment when the souls were spoken to and that when the killing of their brethren should be brought to a close.

The main question to be answered is, Whom do these "souls" represent? Are they Christian martyrs, suffering perhaps at the hands of the Jews before the fall of Jerusalem, perhaps at the hands of the world to the end of time? Or are they the martyrs of the Old Testament dispensation, Jewish martyrs, who had lived and died in faith? Both suppositions have been entertained, though the former has been, and still is, that almost universally adopted. Yet there can be little doubt that the latter is correct, and that several important particulars of the passage demand its acceptance.

1. Let us observe how these martyrs are designated. They had been slain "for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." But that is not the full expression of Christian testimony. As we read in many other passages of the book before us, Christians have "the testimony of Jesus." * The addition needed to bring out the Christian character of the testimony referred to is wanting here. No doubt the saints of old looked forward to the coming of the Christ; but the testimony "of Jesus" is the testimony pertaining to Him as a Saviour come, in all the glory of His person and in all the completeness of His work. It is a testimony embracing a full knowledge of the Messiah; and the inference is natural and legitimate that it is not ascribed to the souls under the altar, because they neither had nor could have possessed it.

2. The cry of these "souls" is worthy of notice, "How long, O Master, the holy and the true," where the word "Master," applied also in Acts iv. 24 and Jude 4 to God as distinguished from Christ, corresponds better to the spirit of the Old than of the New Testament dispensation.

3. The time at which the martyrs had been killed belongs not to the present or the future, but to the past. Like all the other Seals, the fifth is opened at the very beginning of the Christian era; and no sooner is it opened than the souls are seen. It is true that the Seer might be supposed to transport himself forward into the future, and, at some point of Christian history more or less distant, to console Christian martyrs who had already fallen with the assurance that they had only to wait "a little time," until such as were to be their later companions in martyrdom should have shared their fate. But such a supposition is inconsistent with the fact that St. John in the Apocalypse always thinks of the Christian age as one hardly capable of being divided; while, as we shall immediately see more clearly, it would make it impossible to explain the consolation afforded by the bestowal of the "white robe."

4. The altar under which the blood is seen may help to confirm this conclusion, for that blood is not preserved in the inner sanctuary, in that "heaven" which is the ideal home of all the disciples of Jesus: it lies beneath the altar of the outer court.

5. The main argument, however, in favour of the view now contended for is to be found in the act by which these souls were comforted: "And there was given them to each one a white robe." The white robe, then, they had not obtained before; and yet that robe belongs during his life on earth to every follower of Christ. Nothing is more frequently spoken of in these visions than the "white robe" of the redeemed, and it is obviously theirs from the first moment when they are united to their Lord. It is the robe of the priesthood, and at their very entrance upon true spiritual life they are priests in Him. It is the robe with which the faithful remnant in Sardis had been arrayed before they

* Lev. iv. 7.

* Comp. chaps. i. 2, 9; xi. 7; xii. 11, 17; xix. 10.

are introduced to us, for they had not "defiled" it; and the emphasis in the promise there given, "They shall walk with Me in white," appears to lie upon its first rather than its second clause.* Again, the promise to every one in that church that "overcometh" is that he "shall be arrayed in white garments;"† and it is beyond dispute that the promises of the seven epistles belong to the victory of faith gained in this world, not less than to the perfected reward of victory in the world to come. In like manner the Laodicean church is exhorted to buy of her Lord "white garments" that she may be clothed, as well as "gold" that she may be enriched, and "eyesalve" that she may see;‡ and, as the two latter purchases refer to her present state, so also must the former. When, too, the Lord is united in marriage to His Church, it is said that "it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure;" and that fine linen is immediately explained to be "the righteous acts of the saints."

Putting all these passages together, we are distinctly taught that in the language of the Apocalypse the "white robe" denotes that perfect righteousness of Christ, both external and internal, which is bestowed upon the believer from the moment when he is by faith made one with Jesus. It is that more perfect justification of which St. Paul spoke at Antioch in Pisidia when he said to the Jews, "By Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." It had been longed for by the saints of the Old Testament, but had never been fully bestowed upon them until Jesus came. David had prayed for it: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;" Isaiah had anticipated it when he looked forward to the acceptable year of the Lord: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels;" and Ezekiel had celebrated it as the chief blessing of Gospel times: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. . . . And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses." But while thus prayed for, anticipated, and greeted from afar, the fulness of blessing belonging to the New Testament had not been actually received under the Old. "He that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John."§ As we are taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all those heroes of faith who had subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens—even "these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."‖ At death they were not made perfect. They passed rather into a holy rest where they waited until, like Abraham, who had "rejoiced that he should see Christ's day," they "saw it and were glad."* Then the "white robe" was given them. They were raised to the level of that Church which, now that Jesus had come, rejoiced in Him with "a joy unspeakable and glorified."†

These considerations appear sufficient to decide the point. The souls under the altar of the fifth Seal are the saints, not of Christianity, but of Judaism. It is true that all of them had not been literally "slaughtered." But it is a peculiarity of this book, of which further proof will be afforded as we proceed, that it regards all true followers of Christ as martyrs. Christ was Himself a Martyr; His disciples "follow" Him: they are martyrs. Christ's Church is a martyr Church. She dies in her Master's service, and for the world's good.

One point more ought to be noticed before we leave this Seal. The language of these souls under the altar is apt to offend when they apparently cry for vengeance upon their murderers: "How long dost Thou not avenge?" Yet it is enough to say that so to interpret their cry is to do injustice to the whole spirit of this book. Strictly speaking, in fact, they do not themselves cry. It is their blood that cries; it is the wrong done to them that demands reparation. In so far as they may be supposed to cry, they have in view, not their enemies as persons, but the evil that is in them, and that manifests itself through them. At first it may seem difficult to draw the distinction; but if we pause over the matter for a little, the difficulty will disappear. Never do we pity the sinner more, or feel for him with a keener sympathy, than when we are most indignant at sin and most earnest in prayer and effort for its destruction. The more anxious we are for the latter, the more must we compassionate the man who is enveloped in sin's fatal toils. When we long therefore for the hour at which sin shall be overtaken by the just judgment of God, we long only for the establishment of that righteous and holy kingdom which is inseparably bound up with the glory of God and the happiness of the world.

For this kingdom then the saints of the Old Testament, together with all their "brethren" under the New Testament, who like them are faithful unto death, now wait; and the opening of the sixth Seal tells us that it is at hand (vi. 12-17).

The description is marked by almost unparalleled magnificence and sublimity, and any attempt to dwell upon details could only injure the general effect. The real question to be answered is, To what does it apply? Is it a picture of the destruction of Jerusalem or of the final Judgment? Or may it even represent every great calamity by which a sinful world is overtaken? In each of these senses, and in each of them with a certain degree of truth, has the passage been understood. Each is a part of the great thought which it embraces. The error of interpreters has consisted in confining the whole, or even the primary, sense to any one of them. The true reference of the passage appears to be to the Christian dispensation, especially on its side of judgment. That dispensation had often been spoken of by the prophets

* Chap. iii. 4. † Chap. iii. 5. ‡ Chap. iii. 18.
§ Matt. xi. 11. ‖ Heb. xi. 39, 40.

* John viii. 56. † 1 Pet. i. 8 (R. V., margin).

in a precisely similar way; and the whole description of these verses, alive with the rich glow of the Eastern imagination, is taken partly from their language, and partly from the language of our Lord in the more prophetic and impassioned moments of His life.

Thus it was that Joel had announced the purpose of God: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," and again, "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining;" while, apart altogether from the immediately preceding and following words, which prove the interpretation above given to be correct, this announcement of Joel was declared by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost to apply to the introduction of that kingdom of Christ which, in the gift of tongues, was at that moment exhibited in power. In like manner we read in the prophet Haggai, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations." While, again, without our needing to dwell on the connection in which the words occur, we find the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews applying the prophecy to the circumstances of those to whom he wrote at a time when they had heard the voice that speaketh from heaven, and had received the kingdom that cannot be moved. The prophet Malachi also, whose words have been interpreted for us by our Lord Himself, describes the day of Him whom the Baptist was to precede and to introduce as the day that "burneth as a furnace," as "the great and terrible day of the Lord." This aspect, too, of any great era in the history of a land or of a people had always been presented by the voice of prophecy in language from which the words before us are obviously taken. Thus it was that when Isaiah described the coming of a time at which the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it, he mentions, among its other characteristics, "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." * When the same prophet details the burden of Babylon which he saw, he exclaims, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine;" † and again, when he widens his view from Babylon to a guilty world, "For the Lord hath indignation against all the nations, and fury against all their hosts. . . . And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf falleth from off the vine, and as a fading fig from the fig tree." ‡ Many other passages of a similar kind might be quoted from the Old Testament; but, without quoting further from that source, it may be enough to call to mind that when our Lord delivered His discourse upon the last things He adopted a precisely similar strain: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." *

Highly coloured, therefore, as the language used under the sixth Seal may appear to us, to the Jew, animated by the spirit of the Old Testament, it was simply that in which he had been accustomed to express his expectation of any new dispensation of the Almighty, of any striking crisis in the history of the world. Whenever he thought of the Judge of all the earth as manifesting Himself in a greater than ordinary degree, and as manifesting Himself in that truth and righteousness which was the glorious distinction of His character, he took advantage of such figures as we have now before us. To the fall of Jerusalem, therefore, to every great crisis in human history, and to the close of all, they may be fittingly applied. In the eloquent language of Dr. Vaughan, "These words are wonderful in all senses, not least in this sense: that they are manifold in their accomplishment. Wherever there is a little flock in a waste wilderness; wherever there is a Church in a world; wherever there is a power of unbelief, ungodliness, and violence, throwing itself upon Christ's faith and Christ's people and seeking to overbear, and to demolish, and to destroy; whether that power be the power of Jewish bigotry and fanaticism, as in the days of the first disciples; or of pagan Rome, with its idolatries and its cruelties, as in the days of St. John and of the Revelation; or of papal Rome, with its lying wonders and its antichristian assumptions, in ages later still; or of open and rampant atheism, as in the days of the first French Revolution; or of a subtler and more insidious infidelity, like that which is threatening now to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect; wherever and whatever this power may be—and it has had a thousand forms, and may be destined yet to assume a thousand more—then, in each successive century, the words of Christ to His first disciples adapt themselves afresh to the circumstances of His struggling servants; warn them of danger, exhort them to patience, arouse them to hope, assure them of victory; tell of a near end for the individual and for the generation; tell also of a far end, not for ever to be postponed, for time itself and for the world; predict a destruction which shall befall each enemy of the truth, and predict a destruction which shall befall the enemy himself whom each in turn has represented and served; explain the meaning of tribulation, show whence it comes, and point to its swallowing up in glory; reveal the moving hand above, and disclose, from behind the cloud which conceals it, the clear, definite purpose and the unchanging, loving will. Thus understood, each separate downfall of evil becomes a prophecy of the next and of the last; and the partial fulfilment of our Lord's words in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of St. John's words in the downfall of idolatry and the dismemberment of Rome, becomes itself in turn a new warrant for the Church's expectation of the Second Advent and of the day of judgment." †

While, however, the truth of these words may

* Isa. ii. 19. † Isa xiii. 9, 10. ‡ Isa. xxxiv. 2, 4.

* Matt. xxiv. 29. † "Lectures on the Revelation," p. 170.

be allowed, it is still necessary to urge that the primary application of the language of the sixth Seal is to no one of such events in particular, but to something which includes them all. In other words, it applies to the Christian dispensation, viewed in its beginning, its progress, and its end; viewed in all those issues which it produces in the world, but especially on the side of judgment.

Nor ought such dark and terrible figures to startle us, as if they could not be suitably applied to a dispensation of mercy, of grace that we cannot fathom, of love that passeth knowledge. The Christian dispensation is not effeminacy. If it tells of abounding compassion for the sinner, it tells also of fire, and hail, and vapour of smoke for the sin. If it speaks at one time in a gentle voice, it speaks at another in a voice of thunder; and, when the latter is rightly listened to, the air is cleared as by the whirlwind.

Although, therefore, the language of the prophets and of this passage may at first sight appear to be marked by far too great a measure both of strength and of severity to make it applicable to the Gospel age, it is in reality neither too strong nor too severe. It is at variance only with the verdict of that superficial glance which is satisfied with looking at phenomena in their outward and temporary aspect, and which declines to penetrate into the heart of things. So long as man is content with such a spirit, he is naturally enough unstirred by any powerful emotion; and he can only say that words of prophetic fire are words of exaggeration and of false enthusiasm. But no sooner does he catch that spirit of the Bible which brings him into contact with eternal verities than his tone changes. He can no longer rest upon the surface. He can no longer dismiss the thought of mighty issues at stake around him with the reflection that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women on it only players." When from the shore he looks out upon the mass of waters stretching before him, he thinks not merely of the light waves rippling at his feet and losing themselves in the sand, but of the unfathomed depths of the ocean from which they come, and of those mysterious movements of it which they indicate. He sees sights, he hears sounds, which the common eye does not see, and the common ear does not hear. The slightest motion of the soil speaks to him of earthquakes; the handful of snow loosened from the mountain-side, of avalanches; the simplest utterance of awe, of a cry that the mountains and the hills are falling. The great does not become to him little; but the little becomes great. There is thus no exaggeration in the strength or even in the severity of prophetic figures. The prophet has passed from the world of shadows, flitting past him and disappearing, into the world of realities, Divine, unchangeable, and everlasting.

CHAPTER V.

CONSOLATORY VISIONS.

Revelation vii.

Six of the seven Seals have been opened by the "Lamb," who is likewise the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." They have dealt, in brief but pregnant sentences, with the whole history of the Church and of the world throughout the Christian age. No details of history have indeed been spoken of, no particular wars, or famines, or pestilences, or slaughters, or preservations of the saints. Everything has been described in the most general terms. We have been invited to think only of the principles of the Divine government, but of these as the most sublime and, according to our own state of mind, the most alarming or the most consolatory principles that can engage the attention of men. God, has been the burden of the six Seals, is King over all the earth. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" Why do they exalt themselves against the sovereign Ruler of the universe, who said to the Son of His love, when He made Him Head over all things for His Church, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee;" "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies"?* Listening to the voice of these Seals, we know that the world, with all its might, shall prevail neither against the Head nor against the members of the Body. Even when apparently successful it shall fight a losing battle. Even when apparently defeated Christ and they who are one with Him shall march to victory.

We are not to imagine that the Seals of chap. vi. follow one another in chronological succession, or that each of them belongs to a definite date. The Seer does not look forward to age succeeding age or century century. To him the whole period between the first and the second coming of Christ is but "a little time," and whatever is to happen in it "must shortly come to pass." In truth he can hardly be said to deal with the lapse of time at all. He deals with the essential characteristics of the Divine government in time, whether it be long or short. Shall the revolving years be in our sense short, these characteristics will nevertheless come forth with a clearness that shall leave man without excuse. Shall they be in our sense long, the unfolding of God's eternal plan will only be again and again made manifest. He with whom we have to do is without beginning of days or end of years, the I am, unchangeable both in the attributes of His own nature, and in the execution of His purposes for the world's redemption. Let us cast our eyes along the centuries that have passed away since Jesus died and rose again. They are full of one great lesson. At every point at which we pause we see the Son of God going forth conquering and to conquer. We see the world struggling against His righteousness, refusing to submit to it, and dooming itself in consequence to every form of woe. We see the children of God following a crucified Redeemer, but preserved, sustained, animated, their cross, like His, their crown. Finally, as we realise more and more deeply what is going on around us, we feel that we are in the midst of a great earthquake, that the sun and the moon have become black, and that the stars of heaven are falling to the earth; yet by the eye of faith we pierce the darkness, and where are all our adversaries? Where are the kings and the potentates, the rich and the powerful of the earth, of an ungodly and persecuting world? They have hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains;

* Ps. ii. 7; cx. 7.

and we hear them say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

With the beginning of chap. vii. we might expect the seventh Seal to be opened; but it is the manner of the apocalyptic writer, before any final or particularly critical manifestation of the wrath of God, to present us with visions of consolation, so that we may enter into the thickest darkness, even into the valley of the shadow of death, without alarm. We have already met with this in chaps. iv. and v. We shall meet with it again. Meanwhile it is here illustrated (vii. 1-8).

Although various important questions, which we shall have to notice, arise in connection with this vision, there never has been, as there scarcely can be, any doubt as to its general meaning. In its main features it is taken from the language of Ezekiel, when that prophet foretold the approaching destruction of Jerusalem: "He cried also with a loud voice in mine ears, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with fine linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. . . . And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. . . . And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as Thou hast commanded me."* Preservation of the faithful in the midst of judgment on the wicked is the theme of the Old Testament vision, and in like manner it is the theme of this vision of St. John. The "winds" are the symbols of judgment; and, being in number "four" and held by "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth," they indicate that the judgment, when inflicted, will be universal. There is no place to which the ungodly can escape, none where they shall not be overtaken by the wrath of God. "He that fleeth of them," says the Almighty by His prophet, "shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them."†

In the midst of all this the safety of the righteous is secured, and that in a way, as compared with the way of the Old Testament, proportionate to the superior greatness of their privileges. They are marked as God's, not by a man out of the city, but by an "angel ascending from the sun-rising," the quarter whence proceeds that light of day which gilds the loftiest mountain-tops and penetrates into the darkest recesses of the valleys. This angel, with his "great voice," is probably the Lord Himself appearing by His angel. The mark impressed upon the righteous is more than a mere mark: it is a "seal"—a seal similar to that with which Christ was "sealed;"* the seal which in the Song of Songs the bride desires as the token of the Bridegroom's love to her alone: "Set me as a seal upon Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm;"† the seal which expresses the thought, "The Lord knoweth them that are His."‡ Finally, this seal is impressed "on the forehead," on that part of the body on which the high-priest of Israel wore the golden plate, with its inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." Such a seal, manifest to the eyes of all, was a witness to all that they who bore it were acknowledged by the Redeemer before all, even before His Father and the holy angels.§

When we turn to the numbers sealed, every reader who reflects for a moment will allow that they must be symbolically, and not literally, understood. Twelve thousand out of each of twelve tribes, in all "a hundred and forty and four thousand," bears upon its face the stamp of symbolism. It is more difficult to answer the question, Who are they? Are they Jewish Christians, or are they the whole multitude of God's faithful people belonging to the Church universal, but indicated by a figure taken from Judaism?

The question now asked is of greater than ordinary importance, for upon the answer given to it largely depends the solution of the problem whether the author of the fourth Gospel and the author of the Apocalypse are the same. If the first vision of the chapter relating to those sealed out of the tribes of Israel speak only of Jewish Christians, and the second vision, beginning at ver. 9, of "the great multitude which no man could number," speak of Gentile Christians, it will follow that the writer exhibits a particularistic tendency altogether at variance with the universalism of the author of the fourth Gospel. Gentile Christians will be, as they have been called, an "appendix" to the Jewish-Christian Church; and the followers of Jesus will fail to constitute one flock all the members of which are equal in the sight of God, occupy the same position, and enjoy the same privileges. The first impression produced by the vision of the sealed is undoubtedly that it refers to Jewish Christians, and to them alone. Many considerations, however, lead to the wider conclusion that, under a Jewish figure, they include all the followers of Christ, or the universal Church. Some of these at least ought to be noticed.

1. We have not yet found, and we shall not find in any later part of the Apocalypse, a distinction drawn between Jewish and Gentile Christians. To the eye of the Seer, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is one. There is in it neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. He recognises in it in its collective capacity the Body of Christ, all the members of which occupy the same relation to their Lord, and stand equally in grace. He knows indeed of a distinction between the Jewish Church, which waited for the coming of the Lord, and the Christian Church, which rejoiced in Him as come; but he knows also that when Jesus did come the privileges of the latter were

* Ezek. ix. † Amos ix. 1-3.

* John vi. 27. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 19.
† Cant. viii. 3. § Comp. Luke xii. 8.

bestowed upon those in the former who had looked onward to Christ's day, and that they were arrayed in the same "white robe." Under all the six Seals, accordingly, embracing the whole period of the Gospel dispensation, there is not a single word to suggest the thought that the Christian Church is divided into two parts. The struggle, the preservation, and the victory belong equally to all. A similar remark may be made on the epistles to the seven churches, which unquestionably contain a representation of that Church the fortunes of which are to be afterwards described. In these epistles Christ walks equally in the midst of every part of it; and promises are made, not in one form to one member and in another to another, but always in precisely the same terms to "him that overcometh." It would be out of keeping with this were we now, when a similar topic of preservation is on hand, to be introduced to a Jewish-Christian as distinguished from a Gentile-Christian Church.

2. It is the custom of the Seer to heighten and spiritualise all Jewish names. The Temple, the Tabernacle, the Altar, Mount Zion, and Jerusalem are to him the embodiments of ideas deeper than those literally conveyed by them. Analogy therefore might suggest that this also would be the case with the word "Israel." Nay, it would even be the more natural so to use that word, because it is so often used in the same spiritual sense in other parts of the New Testament: "But they are not all Israel which are of Israel;" "And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."* Nor need we be startled by that employment of the word "tribes," which may seem to give more precision to the idea that Jewish Christians are designated by the term, for St. John, in his peculiar way of looking at men, beheld "tribes" not only among the Jews, but among all nations: "And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him."† In chap. xxi. 12, too, the "twelve tribes" plainly include all believers.

3. The enumeration of the tribes of Israel given in these verses is different from any other enumeration of the kind contained in Scripture. Thus the tribe of Dan is omitted; and, contrary to the practice of at least the later books of the Old Testament, that of Levi is inserted; while Joseph also is substituted for Ephraim: and the order in which the twelve are given has elsewhere no parallel. Points such as these may appear trifling, but they are not without importance. No student of the Apocalypse will imagine that they are accidental or undesigned. He may not be able to satisfy either himself or others as to the grounds upon which St. John proceeded, but that there were grounds sufficient to the Apostle himself for what he did he will not for a moment doubt. One thing may, however, be said. If the changes can be explained at all, it must be by considerations springing out of the heart of the Christian community, and not out of any suggested by the relations of the tribes of Judaism to one another. Levi may thus be inserted, instead of standing apart as formerly, because in Christ Jesus there was no priestly tribe: all Christians were priests; Dan may be omitted because that tribe had chosen the serpent as its emblem, and St. John not only felt with peculiar power the direct antagonism to Christ of "the old serpent the devil,"* but had been accustomed to see in the traitor Judas, who had been expelled from the apostolic band, and for whom another apostle had been substituted, the very impersonation or incarnation of Satan;† Ephraim also may have been replaced by Joseph because of its enmity to Judah, the tribe out of which Jesus sprang; while Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, may head the list because it was the tribe in which Christ was born.

4. Some of the expressions of the passage are inconsistent with the limitation of the sealed to any special class of Christians. Why, for example, should the holding back of the winds be universal? Would it not have been enough to restrain the winds that blew on Jewish Christians, and not the winds of the whole earth? And again, why do we meet with language of so general a character as that of ver. 3: "till we shall have sealed the servants of our God"? This designation "servants" seems to include the whole number, and not some only, of God's children.

5. If God's servants from among the Gentiles are not now sealed, the Apocalypse mentions no other occasion when they were so. It is true that, according to the ordinary interpretation of the next vision, they are admitted to the happiness of heaven; but we may well ask whether, if the sealing be the emblem of preservation amidst worldly troubles, they ought not also, at one time or another, to have been sealed on earth.

6. The sealed are marked upon their "foreheads," and in chap. xxii. 4 all believers are marked in a similar way.

7. We shall meet again this number of a hundred and forty-four thousand in chap. xiv.; and, while it can hardly be doubted that the same persons are on both occasions included in it, it will be seen that there at least the whole number of the redeemed is meant.

8. It is worthy of notice that the contrasts of the Apocalypse lead directly to a similar conclusion. St. John always sees light and darkness standing over against each other, and exhibiting themselves in a correspondence which, extending even to minute details, aids the task of the interpreter. Now in many passages of this book we find Satan not only marking his followers, but, precisely as here, marking them upon the "forehead;"‡ and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the one marking is the antithesis of the other. But this mark is imprinted by Satan upon all his followers, and the inference is legitimate that the seal of the living God is in like manner imprinted upon all the followers of Jesus.

9. One more reason may be assigned for this conclusion. If ver. 4, with its "hundred and forty and four thousand out of every tribe of the children of Israel," is to be understood of Jewish Christians alone, the contrast between it and ver. 9, with its "great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes, and peoples, and tongues," makes it necessary to understand the latter of Gentile Christians alone. It will not do to say that the comprehensive enumeration of this verse may include Jewish as well as Gentile Christians. Placed over against the very definite statement

* Rom. ix. 6; Gal. vi. 16. † Chap. i. 7.

* Comp. chap. xii. 9. † John xiii. 2.
‡ Chaps. xiii. 16, 17; xiv. 9; xvi. 2; xix. 20; xx. 4.

of ver. 4, it can only, according to the style of the Apocalypse, be referred to persons who have come out of the heathen world in the fourfold conception of its parts. Now, whatever may be the precise interpretation of the second vision of the chapter, it is undeniable that it unfolds a higher stage of privilege and glory than the first. It will thus follow on the supposition now combated that at the very instant when the Apostle is said to be placing Gentile Christians in a position of inferiority to Jewish Christians, and when he is treating the one as simply an "appendix" to the other, he speaks of them as the inheritors of a far greater "weight of glory." St. John could not be thus inconsistent with himself.

The conclusion from all that has been said is plain. The vision of the sealing does not apply to Jewish Christians only, but to the universal Church. When the judgments of God are abroad in the world, all the disciples of Christ are sealed for preservation against them.

Notwithstanding what has been said, the reader may still find it difficult to conceive that two pictures of the same multitude should be presented to us drawn on such entirely different lines. What is the meaning of it? he may exclaim. What is the Seer's motive in doing so? The explanation is not difficult. An attentive examination of the structural principles marking the writings of St. John will show that they are distinguished by a tendency to set forth the same object in two different lights, the latter of which is climactic to the former, as well as, for the most part at least, taken from a different sphere. The writer is not satisfied with a single utterance of what he desires to impress upon his readers. After he has uttered it for the first time, he brings it again before him, works upon it, enlarges it, deepens it, sets it forth with stronger and more vivid colouring. The fundamental idea is the same on both occasions; but on the second it is the centre of a circle of wider circumference, and it is uttered in a more impressive manner. Want of space will not permit the illustration of this by an appeal either to the nature of Hebrew thought in general, or to the other writings of the New Testament which owe their authorship to St. John. It must be enough to say that the fourth Gospel bears deep and important traces of this characteristic, and that difficult passages in it not otherwise explicable seem to be solved by its application. The main point to be kept in view is that the principle in question may be traced on many different occasions both in the fourth Gospel and in the Apocalypse. One of these has indeed already come under our notice in the case of the "golden candlesticks" and of the "stars" in chap. i. of this book. The two figures relate to the same object, but the second is climactic to the first, and it is taken from a larger field. The same principle meets us here. The second vision of chap. vii. is climactic to the first, and the field from which it is drawn is larger. The analogy, however, not of the golden candlesticks and of the stars only, but of many other passages of a similar kind, warrants the inference that both the visions relate to the same thing, although the aspect in which it is looked at is in each case different. Any difficulty therefore at first presented by the double picture disappears; while the peculiarity of structure exhibited not only helps to lead us to a Johannine authorship, but tends powerfully to establish the correctness of the interpretation now adopted.

We are thus entitled to conclude that the hundred and forty-four thousand of this first consolatory vision represent not Jewish Christians only, but the whole Church of God, and that the number used is intended to represent completeness: not one member of the true Church is lost.* Twelve, a sacred number, the number of the patriarchs, of the tribes of Israel, and of the Apostles of Jesus, is first multiplied by itself, and then by a thousand, the sign of the heavenly in contrast with the earthly. A hundred and forty and four thousand is the result.

It need only further be observed—and the observation will help to confirm what has been said—that St. John did not himself count the number of the sealed. He "heard the number of them" (ver. 4). Already they were "a multitude which no *man* could number" (ver. 9). But He who telleth the innumerable stars that sparkle in the midnight sky, and who "bringeth out their host by number,"† could number them. He it was who communicated the number to the Seer.

The second vision of the chapter follows (vii. 9-17).

Upon the magnificence and beauty of this description it is not only unnecessary, it would be a mistake, to dwell. Words of man would only mar the sublimity and pathos of the spectacle. Neither is it desirable to look at each expression of the passage in itself. These expressions are better considered as a whole. One point indeed ought to be carefully kept in view: that the "palms" spoken of in ver. 9 as in the "hands" of the happy multitude are not the palms of victory in any earthly contest, but the palms of the Feast of Tabernacles, and that upon the thought of that feast the scene is moulded.

The Feast of Tabernacles, it will be remembered, was at once the last, the highest, and the most joyful of the festivals of the Jewish year. It fell in the month of October, when the harvest not only of grain, but of wine and oil, had been gathered in, and when, therefore, all the labours of the year were past. It was preceded, too, by the great Day of Atonement, the ceremonial of which gathered together all the sacrificial acts of the previous months, beheld the sins of the people, from their highest to their lowest, carried away into the wilderness, and brought with it the blessing of God from that innermost recess of the sanctuary which was lightened by the special glory of His presence, and into which the high-priest even was permitted to enter upon that day alone. The feelings awakened in Israel at the time were of the most triumphant kind. They returned in thought to the independent life which their fathers, delivered from the bondage of Egypt, led in the wilderness; and, the better to realise this, they left their ordinary dwellings and took up their abode for the days of the feast in booths, which they erected in the streets or on the flat roofs of their houses. These booths were made of branches of their most prized, most fruit-bearing, and most umbrageous trees; and beneath them they raised their psalms of thanksgiving to Him who had delivered them

* Comp. John xvii. 12. † Isa. xl. 26.

as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. Even this was not all, for we know that in the later period of their history the Jews connected the Feast of Tabernacles with the brightest anticipations of the future as well as with the most joyful memories of the past. They beheld in it the promise of the Spirit, the great gift of the approaching Messianic age; and, that they might give full expression to this, they sent on the eighth, or great, day of the feast, a priest to the pool of Siloam with a golden urn, that he might fill it from the pool, and, bringing it up to the Temple, might pour it on the altar. This is the part of the ceremonial alluded to in John vii. 37-39, and during it the joy of the people reached its highest point. They surrounded the priest in crowds as he brought up the water from the pool, waved their *lulabs*—small branches of palm trees, the "palms" of ver. 9—and made the courts of the Temple re-echo with their song, "With joy shall ye draw water out of wells of salvation."* At night the great illumination of the Temple followed, that to which our Lord most probably alludes when, immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles spoken of in chap. viii. of the fourth Gospel, He exclaims, "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."†

Such was the scene the main particulars of which are here made use of by the apocalyptic Seer to set before us the triumphant and glorious condition of the Church when, after all her members have been sealed, they are admitted to the full enjoyment of the blessings of God's covenant, and when, washed in the blood of the Lamb and clothed with His righteousness, they keep their Feast of Tabernacles.

A most important and interesting question connected with this vision has still to be answered. It may be first asked in the words of Isaac Williams. "It is whether all this description is of the Church in heaven or on earth." The same writer has answered his question by saying, "The fact is that, like the expression 'the kingdom of heaven,' and many others of the same kind, it applies to both, and it is doubtless intended to do so—in fulness hereafter, but even here in part." The answer thus given is no doubt correct when the question is asked in the particular form to which it is a reply. Yet we have still to ask whether, granting it to be so, the primary reference of the vision is to the Church of Christ during her present pilgrimage or after that pilgrimage has been completed, and she has entered on her eternal rest. To the question so put, the reply usually given is that the Seer has the latter aspect of the Church in view. The redeemed are sealed on earth; they bear their "palms," and rejoice with the joy afterwards spoken of, in heaven. Much in the passage may seem to justify this conclusion. But a recent writer on the subject has adduced such powerful considerations in favour of the former view, that it will be proper to examine them.

Appeal is first made to Matt. xxiv. 13, a passage throwing no light upon the point. It is otherwise with many prophecies of the Old Testament next referred to, which describe the coming dispensation of the Gospel: "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them;" "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."* To passages such as these have to be added the promises of our Lord as to fountains of living waters even now opened to the believer, that he may drink and never thirst again: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a springing fountain of water, unto eternal life;" "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."† St. John, too, it is urged, teaches us to look for a Tabernacle Feast on earth‡; while at the same time throughout all his writings eternal life is set before us as a present possession. Nor is this the case only in the writings of St. John. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we meet the same line of thought: "Ye are come" (not Ye shall come) "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven."§ Influenced by these considerations, the writer to whom we have referred is led, "though not without some hesitation," to conclude that the vision of the palm-bearing multitude is to be understood of the Church on earth, and not of the Church in heaven.

The conclusion may be accepted without the "hesitation." The colours on the canvas may indeed at first appear too bright for any condition of things on this side the grave. But they are not more bright than those employed in the description of the new Jerusalem in chap. xxi.; and, when we come to the exposition of that chapter, we shall find positive proof in the language of the Seer that he looks upon that city as one already come down from heaven and established among men. Not a few of its most glowing traits are even precisely the same as those that we meet in the corresponding vision of this chapter: "And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God; and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."‖ If words like these may be justly applied, as we have yet to see that they may and must be, to one aspect of the Church on earth, there is certainly nothing to hinder their application to the same Church now. The truth is that in both cases the description is ideal, and that not less so than the description of the terrors of the worldly at the opening of the sixth Seal. Nor

* Isa. xii. 3. † John viii. 12.

* Isa. xlix. 10; xxv. 8; Zech. xiv. 16.
† John iv. 13, 14; vii. 37, 38.
‡ John i. 14.
§ Heb. xii. 22, 23.
‖ Chap. xxi. 3, 4.

indeed shall we understand any part of the Apocalypse unless we recognise the fact that everything with which it is concerned is raised to an ideal standard. Reward and punishment, righteousness and sin, the martyrdoms of the Church and the fate of her oppressors, are all set before us in an ideal light. The Seer moves in the midst of conceptions which are fundamental, ultimate, and eternal. The "broken lights" which partially illuminate our progress in this world are to him absorbed in "the true Light." The clouds and darkness which obscure our path gather themselves together, to his eyes, in "the darkness" with which the light has to contend. Descriptions, accordingly, applicable in their fulness to the Church only after the glory of her Lord is manifested, apply also to her now, when she is thought of as living the life that is hid with Christ in God, the life of her exalted and glorified Redeemer. For this conception the colours of the picture before us are not too bright.

The relation in which the two visions of this chapter stand to one another may now be obvious. Although the persons referred to are in both the same, they do not in both occupy the same position. In the first they are only sealed, and through that sealing they are safe. Their Lord has taken them under His protection; and, whatever troubles or perils may beset them, no one shall pluck them out of His hand. In the second they are more than safe. They have peace, and joy, and triumph; their every want supplied, their every sorrow healed. Death itself is swallowed up in victory, and every tear is wiped from every eye.

Thus also may we determine the period to which both the sealing of believers and their subsequent enjoyment of heavenly blessing belong. In neither vision are we introduced to any special era of Christian history. St. John has in view neither the Christians of his own day alone, nor those of any later time. As we found that each of the first six Seals embraced the whole Gospel age, so also is it with these consolatory visions. We are to dwell upon the thought rather than the time of preservation and of bliss. The Church of Christ never ceases to follow in the footsteps of her Lord. Like Him, when faithful to her high commission, she never ceases to bear the cross. The unredeemed world must always be her enemy; and in it she must always have tribulation. But not less continuous is her joy. We judge wrongly when we think that the Man of sorrows was never joyful. He spoke of "My peace," "My joy."* In one of His moments of deepest feeling we are told that He "rejoiced in spirit."† Outwardly the world troubled Him; and huge billows, raised by its tempestuous winds, swept across the surface of His soul. Beneath, the unfathomed depths were calm. In communion with His Father in heaven, in the thought of the great work which He was carrying to its completion, and in the prospect of the glory that awaited Him, He could rejoice in the midst of sorrow. So also with the members of His Body. They bear about with them a secret joy which, like their new name, no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. As the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice, so their joy is fulfilled.‡ Nor does it ever cease to be theirs while their Lord is with them; and unless they grieve Him "Lo, He is always with them, even unto the consummation of the age."* The two visions, therefore, of the sealing and of the palm-bearing multitude embrace the whole Christian dispensation within their scope, and express ideas which belong to the condition of the believer in all places and at all times.

* John xiv. 27; xvii. 13. † Luke x. 21. ‡ John iii. 29.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST SIX TRUMPETS.

REVELATION viii., ix.

THE two consolatory visions of chap. vii. have closed, and the Seer returns to that opening of the seven Seals which had been interrupted in order that these two visions might be interposed.

Six Seals had been opened in chap. vi.; the opening of the seventh follows (viii. 1-6).

Before looking at the particulars of this Seal, we have to determine the relation in which it stands to the Seals of chap. vi. as well as to the visions following it. Is it as isolated, as independent, as those that have come before it; and are its contents exhausted by the first six verses of the chapter? or does it occupy such a position of its own that we are to regard the following visions as developed out of it? And if the latter be the case, how far does the development extend?

In answering these questions, it can hardly be denied that if we are to look upon the seventh Seal as standing independent and alone, its contents have not the significance which we seem entitled to expect. It is the last Seal of its own series; and when we turn to the last member of the Trumpet series at chap. xi. 15, or of the Bowl series at chap. xvi. 17, we find them marked, not by less, but by much greater, force than had belonged in either case to the six preceding members. The seventh Trumpet and the seventh Bowl sum up and concentrate the contents of their predecessors. In the one the judgments of God represented by the Trumpets, in the other those represented by the Bowls, culminate in their sharpest expression and their most tremendous potency. There is nothing of that kind in the seventh Seal if it terminates with the preparation of the Trumpet angels to sound; and the analogy of the Apocalypse therefore—an analogy supplying in a book so symmetrically constructed an argument of greater than ordinary weight—is against that supposition.

Again, the larger portion of the first six verses of this chapter does not suggest the contents of the Seal. Rather would it seem as if these contents were confined to the "silence" spoken of in ver. 1, and as if what follows from ver. 2 to ver. 6 were to be regarded as no part of the Seal itself, but simply as introductory to the Trumpet visions. Everything said bears upon it the marks of preparation for what is to come, and we are not permitted to rest in what is passing as if it were a final and conclusive scene in the great spectacle presented to the Seer.

For these reasons the view often entertained

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

that the visions to which we proceed are developed out of the seventh Seal may be regarded as correct.

If so, how far does the development extend? The answer invariably given to this question is, To the end of the Trumpets. But the answer is not satisfactory. The general symmetry of the Apocalypse militates against it. There is then no correspondence between the last Trumpet and the last Seal, nothing to suggest the thought of a development of the Bowls out of the seventh Trumpet in a manner corresponding to the development of the Trumpets out of the seventh Seal. In these circumstances the only probable conclusion is that both the Bowls and the Trumpets are developed out of the seventh Seal, and that that development does not close until we reach the end of chap. xvi.

If what has now been said be correct, it will throw important light upon the relation of the Seals to the two series of the Trumpets and the Bowls taken together; while, at the same time, it will lend us valuable aid in the interpretation of all the three series.

Returning to the words before us, it is said that, at the opening of the seventh Seal, "there followed silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." This silence may perhaps include a cessation even of the songs which rise before the throne of God from that redeemed creation the voice of whose praise rests not either day or night.* Yet it is not necessary to think so. The probability rather is that it arises from a cessation only of the "lightnings and voices and thunders" which at chap. iv. 5 proceed out of the throne, and which are resumed at ver. 5 of the present chapter, when the fire of the altar is cast from the angel's censer upon the earth. A brief suspension of judgment is thereby indicated, a pause by and during which the Almighty would call attention to the manifestations of His wrath about to follow. The exact duration of this silence, "about the space of half an hour," has never been satisfactorily explained; and the general analogy of St. John's language condemns the idea of a literal interpretation. We shall perhaps be more in accordance with the spirit in which the Revelation is written if we consider—(1) that in that book the half of anything suggests, not so much an actual half, as a broken and interrupted whole,—five a broken ten, six a broken twelve, three and a half a broken seven; (2) that in the Gospel of St. John we find on more than one occasion mention made of an "hour" by which at one time the actions, at another the sufferings, of Jesus are determined: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come;" "Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." † The "hour" of Jesus is thus to St. John the moment at which action, having been first resolved on by the Father, is taken by the Son; and a "half-hour" may simply denote that the course of events has been interrupted, and that the instant for renewed judgment has been delayed. Such an interpretation will also be in close correspondence with the verses following, as well as with what we have seen to be the probable meaning of the "silence" of ver. 1. Preparation for action, rather than action, marks as yet the opening of the seventh Seal.

That preparation is next described.

* Chap. iv. 8. † John ii. 4; xii. 27.

St. John saw "seven trumpets" given to "the seven angels which stand before God." In whatever other respects these seven angels are to be distinguished from the hosts of angels which surround the throne, the commission now given shows that they are angels of a more exalted order and a more irresistible power. They are in fact the expression of the Divine Judge of men, or rather of the mode in which He chooses by judgment to express Himself. We are not even required to think of them as numerically seven, for seven in its sacred meaning is the number of unity, though of unity in the variety as well as the combination of its agencies. The "seven Spirits of God" are His one Spirit; the "seven churches," His one Church; the "seven horns" and "seven eyes" of the Lamb, His one powerful might and His one penetrating glance. In like manner the seven Seals, the seven Trumpets, and the seven Bowls embody the thought of many judgments which are yet in reality one. Thus also the angels here are seven, not because literally so, but because that number brings out the varied forms as well as the essential oneness of the action of Him to whom the Father has given "authority to execute judgment, because He is a Son of man." *

As yet the seven Trumpets have only been given to the seven angels. More has to pass before they put them to their lips and sound. Another angel is seen who "came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer" in his hand. At the opening of the fifth Seal we read of an "altar" which it was impossible not to identify with the great brazen altar, the altar of burnt-offering, in the outer court of the sanctuary. Such identification is not so obvious here; and perhaps a majority of commentators agree in thinking that the altar now spoken of is rather the golden or incense altar which had its place within the Tabernacle, immediately in front of the second veil. To this altar the priest on ordinary occasions, and more particularly the high-priest on the great Day of Atonement, brought a censer with burning frankincense, that the smoke of the incense, as it rose into the air, might be a symbol to the congregation of Israel that its prayers, offered according to the Divine will, ascended as a sweet savour to God. It is possible that this may be the altar meant; yet the probabilities of the case rather lead to the supposition that allusion is made to the altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle court; for (1) when the Seer speaks here and again in ver. 5 of "the altar," and in ver. 3 of "the golden altar," he seems to distinguish between the two. (2) The words "fire of the altar" are in favour of the same conclusion. According to the ritual of the Law, it was from the brazen altar that fire was taken in order to kindle the incense,† while at the same time fire continually burned upon that altar, but not upon the altar within the Tabernacle. (3) The thought represented by the symbolism seems to be that the sufferings of the saints gave efficacy to their prayers, and drew down the answer of Him who says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."‡ (4) The words of ver. 3, "the prayers of all the saints,"

* John v. 27.
† Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," INCENSE.
‡ Ps. l. 15.

and the similar expression in ver. 4, remind us of the prayers of the fifth Seal, now swelled by the prayers of those New Testament saints who have been added to "the blessed fellowship" of the Old Testament martyrs. These prayers, it will be remembered, rose from beneath the altar of burnt-offering; and it is natural to think that the same altar is again alluded to in order to bring out the idea of a similar martyrdom. What we see, therefore, is an angel taking the prayers and adding to them much incense, so that we may behold them as they ascend up before God and receive His answer.

Further, it ought to be observed that the prayers referred to are for judgment upon sin. There is nothing to justify the supposition that they are partly for judgment upon, partly for mercy to, a sinful world. They are simply another form of the cry, "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" * They are a cry that God will vindicate the cause of righteousness.†

The cry is heard, for the angel takes of the fire of the altar on which the saints had been sacrificed as an offering to God, and casts it into the earth, that it may consume the sin by which it had been kindled. The *lex talionis* again starts to view; not merely punishment, but retribution; the heaviest of all retribution, because it is accompanied by a convicted conscience, retribution in kind.

Everything is now ready for judgment, and "the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepare themselves to sound."

(Chap. viii. 7.) To think, in interpreting these words, of a literal burning up of a third part of the "earth," of the "trees," and of the "green grass," would lead us astray. Comparing the first Trumpet with those that follow, we have simply a general description of judgment as it affects the land in contradistinction to the sea, the rivers and fountains of water, and the heavenly bodies by which the earth is lighted. The punishment is drawn down by a guilty world upon itself when it rises in opposition to Him who at first prepared the land for the abode of men, planted it with trees pleasant to the eye, cast over it its mantle of green, and pronounced it to be very good. Of every tree of the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, might our first parents eat; while grass covered the earth for their cattle, and herb for their service. All nature was to minister to the wants of man, and in cultivating the garden and the field he was to find light and happy labour. But sin came in. Thorns and thistles sprang up on every side. Labour became a burden, and the fruitful field was changed into a wilderness which could only be subdued by constant, patient, and often-disappointed toil. This is the thought—a thought often dwelt upon by the prophets of the Old Testament—that is present to the Seer's mind.

One of the plagues of Egypt, however, may also be in his eye. When the Almighty would deliver His people from that land of their captivity, "He sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous. . . . And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field." * That plague the Seer has in his mind; but he is not content to use its traits alone, terrible as they were. The sin of a guilty world in refusing to listen to Him who speaks from heaven is greater than was the sin of those who refused Him that spake on earth, and their punishment must be in proportion to their sin. Hence the plague of Egypt is magnified. We read, not of hail and fire only, but of "hail and fire mingled with" (or rather "in") "blood," so that the blood is the outward and visible covering of the hail and of the fire. In addition to this, we have the herbs and trees of the field, not merely smitten and broken, but utterly consumed by fire. What is meant by the "third part" of the earth and its products being attacked it is difficult to say. The probability is that, as a whole consists of three parts, partial destruction only is intended, yet not destruction of a third part of the earth, leaving two-thirds untouched; but a third part of the earth and of its produce is everywhere consumed.

The second Trumpet is now blown (viii. 8, 9).

As the first Trumpet affected the land, so the second affects "the sea;" and the remarks already made upon the one destruction are for the most part applicable to the other. The figure of removing a mountain from its place and casting it into the sea was used by our Lord to express what beyond all else it was impossible to accomplish by mere human power: "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done."† In so speaking, our Lord had followed the language of the prophets, who were accustomed to illustrate by the thought of the removal of mountains the greatest acts of Divine power: "What are thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain;" "Therefore will we not fear, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the seas."‡

Even the figure of a "burnt mountain" is not strange to the Old Testament, for the prophet Jeremiah thus denounces woe on Babylon: "Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out Mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and make thee a burnt mountain."§

The plagues of Egypt, too, are again taken advantage of by the Seer, for in the first of these Moses "lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river; . . . and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." ‖ Here, however, the plague is extended, embracing as it does not only the river of Egypt, but the sea, with all the ships that sail upon it, and all its fish. Again also, as before, the "third part" is not to be thought of as confined to one region of the ocean, while the remaining two-thirds are left untouched. It is to be

* Chap. vi. 10. † Comp. p. 858.

* Exod. ix. 23–25. ‡ Zech. iv. 7; Ps. xlvi. 2.
† Matt. xxi. 21. § Jer. li. 25.
‖ Exod. vii. 20, 21.

sought everywhere over the whole compass of the deep.

The third Trumpet is now blown (viii. 10, 11).

The third Trumpet is to be understood upon the same principles and in the same general sense as the two preceding Trumpets. The figures are again such as meet us in the Old Testament, though they are used by the Seer in his own free and independent way. Thus the prophet Isaiah, addressing Babylon in his magnificent description of her fall, exclaims, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" and thus also the prophet Jeremiah denounces judgment upon rebellious Israel: "Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink." The bitter waters of Marah also lived in the recollections of Israel as the first, and not the least terrible, punishment of the murmuring of their fathers against Him who had brought them out into what seemed but a barren wilderness, instead of leaving them to quench their thirst by the sweet waters of the Nile. Thus the waters which the world offers to its votaries are made bitter, so bitter that they become wormwood itself, the very essence of bitterness. Again the "third part" of them is thus visited, but this time with a feature not previously mentioned: the destruction of human life,—"many men died of the waters." Under the first Trumpet only inanimate nature was affected; under the second we rose to creatures that had life; under the third we rise to "many men." The climax ought to be noticed, as illustrating the style of the Apostle's thought and aiding us in the interpretation of his words. A similar climax may perhaps also be intended by the agents successively employed under these Trumpets: hail and fire, a great mountain burning, and a falling star.

The fourth Trumpet is now blown (viii. 12).

This Trumpet offers no contradiction to what we previously said,—that the first four members of the three series of Seals, of Trumpets, and of Bowls deal with the material rather than the spiritual side of man, with man as a denizen of this world rather than of the next.* The heavenly bodies are here viewed solely in their relation to earth and its inhabitants. As to the judgment, it rests, like those of the first and second Trumpets, upon the thought of the Egyptian plague of darkness: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had lights in their dwellings."† The trait of the Egyptian plague alluded to in this last sentence is not mentioned here; and we have probably, therefore, no right to say that it was in the Seer's thoughts. Yet it is in a high degree probable that it was; and at all events his obvious reference to that plague may help to illustrate an important particular to be afterwards noticed,—that all the Trumpet judgments fall directly upon the world, and not the Church. As under the first three Trumpets, the third part of the light of sun, and moon, and stars is alone darkened.

The first four Trumpets have now been blown, and we reach the line of demarcation by which each series of judgments is divided into its groups of four and three. That line is drawn in the present instance with peculiar solemnity and force (viii. 13).

Attention ought to be paid to the fact that the cry uttered in "mid-heaven," and thus penetrating to the most distant corners of the earth, proceeds from an "eagle," and not, as in the Authorised Version, from an "angel;" and the eagle is certainly referred to for the purpose of adding fresh terror to the scene. If we would enter into the Seer's mind, we must think of it as the symbol of rapine and plunder. To him the prominent characteristics of that bird are not its majesty, but its swiftness, its strength, and its hasting to the prey.*

Thus ominously announced, the fifth Trumpet is now blown (ix. 1-11).

Such is the strange, but dire picture of the judgment of the fifth Trumpet; and we have, as usual, in the first place, to look at the particulars contained in it. As in several previous instances, these are founded upon the plagues of Egypt and the language of the prophets. In both these sources how terrible does a locust plague appear! In Egypt—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left. And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt." Darker even than this is the language of the prophet Joel. When he sees locusts sweeping across a land, he exclaims, "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness;" and from their irresistible and destructive ravages he draws not a few traits of the dread events by which the coming of the day of the Lord shall be accompanied: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. . . . They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. . . . They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining."

* Comp. p. 857. † Exod. x. 21–23. * Comp. Job ix. 26.

It is no doubt true that in the description before us the qualities of its locusts are preternaturally magnified, but that is only what we might expect, and it is in keeping with the mode in which other figures taken from the Old Testament are treated in this book. There is a probability, too, that each trait of the description had a distinct meaning to St. John, and that it represents some particular phase of the calamities he intended to depict. But it is hardly possible now to discover such meanings; and that the Seer had in view general evil as much at least as evil in certain special forms is shown by the artificiality of structure marking the passage as a whole. For the description of the locusts is divided into three parts, the first general, the second special, the third the locust-king. The special characteristics of the insects, again, are seven in number: (1) "upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold;" (2) "and their faces were as faces of men;" (3) "and they had hair as the hair of women;" (4) "and their teeth were as the teeth of lions" (5) "and they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron;" (6) "and the sound of their wings was as the sound of many chariots;" (7) "and they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings."

Whether the period of "five months," during which these locusts are said to commit their ravages, is fixed on because the destruction caused by the natural insect lasts for that length of time, or for some other reason unknown to us, it is difficult to determine. There is a want of proof that a locust-plague generally continues for the number of months thus specified, and it is otherwise more in accordance with the style of the Apocalypse to regard that particular period of time as simply denoting that the judgment has definite limits.

One additional particular connected with the fifth Trumpet ought to be adverted to. It will be noticed that the "well of the abyss" whence the plague proceeds is opened by a "star fallen" (not "falling") "out of heaven," to which "the key of the well was given." We have here one of those contrasts of St. John a due attention to which is of such importance to the interpreter. This "fallen star" is the contrast and counterpart of Him who is "the bright, the morning star," and who "has the keys of death and of Hades."

At this point the sixth angel ought to sound; but we are now in the midst of the three last woes, and each is of so terrible an import that it deserves to be specially marked. Hence the words of the next verse: "The first Woe is past; behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter" (ix. 12).

This warning given, the sixth Trumpet is now blown (ix. 13-21).

There is much in this Trumpet that is remarkable even while we confine ourselves to the more outward particulars contained in it. Thus we are brought back by it to the thought of those prayers of the saints to which all the Trumpets are a reply, but which have not been mentioned since the blowing of the Trumpets began.* Once more we read of "the golden altar which was before God," in His immediate presence. On that altar the prayers of all the saints had been laid, that they might rise to heaven with the much incense added by the angel, and might be answered in God's own time and way. The voice heard from "the four horns" of this altar—that is, from the four projecting points at its four corners, representing the altar in its greatest potency—shows us, what we might have been in danger of forgetting, that the judgment before us continues to be an answer of the Almighty to His people's prayers. Again it may be noticed that in the judgment here spoken of we deal once more with a "third part" of the class upon which it falls. Nothing of the kind had been said under the fifth Trumpet. The inference to be drawn from these particulars is important. We learn that, however distinct the successive members of any of the three series of the Seals, the Trumpets, or the Bowls may seem to be, they are yet closely connected with one another. Though seven in number, there is a sense in which they are also one; and any characteristic thought which appears in a single member of the series ought to be carried through all its members.*

The judgment itself is founded, as in the others already considered, upon thoughts and incidents connected with Old Testament history.

The first of these is the river Euphrates. That great river was the boundary of Palestine upon the northeast. "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates;"† and in the days of Solomon this part of the covenant appears to have been fulfilled, for we are told that "Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river" (that is, the Euphrates) "unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt."‡ The Euphrates, however, was not only the boundary between Israel and the Assyrians. It was also Israel's line of defence against its powerful and ambitious neighbour, who had to cross its broad stream before he could seize any part of the Promised Land. By a natural transition of thought, the Euphrates next became a symbol of the Assyrians themselves, for its waters, when they rose in flood, overflowed Israel's territory and swept all before them. Then the prophets saw in the rush of the swollen river a figure of the scourge of God upon those who would not acknowledge Him: "The Lord spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; and he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of Thy land, O Immanuel."§ When accordingly the Euphrates is here spoken of, it is clear that with the river as such we have nothing to do. It is simply a symbol of judgment; and "the four angels which had been bound at it," but were now "loosed," are a token—four being the number of the world—that the judgment referred to, though it affects but a third part of men, reaches men over the whole surface of the globe. When "the hour,

* Vers. 3-5.

* Comp. p. 897.
† Gen. xv. 18.
‡ 1 Kings iv. 21.
§ Isa. viii. 5-8.

and the day, and the month, and the year"—that is, when the moment fixed in the counsels of the Almighty—come, the chains by which destruction has been kept back shall be broken, and the world shall be overwhelmed by the raging stream.

The second Old Testament thought to be noted in this vision is that of "horses." To the Israelite the horse presented an object of terror rather than admiration, and an army of horsemen awakened in him the deepest feelings of alarm. Thus it is that the prophet Habakkuk, describing the coming judgments of God, is commissioned to exclaim, "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust, and take it."* Like the locusts of the previous vision, the "horses" now spoken of are indeed clothed with preternatural attributes; but the explanation is the same. Ordinary horses could not convey images of sufficient terror.

The last two verses of chap. ix., which follow the sixth Trumpet, deserve our particular attention. They describe the effect produced upon the men who did not perish by the previous plagues, and they help to throw light upon a question most intimately connected with a just interpretation of the Apocalypse. The question is, Does the Seer, in any of his visions, anticipate the conversion of the ungodly? or does he deal, from the beginning to the end of his descriptions, with righteousness and sin in themselves rather than with righteous persons who may decline from the truth or sinful persons who may own and welcome it? The question will meet us again in the following chapters of this book, and will demand a fuller discussion than it can receive at present. In the meantime it is enough to say that, in the two verses now under consideration, no hint as to the conversion of any ungodly persons by the Trumpet plagues is given. On the contrary, the "men"—that is, the two-thirds of the inhabitants of the earth or of the ungodly world—who were not killed by these plagues repented neither of their irreligious principles nor of their immoral lives. They went on as they had done in the grossness of their idolatries and in the licentiousness of their conduct. They were neither awakened nor softened by the fate of others. They had deliberately chosen their own course; and, although they knew that they were rushing against the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, they had resolved to persevere in it to the end.

* Hab. i. 5-10.

Two brief remarks on these six Trumpet visions, looked at as a whole, appear still to be required.

1. No attempt has been made to interpret either the individual objects of the judgments or the instruments by which judgment is inflicted. To the one class belong the "earth," the "trees," the "green grass," the "sea," the "ships," the "rivers and fountains of the waters," the "sun," the "moon," and the "stars;" to the other belong the details given in the description first of the "locusts" of the fifth Trumpet and then of the "horses" of the sixth. Each of these particulars may have a definite meaning, and interpreters may yet be successful in discovering it. The object kept in view throughout this commentary makes any effort to ascertain that meaning, when it is doubtful if it even exists, comparatively unimportant. We are endeavouring to catch the broader interpretation and spirit of the book; and it may be a question whether our impressions would in that respect be deepened though we saw reason to believe that all the objects above mentioned had individual force. One line of demarcation certainly seems to exist, traced by the Seer himself, between the first four and the two following judgments, the former referring to physical disasters flowing from moral evil, the latter to the more dreadful intensification of intellectual darkness and moral corruption visited upon men when they deliberately choose evil rather than good. Further than this it is, for our present purpose, unnecessary to go.

2. The judgments of these Trumpets are judgments on the world rather than the Church. Occasion has been already taken to observe that the structure of this part of the Apocalypse leads to the belief that both the Trumpets and the Bowls are developed out of the Seals. Yet there is a difference between the two, and various indications in the Trumpet visions appear to confine them to judgments on the world.

There is the manner in which they are introduced, as an answer to the prayers of "all the saints."* It is true, as we shall yet see, that the degenerate Church is the chief persecutor of the people of God. But against her the saints cannot pray. To them she is still the Church. They remember the principle laid down by their Lord when He spoke of His kingdom in the parable of the tares: "Let both grow together until the harvest."† God alone can separate the false from the true within her pale. There is a sense in which the Church can never be overthrown, and there is not less a sense in which the world shall be subdued. Only for the subjugation of the world, therefore, can "all the saints" pray; and the Trumpets are an answer to their prayers.

Again, the three Woe-Trumpets are directed against "them that dwell on the earth."‡ But, as has been already said, it is a principle of interpretation applicable to all the three series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls, that traits filling up the picture in one member belong also to the other members of the group, and that the judgments, while under one aspect seven, are under another one. The three Woes therefore fall upon the same field of judgment as that visited by the plagues preceding them. In other words, all the six plagues of this series

* Chap. viii. 3. † Matt. xiii. 30. ‡ Chap. viii. 13.

of visions are inflicted upon "them that dwell on the earth;" and that is simply another form of expression for the ungodly world.

Again, under the fifth Trumpet the children of God are separated from the ungodly, so that the particulars of that judgment do not touch them. The locusts are instructed that "they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only such men as have not the seal of God in their foreheads." *

Again, the seventh Trumpet, in which the series culminates, and which embodies its character as a whole, will be found to deal with judgment on the world alone: "The nations were roused to wrath, and Thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged," . . . and "the time to destroy them that destroy the earth." †

Finally, the description given at the end of the sixth Trumpet of those who were hardened rather than softened by the preceding judgments leads directly to the same conclusion: "And the rest of mankind which were not killed by these plagues repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood." ‡

These considerations leave no doubt that the judgments of the Trumpets are judgments on the world. The Church, it is true, may also suffer from them, but not in judgment. They may be part of her trial as she mixes with the world during her earthly pilgrimage. Trial, however, is not judgment. To the children of God it is the discipline of a Father's hand. In the midst of it the Church is safe, and it helps to ripen her for the fulness of the glory of her heavenly inheritance.

CHAPTER VII.

RENEWED CONSOLATORY VISION.

Revelation x.

At the point now reached by us the regular progress of the Trumpet judgments is interrupted, in precisely the same manner as between the sixth and seventh Seals, by two consolatory visions. The first is contained in chap. x., the second in chap. xi. 1-13. At chap. xi. 14 the series of the Trumpets is resumed, reaching from that point to the end of the chapter.

(Chap. x. 1-11.) Many questions of deep interest, and upon which the most divergent opinions have been entertained, meet us in connection with this passage. To attempt to discuss these various opinions would only confuse the reader. It will be enough to allude to them when it seems necessary to do so. In the meantime, before endeavouring to discover the meaning of the vision, three observations may be made; one of a general kind, the other two bearing upon the interpretation of particular clauses.

1. Like almost all else in the Revelation of St. John, the vision is founded upon a passage of the Old Testament. "And when I looked," says the prophet Ezekiel, "behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein. . . . Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat what thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll. And He said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them." *

2. In one expression of ver. 6 it is doubtful whether the translation of the Authorised and Revised Versions, or the marginal translation of the latter, ought to be adopted, whether we ought to read, "There shall be time" or "There shall be delay" no longer. But the former is not only the natural meaning of the original; it would almost seem, from the use of the same word in other passages of the Apocalypse, that it is employed by St. John to designate the whole Christian age. That age is now at its very close. The last hour is about to strike. The drama of the world's history is about to be wound up. "For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short."

3. The last verse of the chapter deserves our attention for a moment: "And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Although prophecy itself is spoken of in several passages of this book, we read only once again of prophesying: when it is said in chap. xi. 3 of the two witnesses that they shall prophesy. A comparison of these passages will show that both words are to be understood in the sense of proclaiming the righteous acts and judgments of the Almighty. The prophet of the Apocalypse is not the messenger of mercy only, but of the just government of God.

From these subordinate points we hasten to questions more immediately concerning us in our effort to understand the chapter. Several such questions have to be asked.

1. Who is the angel introduced to us in the first verse of the vision? He is described as "another strong angel;" and, as the epithet "strong" has been so used only once before—in chap. v. 2, in connection with the opening of the book-roll sealed with seven seals—we are entitled to conclude that this angel is said to be "another" in comparison with the angel there spoken of rather than with the many angels that surround the throne of God. But the "strong angel" in chap. v. is distinguished both from God Himself, and from the Lamb. In some sense, therefore, a similar distinction must be drawn here. On the other hand, the particulars mentioned of this angel lead directly to the conclusion not only that he has Divine attributes, but that he represents no other than that Son of man beheld by St. John in the first vision of his book. He is "arrayed with a cloud;" and in every passage of the Apocalypse where mention is made of such investiture, or in which a cloud or clouds are associated with a person, it is with the Saviour of the world as He comes to judgment. Similar language marks also the other books of the New Testament. "The rainbow was upon his head;" and the definite article employed takes us back, not to the rainbow spoken of in the book of Genesis, or to the rainbow which from time to time appears, a well-known object, in the sky, but

* Chap. ix. 4. † Chap. xi. 18. ‡ Chap. ix. 20.

* Ezek. ii. 9; iii. 4.

to that of chap. iv. 3, where we have been told, in the description of the Divine throne, that "there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon." The words "his face was as the sun" do not of themselves prove that the reference is to chap. i. 16, where it is said of the One like unto a son of man that "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength;" but the propriety of this reference is made almost indubitable by the mention of "his feet as pillars of fire," for this last circumstance can only be an allusion to the trait spoken of in chap. i. 15, "And His feet like unto fine brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace." The combination of these particulars shows how close is the connection between the "strong angel" of this vision and the Divine Redeemer; and the explanation of both the difference and the correspondence between the two is to be found in the remark previously made that in the Apocalypse the "angel" of any person or thing expresses that person or thing in action. Here, therefore, we have the action of Him who is the Head, and King, and Lord of His Church.

2. In what character does the Lord appear? As to the answer to this question there can be no dubiety. He appears in judgment. The rainbow upon His head is indeed the symbol of mercy, but it is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that He is Saviour as well as Judge. So far is the Apocalypse from representing the ideas of judgment and mercy as incompatible with each other that throughout the whole book the most terrible characteristic of the former is its proceeding from One distinguished by the latter. If even in itself the Divine wrath is to be dreaded by the sinner, the dread which it ought to inspire reaches its highest point when we think of it as "the wrath of the Lamb." The other features of the description speak directly of judgment: the "cloud," the "sun," the "pillars of fire."

3. What notion are we to form of the contents of the "little book-roll"? They are certainly not the same as those of the book-roll of chap. v., although the word here used for the roll, a diminutive from the other, may suggest the idea that there is an intimate connection between the two books, and that the second, like the first, is full of judgment. Other circumstances mentioned lead to the same conclusion. Thus the "great voice, as a lion roareth," cannot fail to remind us of the voice of "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah" in chap. v. The thought of "the seven thunders" which "uttered their voices" deepens the impression, for in that number we have the general conception of thunder in all the varied terrors that belong to it; and, whatever the particulars uttered by the thunders were—a point into which it is vain to inquire, as the writing of them was forbidden—their general tone must have been that of judgment. But these thunders are a response to the strong angel as he was about to take action with the little book,—"when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices,"—and the response must have been related to the action. It is clear, therefore, that the contents of the little book cannot have been tidings of mercy to a sinful world; and that that book cannot have been intended to tell the Seer that, notwithstanding the opposition of the powers of darkness, the Church of Christ was to make her way among the nations, growing up from the small seed into the stately tree, and at last covering the earth with the shadow of her branches. Even on the supposition that a conception of this kind could be traced in other parts of the Apocalypse, it would be out of keeping with the particulars accompanying it here. We may without hesitation conclude that the little book-roll has thus the general character of judgment, although, like the larger roll of chap. v., it may also include in it the preservation of the saints.

We are thus in a position to inquire what the special contents of the little book-roll were. Before doing so one consideration may be kept in view.

Calling to mind the symmetrical structure of the Apocalypse, it seems natural to expect that the relation to one another of the two consolatory visions falling between the Trumpets and the Bowls will correspond to that of the two between the Seals and the Trumpets. The two companies, however, spoken of in these two latter visions, are the same, the hundred and forty and four thousand "out of every tribe of the children of Israel" being identical with the great multitude "out of every nation;" while the contents of the second vision are substantially the same as those of the first, though repeated on a fuller and more perfect scale. Now we shall shortly see that the second of our present consolatory visions—that in chap. xi.—brings out the victory and triumph of "a faithful remnant" of believers within a degenerate, though professing, Church. How probable does it become that the first consolatory vision —that in chap. x.—will relate to the same remnant, though on a lower plane alike of battle and of conquest!

Thus looked at, we have good ground for the supposition that the little book-roll contained indications of judgment about to descend on a Church which had fallen from her high position and practically disowned her Divine Master; while at the same time it assured the faithful remnant within her that they would be preserved, and in due season glorified. The little book thus spoke of the hardest of all the struggles through which believers have to pass: that with foes of their own household; but, so speaking, it told also of judgment upon these foes, and of a glorious issue for the true members of Christ's Body out of toil and suffering.

With this view of the contents of the little book-roll everything that is said of it appears to be in harmony.

1. We thus at once understand why it is named by a diminutive form of the word used for the book-roll in chap. v. The latter contained the whole counsel of God for the execution of His plans both in the world and in the Church. The former has reference to the Church alone. A smaller roll therefore would naturally be sufficient for its tidings.

2. The action which the Seer is commanded to take with the roll receives adequate explanation. He was to "take it" out of the hand of the strong angel and to "eat it up." The meaning is obvious, and is admitted by all interpreters. The Seer is in his own actual experience to assimilate the contents of the roll in order that he may know their value. The injunction is in beautiful accord with what we otherwise

know of the character and feelings of St. John. The power of Christian experience to throw light upon Christian truth and upon the fortunes of Christ's people is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the fourth Gospel. It penetrates and pervades the whole. We listen to the expression of the Evangelist's own feelings as he is about to present to the world the image of his beloved Master, and he cries, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father;" "Of His fulness we all received, and grace for grace."* We notice his comment upon words of Jesus dark to his fellow-Apostles and himself at the time when they were spoken, and he says, "When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He spake this; and they believed the word which Jesus had said."† Finally, we hear him as he remembers the promise of the Spirit of truth, who was to instruct the disciples, not by new revelations of the Divine will, but by unfolding more largely the fulness that was to be found in Christ: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you."‡ Everywhere and always Christian experience is the key that unlocks what would otherwise be closed, and sheds light upon what would otherwise be dark. To such experience, accordingly, the contents of the little roll, if they were such as we have understood them to be, must have appealed with peculiar power. In beholding judgment executed on the world, the believer might need only to stand by and wonder, as Moses and Israel stood upon the shore of the Red Sea when the sea, returning to its bed, overwhelmed their enemies. They were safe. They had neither part nor lot with those who were sinking as lead in the mighty waters. It would be otherwise when judgment came upon the Church. Of that Church believers were a part. How could they explain the change that had come over her, the purification that she needed, the separation that must take place within what had hitherto been to all appearance the one Zion which God loved? In the former case all was outward; in the latter all is inward, personal, experimental, leading to inquiry and earnest searchings of heart and prayer. A book containing these things was thus an appeal to Christian experience, and St. John might well be told to "eat it up."

3. The effect produced upon the Seer by eating the little roll is also in accord with what has been said. "It shall make thy belly bitter," it was said to him, "but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey;" and the effect followed. "It was in my mouth," he says, "sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter." Such an effect could hardly follow the mere proclamation of judgment on the world. When we look at that judgment in the light in which it ought to be regarded, and in which we have hitherto regarded it—as the vindication of righteousness and of a Divine and righteous order—the thought of it can impart nothing but joy. But to think that the Church of the living God, the bride of Christ, shall be visited with judgment, and to be compelled to acknowledge that the judgment is deserved; to think that those to whom so much has been given should have given so little in return; to think of the selfishness which has prevailed where love ought to have reigned, of worldliness where there ought to have been heavenliness of mind, and of discord where there ought to have been unity—these are the things that make the Christian's reflections "bitter;" they, and they most of all, are his perplexity, his burden, his sorrow, and his cross. The world may disappoint him, but from it he expected little. When the Church disappoints him, the "foundations are overturned," and the honey of life is changed into gall and wormwood.

Combining the particulars which have now been noticed, we seem entitled to conclude that the little book-roll of this chapter is a roll of judgment, but of judgment relating less to the world than to the Church. It tells us that that sad experience of hers which is to meet us in the following chapters ought neither to perplex nor overwhelm us. The experience may be strange, very different from what we might have expected and hoped for; but the thread by which the Church is guided has not passed out of the hands of Him who leads His people by ways that they know not into the hands of an unsympathising and hostile power. As His counsels in reference to the world, and to the Church in her general relation to it, contained in the great book-roll of chap. v., shall stand, so the internal relations of the two parts of His Church to each other, together with the issues depending upon them, are equally under His control. If judgment falls upon the Church, it is not because God has forgotten to be gracious, or has in anger shut up His tender mercies, but because the Church has sinned, because she is in need of chastisement, and because she must be taught that only in direct dependence upon the voice of the Good Shepherd, and not in the closest "fold" that can be built for her, is she safe. Let her "know" Him, and she shall be known of Him even as He is known of the Father.*

* John i. 14, 16. † John ii. 22. ‡ John xvi. 13, 14.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND CONSOLATORY VISION AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET.

Revelation xi.

From the first consolatory vision we proceed to the second (xi. 1, 2).

Various points connected with these verses demand examination before any attempt can be made to gather the meaning of the vision as a whole.

1. What is meant by the "measuring" of the Temple? As in so many other instances, the figure is taken from the Old Testament. In the prophet Zechariah we read, "I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof."† To the same effect, but still more particularly, the prophet Ezekiel speaks: "In the visions of God

* Comp. John x. 1–15. † Zech. ii. 1, 2.

brought He me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. . . . And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an handbreadth, so he measured," * whereupon follows a minute and lengthened description of the measuring of all the parts of that Temple which was to be the glory of God's people in the latter days. From these passages we not only learn whence the idea of the "measuring" was taken, but what the meaning of it was. The account given by Ezekiel distinctly shows that thus to measure expresses the thought of preservation, not of destruction. That the same thought is intended by Zechariah is clear from the words immediately following the instruction given him to measure: "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her;" † while, if further proof upon this point were needed, it is found in the fact that the measuring of this passage does not stand alone in the Apocalypse. The new Jerusalem is also measured: "And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel." ‡ When God therefore measures, He measures, not in indignation, but that the object measured may be in a deeper than ordinary sense the habitation of His glory.

2. What is meant by "the temple," "the altar," and the "casting without of the court which is without the temple"? In other words, are we to interpret these objects and the action taken with the latter literally or figuratively? Are we to think of the things themselves, or of certain spiritual ideas which they are used to represent? The first view is not only that of many eminent commentators; it even forms one of the chief grounds upon which they urge that the Herodian temple upon Mount Moriah was still in existence when the Apocalyptist wrote. He could not, it is alleged, have been instructed to "measure" the Temple if that building had been already thrown down, and not one stone left upon another. Yet, when we attend to the words, it would seem as if this view must be set aside in favour of a figurative interpretation. For—

(1) The word "temple" misleads. The term employed in the original does not mean the Temple buildings as a whole, but only their innermost shrine or sanctuary, that part known as the "Holy of holies," which was separated from every other part of the sacred structure by the second veil. No doubt, so far as the simple act of measuring was concerned, a part might have been as easily measured as the whole. But closer attention to what was in the Seer's mind will show that when he thus speaks of the *naos*, or shrine, he is not thinking of the Temple at Jerusalem at all, but of the Tabernacle in the wilderness upon which the Temple was moulded. The nineteenth verse of the chapter makes this clear. In that verse we find him saying, "And there was opened the temple" (the *naos*) "of God that is in heaven, and there was seen in His temple" (His *naos*) "the ark of His covenant." We know, however, that the ark of the covenant never had a place in the Temple which existed in the days of Christ. It had disappeared at the destruction of the first Temple, long before that date. The Temple spoken of in the nineteenth verse is indeed said to be "in heaven;" and it may be thought that the ark, though not on earth, might have been seen there. But no reader of the Revelation of St. John can doubt that to him the sanctuary of God on earth was an exact representation of the heavenly sanctuary, that what God had given in material form to men was a faithful copy of the ideas of His spiritual and eternal kingdom. He could not therefore have placed in the original what, if he had before his mind the Temple at Jerusalem, he knew had no existence within its precincts; and the conclusion is irresistible that when he speaks of a *naos* that was to be measured he had turned his thoughts, not to the stone building upon Mount Moriah, but to its ancient prototype. On this ground alone then, even could no other be adduced, we seem entitled to maintain that a literal interpretation of the word "temple" is here impossible.

(2) Even should it be allowed that the sanctuary and the altar might be measured, the injunction is altogether inapplicable to the next following clause: "them that worship therein." And it is peculiarly so if we adopt the natural construction, by which the word "therein" is connected with the word "altar." We cannot literally speak of persons worshipping "in" an altar. Nay, even though we connect "therein" with "the temple," the idea of measuring persons with a rod is at variance with the realites of life and the ordinary use of human language. A figurative element is thus introduced into the very heart of the clause the meaning of which is in dispute.

(3) A similar observation may be made with regard to the words "cast without" in ver. 2. The injunction has reference to the outer court of the Temple, and the thought of "casting out" such an extensive space is clearly inadmissible. So much have translators felt this that both in the Authorised and Revised Versions they have replaced the words "cast without" by the words "leave without." The outer court of the Temple could not be "cast out;" therefore it must be "left out." The interpretation thus given, however, fails to do justice to the original, for, though the word employed does not always include actual violence, it certainly implies action of a more positive kind than mere letting alone or passing by. More than this. We are under a special obligation in the present instance not to strip the word used by the Apostle of its proper force, for we shall immediately see that, rightly interpreted, it is one of the most interesting expressions of his book, and of the greatest value in helping us to determine the precise nature of his thought. In the meanwhile it is enough to say that the employment of the term in the connection in which it here occurs is at variance with a simply literal interpretation.

(4) It cannot be denied that almost every other expression in the subsequent verses of the

* Ezek. xl. 2–5. † Zech. ii. 5. ‡ Chap. xxi. 15, 17.

vision is figurative or metaphorical. If we are to interpret this part literally, it will be impossibled to apply the same rule to other parts; and we shall have such a mixture of the literal and metaphorical as will completely baffle our efforts to comprehend the meaning of the Seer.

(5) We have the statement from the writer's own lips that, at least in speaking of Jerusalem, he is not to be literally understood. In ver. 8 he refers to "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt." The hint thus given as to one point of his description may be accepted as applicable to it all.

We conclude, therefore, that the "measuring," the "temple" or *naos*, the "altar," the "court which is without," and the "casting without" of the latter are to be regarded as figurative.

3. Our third point of inquiry is, What is the meaning of the figure? There need be no hesitation as to the things first spoken of: "the temple, the altar, and them that worship therein." These, the most sacred parts of the Temple buildings, can only denote the most sacred portion of the true Israel of God. They are those disciples of Christ who constitute His shrine, His golden altar of incense whence their prayers rise up continually before Him, His worshippers in spirit and in truth. These, as we have already often had occasion to see, shall be preserved safe amidst the troubles of the Church and of the world. In one passage we have been told that they are numbered *; now we are further informed that they are measured.

It is more difficult to explain who are meant by "the court which is without the temple." But three things are clear. First, they are a part of the Temple buildings, although not of its inner shrine. Secondly, they belong to Jerusalem; and Jerusalem, notwithstanding its degenerate condition, was still the city of God, standing to Him in a relation different from that of the "nations," even when it had sunk beneath them and had done more to merit His displeasure. Thirdly, they cannot be the Gentiles, for from them they are manifestly distinguished when it is said that the outer court "hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." † One conclusion alone remains. The "court that is without" must symbolise the faithless portion of the Christian Church, such as tread the courts of the house of God, but to whom He speaks as He spoke to Jerusalem of old: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them." ‡

The correctness of the sense thus assigned to this part of the vision is powerfully confirmed by what appears to be the true foundation of the singular expression already so far spoken of, "cast without." Something must lie at the bottom of the figure; and nothing seems so probable as this: that it is the "casting out" which took place in the case of the man blind from his birth, and the opening of whose eyes by Jesus is related in the fourth Gospel. Of that man we are told that when the Jews could no longer answer him "they cast him out." * The word is the same as that now employed, and the thought is most probably the same also. Excommunication from the synagogue is, in the Seer's mind, not a temporal punishment, not a mere worldly doom, but a spiritual sentence depriving of spiritual privileges misunderstood and abused. Such a casting out, however, can apply only to those who had been once within the courts of the Lord's house or to the faithless members of the Christian Church. They, like the Jews of old, would "cast out" the humble disciples whom Jesus "found"; and He cast them out.

If the explanation now given of the opening verses of this chapter be correct, we have reached a very remarkable stage in these apocalyptic visions. For the first time, except in the letters to the churches, we have a clear line of distinction drawn between the professing and the true portions of the Church of Christ, or, as it may be otherwise expressed, between the "called" and the "chosen." How far the same distinction will meet us in later visions of this book we have yet to see. For the present it may be enough to say that the drawing of such a distinction corresponds exactly with what we might have been prepared to expect. Nothing can be more certain than that in the things actually around him St. John beheld the mould and type of the things that were to come. Now Jerusalem, the Church of God in Israel, contained two classes within its walls: those who were accomplishing their high destiny and those by whom that destiny was misunderstood, despised, and cast away. Has it not always been the same in the Christian Church? If the world entered into the one, has it not entered as disastrously into the other? That field which is "the kingdom of heaven" upon earth has never wanted tares as well as wheat. They grow together, and no man may separate them. When the appropriate moment comes, God Himself will give the word; angels will carry off the tares, and the great Husbandman will gather the wheat into His garner.

4. One question still remains: What is the meaning of the "forty and two months" during which the holy city is to be trodden under foot of the nations? The same expression meets us in chap. xiii. 5, where it is said that "there was given to the beast authority to continue forty and two months." But forty and two months is also three and a half years, the Jewish year having consisted of twelve months, except when an intercalary month was inserted among the twelve in order to preserve harmony between the seasons and the rotation of time. The same period is therefore again alluded to in chap. xii. 14, when it is said of the woman who fled into the wilderness that she is there nourished for "a time, and times, and half a time." Once more, we read in chap. xi. 3 and in chap. xii. 6 of a period denoted by "a thousand two hundred and three score days;" and a comparison of this last passage with ver. 14 of the same chapter distinctly shows that it is equivalent to the three and a half times or years. Three and a half multiplied by three hundred and sixty, the number of days in the Jewish year, gives us exactly the twelve hundred and sixty days. These three periods, therefore, are the same. Why the different

* John vii. 4. † Ver. 2. ‡ Isa. i. 13, 14.

* John ix. 34.

designations should be adopted is another question, to which, so far as we are aware, no satisfactory reply has yet been given, although it may be that, for some occult reason, the Seer beholds in "months" a suitable expression for the dominion of evil, in "days" one appropriate to the sufferings of the good.

The ground of this method of looking at the Church's history is found in the book of Daniel, where we read of the fourth beast, or the fourth kingdom, "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." * The same book helps us also to answer the question as to the particular period of the Church's history denoted by the days, or months, or years referred to, for in another passage the prophet says, "And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." † The three and a half years therefore, or the half of seven years, denote the whole period extending from the cessation of the sacrifice and oblation. In other words, they denote the Christian era from its beginning to its close, and that more especially on the side of its disturbed and broken character, of the power exercised in it by what is evil, of the troubles and sufferings of the good. During it the disciples of the Saviour do not reach the completeness of their rest; their victory is not won. Ideally it is so; it always has been so since Jesus overcame: but it is not yet won in the actual realities of the case; and, though in one sense every heavenly privilege is theirs, their difficulties are so great, and their opponents so numerous and powerful, that the true expression for their state is a broken seven years, or three years and a half. During this time, accordingly, the holy city is represented as trodden under foot by the nations. They who are at ease in Zion may not feel it; but to the true disciples of Jesus their Master's prophecy is fulfilled, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."

The vision now proceeds (xi. 3-13).

The figures of this part of the vision, like those of the first part, are drawn from the Old Testament. That the language is not to be literally understood hardly admits of dispute, for, whatever might have been thought of the "two witnesses" had we read only of them, the description given of their persons, or of their person (for in ver. 8, where mention is made of their "dead body"—not "bodies"—they are treated as one), of their work, of their death, and of their resurrection and ascension, is so obviously figurative as to render it necessary to view the whole passage in that light. The main elements of the figure are supplied by the prophet Zechariah. "And the angel that talked with me," says the prophet, "came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? . . . Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. . . . Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." * In these words indeed we read only of one golden candlestick, while now we read of two. But we have already found that the Seer of the Apocalypse, in using the figures to which he had been accustomed, does not bind himself to all their details; and the only inference to be drawn from this difference, as well as from the circumstance already noted in ver. 8, is that the number "two" is to be regarded less in itself than as a strengthening of the idea of the number one. This circumstance further shows that the two witnesses cannot be divided between the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, as if the one witness were the former and the other the latter. Both taken together express the idea of witnessing, and to the full elucidation of that idea belong also the olive tree and the candlestick. The witnessing is fed by perpetual streams of that heavenly oil, of that unction of the Spirit, which is represented by the olive tree; and it sheds light around like the candlestick. The two witnesses, therefore, are not two individuals to be raised up during the course of the Church's history, that they may bear testimony to the facts and principles of the Christian faith. The Seer indeed may have remembered that it had been God's plan in the past to commission His servants, not singly, but in pairs. He may have called to mind Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb, Elijah and Elisha, Zerubbabel and Joshua, or he may have thought of the fact that our Lord sent forth His disciples two by two. The probability, however, is that, as he speaks of "witnessing," he thought mainly of that precept of the law which required the testimony of two witnesses to confirm a statement. Yet he does not confine himself to the thought of two individual witnesses, however eminent, who shall in faithful work fill up their own short span of human life and die. The witness he has in view is that to be borne by all Christ's people, everywhere, and throughout the whole Christian age. From the first to the last moment of the Church's history in this world there shall be those raised up who shall never fail to prophesy, or, in other words, to testify to the truth of God as it is in Jesus. The task will be hard, but they will not shrink from it. They shall be "clothed in sackcloth," but they shall count their robes of shame to be robes of honour. They shall occupy the position of Him who, in the days of His humiliation, was the "faithful and true Witness." Nourished by the

* Dan. vii. 25. † Dan. ix. 27. * Zech. iv.

Spirit that was in Him, they shall, like Him, be the light of the world,* so that God shall never be left without some at least to witness for Him.

Having spoken of the persons of the two witnesses, St. John next proceeds to describe the power with which, amidst their seeming weakness, their testimony is borne; and once more he finds in the most striking histories of the Old Testament the materials with which his glowing imagination builds.

In the first place, "fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies," so that these enemies are "killed" by the manifest judgment of God, and even, in His righteous retribution, by the very instrument of destruction they would have themselves employed. Elijah and the three companions of Daniel are before us, when at the word of Elijah fire descended out of heaven, and consumed the two captains and their fifties,† and when the companions of Daniel were not only left unharmed amidst the flames, but when the fire leaped out upon and slew the men by whom they had been cast into the furnace.‡ This fire proceeding out of the mouth of the two witnesses is like the sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of the mouth of the Son of man in the first vision of the book.§ In the second place, the witnesses "have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy." Elijah is again before us when he exclaimed in the presence of Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word," and when "it rained not on the earth for three years and six months."‖ Finally, when we are told that the witnesses "have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire," we are reminded of Moses and of the plagues inflicted through him upon the oppressors of Israel in Egypt.

The three figures teach the same lesson. No deliverance has been effected by the Almighty for His people in the past which He is not ready to repeat. The God of Moses, and Elijah, and Daniel is the unchangeable Jehovah. He has made with His Church an everlasting covenant; and the most striking manifestations of His power in bygone times "happened by way of example, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."¶

Hence, accordingly, the Church "finishes her testimony."** So was it with our Lord in His high-priestly prayer and on the Cross: "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do;" "It is finished."†† But this "finishing" of their testimony on the part of the two witnesses points to more than the end of the three and a half years viewed simply as a period of time. Not the thought of time alone, but of the completion of testimony, is present to the Seer's mind. At every moment in the history of Christ's true disciples that completion is reached by some or others of their number. Through all the three and a half years their testimony is borne with power, and is finished with triumph, so that the world is always without excuse.

* John viii. 12. Comp. Matt. v. 14.
† 2 Kings i. 10, 12.
‡ Dan. iii. 22.
§ Chap. i. 16.
‖ 1 Kings xvii. 1; James v. 17.
¶ 1 Cor. x. 11.
** Ver. 7.
†† John xvii. 4; xix. 30.

Having spoken of the power of the witnesses, St. John next turns to the thought of their evil fate. "The beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them." This "beast" has not yet been described; but it is a characteristic of the Apostle, both in the fourth Gospel and in the Apocalypse, to anticipate at times what is to come, and to introduce persons to our notice whom we shall only learn to know fully at a later point in his narrative. That is the case here. This beast will again meet us in chap. xiii. and chap. xvii., where we shall see that it is the concentrated power of a world material and visible in its opposition to a world spiritual and invisible. It may be well to remark, too, that the representation given of the beast presents us with one of the most striking contrasts of St. John, and one that must be carefully remembered if we would understand his visions. Why speak of its "coming up out of the abyss"? Because the beast is the contrast of the risen Saviour. Only after His resurrection did our Lord enter upon His dominion as King, Head, and Guardian of His people. In like manner, only after a resurrection mockingly attributed to it does this beast attain its full range of influence. Then, in the height of its rage and at the summit of its power, it sets itself in opposition to Christ's witnesses. It cannot indeed prevent them from accomplishing their work; they shall finish their testimony in spite of it: but, when that is done, it shall gain an apparent triumph. As the Son of God was nailed to the Cross, and in that hour of His weakness seemed to be conquered by the world, so shall it be with them. They shall be overcome and killed.

Nor is that all, for their "dead body" (not "dead bodies" *) is treated with the utmost contumely. It lies in the broad open street of "the great city," which the words "where also their Lord was crucified" show plainly to be Jerusalem. But Jerusalem! In what aspect is she here beheld? Not as "the holy city," "the beloved city," the Zion which God had desired for His habitation, and of which He had said, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it,"† but degenerate Jerusalem, Jerusalem become as Sodom for its wickedness, and as Egypt for its oppression of the Israel of God. The language is strong, so strong that many interpreters have deemed it impossible to apply it to Jerusalem in any sense, and have imagined that they had no alternative but to think of Rome. Yet it is not stronger than the language used many a time by the prophets of old: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. How is the faithful city become an harlot! . . . righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers."‡

If, however, this city be Jerusalem, what does it represent? Surely, for reasons already stated, neither the true disciples of Jesus, nor the heathen nations of the world. We have the degenerate Church before us, the Church that has conformed to the world. That Church beholds the faithful witnesses for Christ the Crucified lie in the open way. Their wounds make no impression upon her heart, and draw no tear from her eyes. She even invites the world to

* See margin of R. V. † Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14.
‡ Isa. i. 10, 21.

the spectacle; and the world, always eager to hear the voice of a degenerate Church, responds to the invitation. It "looks," and obviously without commiseration, upon the prostrate, mangled form that has fallen in the strife. This it does for three days and a half, the half of seven, a broken period of trouble; and it will not suffer the dead body to be laid in a tomb. Nay, the world is not content even with its victory. After victory it must have its triumph; and that triumph is presented to us in one of the most wonderful pictures of the Apocalypse, when "they that dwell on the earth"—that is, the men of the world—"from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations," having listened to the degenerate Church's call, make high holiday at the thought of what they have done. They "rejoice over the dead bodies, and make merry: and they send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth." We are reminded of Herod and Pilate, who, when the Jewish governor sent Jesus to his heathen brother, "became friends that very day."* But we are reminded of more. In the book of Nehemiah we find mention of that great feast of Tabernacles which was observed by the people when they heard again, after long silence, the book of the law, and when "there was very great gladness." In immediate connection with this feast, Nehemiah said to the people, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength";† while it constituted a part also of the joyful ceremonial of the feast of the dedication of the Temple that the Jews made the days of the feast "days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."‡ Taking these passages into account, and remembering the general style and manner of St. John, we can have no hesitation in recognising in the festival of these verses the world's Feast of Tabernacles, the contrast and the counterpart of the Church's feast already spoken of in the second consolatory vision of chap. vii.

If so, what a picture does it present!—the degenerate Church inviting the world to celebrate a feast over the dead bodies of the witnesses for Christ, and the world accepting the invitation; the former accommodating herself to the ways of the latter, and the latter welcoming the accommodation; the one proclaiming no unpleasant doctrines and demanding no painful sacrifices, the other hailing with satisfaction the prospect of an easy yoke and of a cheap purchase of eternity as well as time. The picture may seem too terrible to be true. But let us first remember that, like all the pictures of the Apocalypse, it is ideal, showing us the operation of principles in their last, not their first, effect; and then let us ask whether we have never read of, or ourselves seen, such a state of things actually realised. Has the Church never become the world, on the plea that she would gain the world? Has she never uttered smooth things or prophesied deceits in order that she might attract those who will not endure the thought of hardness in religious service, and would rather embrace what in their inward hearts they know to be a lie than bitter truth? Such a spectacle has been often witnessed, and is yet witnessed every day, when those who ought to be witnesses for a living and present Lord gloze over the peculiar doctrines of the Christian faith, draw as close as possible the bonds of their fellowship with unchristian men, and treat with scorn the thought of a heavenly life to be led even amidst the things of time. One can understand the world's own ways, and, even when lamenting that its motives are not higher, can love its citizens and respect their virtues. But a far lower step in declension is reached when the Church's silver becomes dross, when her wine is mixed with water, and when her voice no longer convicts, no longer "torments them that dwell on the earth."

In the midst of all their tribulation, however, the faithful portion of the Church have a glorious reward. They have suffered with Christ, but they shall also reign with Him. After all their trials in life, after their death, and after the limited time during which even when dead they have been dishonoured, they live again. "The breath of life from God entered into them." Following Him who is the first-fruits of them that sleep, they "stood upon their feet."* They "heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither." They "went up into heaven in the cloud;" and there they sit down with the conquering Redeemer in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne.† All this, too, takes place in the very presence of their enemies, upon whom "great fear fell." Even nature sympathises with them. Having waited for the revealing of the sons of God, and in hope that she also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God,‡ she hails their final triumph. "There was a great earthquake, the tenth part of the city" (that is, of Jerusalem) "fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons." It is unnecessary to say that the words are figurative and symbolical, denoting in all probability simply judgment, but judgment restrained.

The last words of the vision alone demand more particular attention: "The rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."

The thought is the same as that which met us when we were told at the close of the sixth Trumpet that "the rest of mankind which were not killed with these plagues repented not."§ There is no repentance, no conversion. There is terror; there is alarm; there is a tribute of awe to the God of heaven who has so signally vindicated His own cause; but there is nothing more. Nor are we told what may or may not follow in some future scene. For the Seer the final triumph of good and the final overthrow of evil are enough. He can be patient, and, so far as persons are concerned, can leave the issue in the hands of God.

The two consolatory visions interposed between the sixth and seventh Trumpets are now over, and we cannot fail to see how great an advance they are upon the two visions of a similar kind interposed between the sixth and seventh Seals. The whole action has made progress. At the earlier stage the Church may be said to have been hidden in the hollow of the Almighty's hand. In the thought of the

* Luke xxiii. 12. † Neh. viii. 10. ‡ Esther ix. 22.

† Comp. chap. v. 6. ‡ Rom. viii. 19, 21.
† Chap. iii. 21. § Chap. ix. 20.

"great tribulation" awaiting her she has been sealed, while the peace and joy of her new condition have been set before us, as she neither hungers nor thirsts, but is guided by her Divine Shepherd to green pastures and to fountains of the waters of life. At this later stage she is in the midst of her conflict and her sufferings. She is in the heat of her warfare, in the extremity of her persecuted state. From the height on which we stand we do not look over a quiet and peaceful plain, with flocks of sheep resting in its meadows; we look over a field where armed men have met in the shock of battle. There is the stir, the excitement, the tumult of deadly strife for higher than earthly freedom, for dearer than earthly homes. There may be temporary repulse and momentary yielding even on the side of the good, but they still press on. The Captain of their salvation is at their head; and foot by foot fresh ground is won, until at last the victory is sounded, and we are ready for the seventh Trumpet.

Before it sounds there is a warning similar to that which preceded the sounding of the fifth and sixth (xi. 14).

These words are to be connected with the close of chap. ix., all that is contained in chaps. x. and xi. 1-13 being, as we have seen, episodical.

The seventh Trumpet is now sounded (xi. 15-19).

1. By "the kingdom of the world" here spoken of is meant that dominion over the world as a whole has become the possession of our Lord and of His Christ; and it is to be His for ever and ever. There is no contradiction between this statement of St. John and that of St. Paul when, speaking of the Son, the latter Apostle says, "And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all."* The "kingdom" thus spoken of by St. Paul is that exercised by our Lord in subduing His enemies, and it must necessarily come to an end when there are no more enemies to subdue. The kingdom here referred to is Christ's dominion as Head and King of His Church, and of that dominion there is no end. Of more consequence perhaps is it to observe that when it is said in the words before us, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ," there is nothing to lead to the supposition that this "kingdom" becomes Christ's by the conversion of the world. The meaning simply is that evil has been finally and for ever put down, that good is finally and for ever triumphant. No inference can be drawn as to the fate of wicked persons further than this: that they shall not be found in "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."† Were additional proof needed upon this point, it would be supplied by the fact that in almost the next following words we read of "the nations being roused to wrath." These are the wicked upon whom judgment falls; and, instead of being converted, they are roused to the last and highest outburst of the wickedness which springs from despair.

2. The song of the four-and-twenty elders. We have already had occasion to notice that song of the representatives of redeemed creation in which the four living creatures celebrated "the Lord, God, the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come."* The song now before us, sung by the representatives of the glorified Church, is cast in precisely the same mould of three ascriptions of praise to "the Lord." But in the third member there is an important difference, the words "and which is to come" being omitted. The explanation is that the Lord is come. The present dispensation is at its close.

3. The events of the close are next described. It is "the time of the dead to be judged," and the time "to give reward" to God's faithful servants, to whatever part of mankind they have belonged, and whatever the position they have filled in life. The whole family of man is divided into two great classes, and for the one there is judgment, for the other reward.

4. Before passing on it may be well to call attention to one or two particulars in these verses which, though not specially connected with that general meaning of the passage which it is the main object of this commentary to elicit, may help to throw light upon the style of the Apostle and the structure of his work.

(1) Thus it is important to observe his use of the word "prophets." The persons spoken of are obviously in contrast with "the nations" and "the dead to be judged," and they must include all who are faithful unto death. Already we have seen that every true follower of Christ is in St. John's eyes a martyr, and that when he thinks of the martyrs of the Church he has a far wider circle in view than that of those who meet death by the sword or at the stake.† To his ideal conceptions of things the martyr spirit makes the martyr, and the martyr spirit must rule in every disciple of the Crucified. In like manner the prophetic spirit makes the prophet, and of that spirit no true follower of Him in whom prophecy culminated can be devoid. In this very chapter we have read of "prophesying" as the work of the two witnesses who are a symbol of the whole Christian Church, and who prophesy through the thousand two hundred and threescore days of her pilgrimage. We are not therefore to suppose that those here called "prophets" are either prophets in the stricter sense of the word, or commissioned ministers of Christ. All Christ's people are His "servants the prophets," and the idealism of St. John distinctly appears in the designation given them.

(2) The next following clause, which we have translated in a manner slightly different from that of both the Authorised and the Revised Versions, is not less important: "both the saints and them that fear Thy name," instead of "and to the saints, and to them that fear Thy name." It is the manner of St. John to dwell in the first instance upon one characteristic of the object of which he speaks, and then to add other characteristics belonging to it, equally important, it may be, in themselves, but not occupying so prominent a place in the line of thought which he happens to be pursuing at the moment. An illustration of this is afforded in John xiv. 6, where the words of Jesus are given in the form, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." The context shows that the emphasis rests wholly on Jesus as "the Way," and that the addition of the words "the Truth, and the Life," is only made to enhance and com-

*1 Cor. xv. 28. †2 Pet. iii. 13.

*Chap. iv. 8. †Comp. p. 858.

plete the thought. Here in like manner the contents of what is involved in the term "the prophets" are completed by a further statement of what the prophets are. They are "the saints and they that fear God's name." The twofold structure of this statement, however, again illustrates the manner of St. John. "The saints" is, properly speaking, a Jewish epithet, while every reader of the Acts of the Apostles is familiar with the fact that "they that fear God" was a term applied to Gentile proselytes to Judaism. We have thus an instance of St. John's method of regarding the topic with which he deals from a double point of view, the first Jewish, the second Gentile. He is not thinking of two divisions of the Church. The Church is one; all her members constitute one Body in Christ. But looked at from the Jewish standpoint, they are "the saints"; from the Gentile, they are those that "fear Thy name."

(3) The verses under consideration afford a marked illustration of St. John's love of presenting judgment under the form of the *lex talionis*. The nations were "roused to wrath," and upon them God's "wrath came." They had "destroyed the earth," and God would "destroy" them. In studying the Apocalypse, all peculiarities of style or structure ought to be present to the mind. They are not unfrequently valuable guides to interpretation.

The seventh Trumpet has sounded, and the end has come. A glorious moment has been reached in the development of the Almighty's plan; and the mind of the Seer is exalted and ravished by the prospect. Yet he beholds no passing away of the present earth and heavens, no translation of the reign of good to an unseen spiritual and hitherto unvisited region of the universe. It would be out of keeping with the usual phraseology of his book to understand by "heaven," in which he sees the ark of God's covenant, a locality, a place "beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb." His employment of the contrasted words "earth" and "heaven" throughout his whole series of visions rather leads to the supposition that by the latter we are to understand that region, wherever it may be, in which spiritual principles alone bear sway. It may be here; it may be elsewhere; it seems hardly possible to say: but the more the reader enters into the spirit of this book, the more difficult will he find it to resist the impression that St. John thinks of this present world as not only the scene of the great struggle between good and evil, but also, when it has been cleansed and purified, as the seat of everlasting righteousness. These in the present instance are striking words: "to destroy them that destroy the earth." Why not destroy the earth itself if it is only to be burned up? Why speak of it in such terms as lead almost directly to the supposition that it shall be preserved though its destroyers perish? While, on the other hand, if God at first pronounced it to be "very good"; if it may be a home of truth, and purity, and holiness; and if it shall be the scene of Christ's future and glorious reign,—then may we justly say, Woe to them that destroy the habitation, the palace, now preparing for the Prince of peace.

However this may be, it was a fitting close to the judgments of the seven Trumpets that the "temple" of God—that is, the innermost shrine or sanctuary of His temple—should be opened. There was no need now that God should be "a God that hideth Himself." When earth had in it none but the pure in heart, why should they not see Him? He would dwell in them and walk in them. The Tabernacle of the Lord would be again with men.

When too the shrine was opened, what more appropriate spectacle could be seen than "the ark of His covenant," the symbol of His faithfulness, the pledge of that love of His which remains unchanged when the mountains depart and the hills are removed? The covenant-keeping God! No promise of the past had failed, and the past was the earnest of the future.

Nor need we wonder at the "lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and the earthquake, and the great hail" that followed. For God had "promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH.

Revelation xii.

The twelfth chapter of the Revelation of St John has been felt by every commentator to be one more than usually difficult to interpret, and that whether we look at it in relation to its special purpose or to its position in the structure of the book. If we can satisfy ourselves as to the first of these two points, we shall be better able to form correct notions as to the second.

Turning, then, for a moment to chap. xiii., we find it occupied with a description of two of the great enemies with which the Church has to contend. These are spoken of as "a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast" (ver. 11), the latter being obviously the same as that described in chap xix. 20 as "the false prophet that wrought the signs" in the sight of the former. At the same time, it is evident that these two beasts are regarded as enemies of the Church in a sense peculiar to themselves, for the victorious Conqueror of chap. xix. makes war with them, and "they twain are cast into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone." * This fate next overtakes, in chap. xx. 10, "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan," so that no doubt can rest upon the fact that to St. John's view the great enemies of the Church are three in number. When, accordingly, we find two of them described in chap. xiii., and chap. xii. occupied with the description of another, we are warranted in concluding that the main purpose of the chapter is to set before us a picture of this last.

Thus also we are led to understand the place of the chapter in the structure of the book. We have already seen that the seven Trumpets are occupied with judgments on the world. The seven Bowls, forming the next and highest series of judgments, are to be occupied with judgments on the degenerate members of the

* Chap. xix. 20.

Church. It is a fitting thing, therefore, that we should be able to form a clear idea of the enemies by which these faithless disciples are subdued, and in resisting whom the steadfastness of the faithful remnant shall be proved. To describe them sooner was unnecessary. They are the friends, not the enemies, of the world. They are the enemies only of the Church. Hence the sudden transition made at the beginning of chap. xii. There is no chronological relation between it and the chapters which precede. The thoughts embodied in it refer only to what follows. The chapter is obviously divided into three parts, and the bearing of these parts upon one another will appear as we proceed (xii. 1-6).

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we read, "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also." * Sun, and moon, and stars exhaust the Biblical notion of the heavenly bodies which give light upon the earth. They, therefore, taken together, clothe this woman; and there is no need to search for any recondite meaning in the place which they severally occupy in her investiture. She is simply arrayed in light from head to foot. In other words, she is the perfect emblem of light in its brightness and purity. The use of the number "twelve" indeed suggests the thought of a bond of connection between this light and the Christian Church. The tribes of Israel, the type of God's spiritual Israel, were in number twelve; our Lord chose to Himself twelve Apostles; the new Jerusalem has "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." †

But though the light is thus early connected with the thought of the Christian Church, and though the subsequent portion of the chapter confirms the connection, the woman is not yet to be regarded as, in the strictest sense, representative of that community or Body historically viewed. By-and-by she will be so. In the meantime a comparison of ver. 6 with ver. 14, where her fleeing into the wilderness and her nourishment in it for precisely the same period of time as in ver. 6 are again mentioned, together with what we have already seen to be a peculiarity of St. John's mode of thought, forbids the supposition. The Apostle would not thus repeat himself. We are entitled therefore to infer that at the opening of the chapter he deals less with actual history than with the "pattern" of that history which had existed from all eternity in the mount. Hence also it would seem that the birth of the child, though undoubtedly referring to the birth of Jesus, is not the actual birth. It, too, is rather the eternal "pattern" of that event. Similar remarks apply to the "dragon," who is not yet the historical Satan, and will only be so in the second paragraph, at ver. 9. The whole picture, in short, of these verses is one of the ideal which precedes the actual, and of which the actual is the counterpart and realisation.

The resemblance, accordingly, borne by the first paragraph of this chapter (vers. 1-6) to the first paragraph of the fourth Gospel (vers. 1-5), is of the most striking kind. In neither is there any account of the actual birth of our Lord. In both (and we shall immediately see this still more fully brought out in the apocalyptic vision) we are introduced to Him at once, not as growing up to be the Light of the world, but as already grown up and as perfect light. In both we have the same light and the same darkness, and in both the same contrariety and struggle between the two. Nor does the comparison end here. We have also the same singular method of expressing the deliverance of the light from the enmity of the darkness. In John i. 5, correctly translated, we read "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not," the thought being rather negative than positive, rather that of preservation than of victory. In the Apocalypse we read, "And her child was caught up unto God, and unto His throne," the idea being again that of preservation rather than of victory.

Such is the general conception of the first paragraph of this chapter. The individual expressions need not detain us long. The woman's raiment of light has been already spoken of. Passing therefore from that, it need occasion no surprise that He who is Himself the Giver of light should be represented as the Son of light. God "is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Jesus, as the Son of God, is thus also the Son of light. No doubt the conception is continued even after we behold the woman in her actual, not her ideal, state. Jesus is still her Son. Yet there is a true sense in which we may describe our Lord not only as the Foundation, but also as the Son, of the Church. He is "the First-born among many brethren," the elder Brother in a common Father's house. He is begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit; and they that believe in His name are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." So close indeed in the teaching of St. John is the identification of Christ and His people, that whatever is said of Him may be said of them, and what is said of them may be said of Him. Human thought and language fail to do justice to a relation so profound and mysterious. But it is everywhere the teaching of the beloved disciple—in his Gospel, in his Epistles, in his Revelation—although the Church may not fully understand it until she has lived herself more into it than she has done. Her "life" will then bring her "light."

The dragon of the passage is "great" and "red:" "great" because of the power which he possesses; "red," the colour of blood, because of the ferocity with which he destroys men: "He was a murderer from the beginning;" "Cain was of the Evil One, and slew his brother;" "And I saw the woman" (that is, the woman who rode upon the scarlet-coloured beast) "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." The dragon has further "seven heads,"—seven, the number of completeness, so that he possesses everything to enable him to execute his plans; and "ten horns," the emblem at once of his strength and of his rule over all the kingdoms of the world. Upon the heads, too, are "seven diadems," a word different from that which had been employed for the woman's "crown" in the first verse of the chapter. Hers is a crown of victory; the diadems of the dragon are only marks of royalty, and may be worn, as they will be worn, in defeat. The dragon's "tail," again, like the tails of the locusts of the fifth Trumpet and of the horses of the sixth, is the instrument

* Gen. i. 16. † Chap. xxi. 12.

with which he destroys; and "the third part of the stars of heaven" corresponds to "the third part" mentioned in each of the first four Trumpets. The figure of "casting the stars into the earth" is taken from the prophecy of Daniel, in which it is said of the "little horn" that "it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." *

The dragon next takes up his position "before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered he might devour her child;" and the first historical circumstances to which the idea corresponds, and in which it is realised, may be found in the effort of Pharaoh to destroy the infant Moses. Pharaoh is indeed often compared in the Old Testament to a dragon: "Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength: Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters;" "Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." † The power, and craft, and cruelty of the Egyptian king could hardly have been absent from the Seer's mind when he employed the figure of the text. But he was certainly not thinking of Pharaoh alone. He remembered also the plot of Herod to destroy the Child Jesus.‡ Pharaoh and Herod—men quailed before them; yet both were no more than instruments in the hands of God. Both worked out His "determinate counsel and foreknowledge."§

The child is born, and is described in language worthy of our notice. He is "a son, a man-child;" and the at first sight tautological information appears to hint at more than the mere sex of the child. He is already more than a child: he is a man. There is a similar emphasis in the words of our Lord when He said to His disciples in His last consolatory discourse, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that *a man* is born into the world." ‖ From the first the child is less a child than a man, strong, muscular, and vigorous, who "as a shepherd shall tend all the nations with a sceptre of iron." Strange that we should be invited to dwell on this ideal aspect of the Son's work rather than any other! No doubt the words are quoted from the second Psalm. This, however, only removes the difficulty a step further back. Why either there or here should the shepherd work of the Messiah be connected with an iron sceptre rather than a peaceful crook? The explanation is not difficult. Both the Psalm and the Apocalypse are occupied mainly with the victory of Christ over His adversaries. His friends have already been secured in the possession of a complete salvation. It remains only that His foes shall be finally put down. Hence the "sceptre of iron." Strange also, it may be thought, that in this ideal picture we should find no "pattern" of the life of our Lord on earth, of His labours, or sufferings, or death; and that we should only be invited to behold Him in His incarnation and ascension into heaven! But again the explanation is not difficult. Over against Satan stands, not a humbled merely, but a risen and glorified, Redeemer. The process by which He conquered it is unnecessary to dwell upon. Enough that we know the fact.

The woman's child being thus safe, "the woman" herself "fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God," and where she shall be nourished by heavenly sustenance. Thus Israel wandered forty years, fed with the manna that fell from heaven and the water that flowed from the smitten rock.* Thus Elijah fled to the brook Cherith, and afterwards to the wilderness, where his wants were supplied in the one case by the ravens, in the other by an angel.† And thus was our Lord upheld for forty days by the words that proceeded out of the mouth of God.‡ This wilderness life of the Church, too, continues during the whole Christian era, during the whole period of witnessing.§ Always in the wilderness so long as her Lord is personally absent, she eats heavenly food and drinks living water.

Such is the first scene of this chapter; and, glancing once more over it, it would seem as if its chief purpose were to present to us the two great opposing forces of light and darkness, of the Son and the dragon, considered in themselves.

The second scene follows (xii. 7-12).

If our conception of the first six verses of the chapter be correct, it will be evident that the idea often entertained, that the verses following them form a break in the narrative which is only resumed at ver. 13, is wrong. There is no break. The progress of the thought is continuous. The combatants have been set before us, and we have now the contest in which they are engaged. This consideration also helps us to understand the personality of Michael and the particular conflict in the Seer's view.

For, as to the first of these two points, it is even in itself probable that the Leader of the hosts of light will be no other than the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The dragon leads the hosts of darkness. The Son has been described as the opponent against whom the enmity of the dragon is especially directed. When the war begins, we have every reason to expect that as the one leader takes the command, so also will the other. There is much to confirm this conclusion. The name Michael leads to it, for that word signifies, "Who is like God?" and such a name is at least more appropriate to a Divine than to a created being. In the New Testament, too, we read of "Michael the archangel" ‖—there seems to be only one, for we never read of archangels ¶—and an archangel is again spoken of in circumstances that can hardly be associated with the thought of any one but God: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." ** Above all, the prophecies of Daniel, in which the name Michael first occurs, may be said to decide the point. A person named Michael there appears on different occasions as the defender of the

* Dan. viii. 10. † Ps. lxxiv. 13; Ezek. xxix. 3.
‡ Matt. ii. 16. § Acts ii. 23. ‖ John xvi. 21.
* 1 Cor. x. 3 4. ‡ Matt. iv. 4.
† 1 Kings xvii. 6; xix. 5. § Chap. xi. 3.
‖ Jude 9.
¶ Brown, "The Book of Revelation," p. 69.
** 1 Thess. iv. 16.

Church against her enemies,* and once at least in a connection leading directly to the thought of our Lord Himself; "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time Thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."† These considerations justify the conclusion that the Michael now spoken of is the representative of Christ; and we have already seen, in examining the vision of the "strong angel" in chap. x., that such a mode of speaking is in perfect harmony with the general method of St. John.

Light is thus thrown also upon the second point above mentioned: the particular conflict referred to in these verses. The statement that "there was war in heaven," and that when the dragon was defeated he was "cast down into the earth," might lead us to think of an earlier conflict between good and evil than any in which man has part: of that mentioned by St. Peter and St. Jude, when the former consoles the righteous by the thought that "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment,"‡ and when the latter warns sinners to remember that "angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."§ The circumstances, however, of the war, lead rather to the thought of a conflict in which the Son, incarnate and glorified, takes His part. For this "Son" is the opponent of the dragon introduced to us in the first paragraph of the chapter. "Heaven" is not so much a premundane or supramundane locality as the spiritual sphere within which believers dwell even during their earthly pilgrimage, when that pilgrimage is viewed upon its higher side. And the means by which the victory is gained—for the victors "overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony"—distinctly indicate that the struggle referred to took place after the work of redemption had been completed, not before it was begun.

Several other passages of the New Testament are in harmony with this supposition. Thus it was that when the seventy returned to our Lord with joy after their mission, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy name," He, beholding in this the pledge of His completed victory, exclaimed, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven."‖ Thus it was that when charged with casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, our Lord pointed out to His accusers that His actions proved Him to be the Conqueror, and that the kingdom of God was come unto them: "When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."* To the same effect are all those passages where our Lord or His Apostles speak, not of a partial, but of a complete, victory over Satan, so that for His people the great enemy of man is already judged, and overthrown, and bruised beneath their feet: "Now is a judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out;" "And when He" (the Advocate) "is come, He will convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged;" "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage;" "Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;" "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not; but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the Evil One toucheth him not."†

In passages such as these we have the same thought as that before us in this vision. Satan has been cast out of heaven; that is, "in his warfare against the children of God he has been completely overthrown." Over their higher life, their life in a risen and glorified Redeemer, he has no power. They are for ever escaped from his bondage, and are free. But he has been "cast down into the earth, and his angels with him;" that is, over the "men of the world" he still exerts his power, and they are led captive by him at his will. Hence, accordingly, the words of the "great voice" heard in heaven which occupy all the latter part of the vision, words which distinctly bring out the difference between the two aspects of Satan now adverted to,—(1) his impotence as regards the disciples of Jesus who are faithful unto death: "Rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them;" (2) his mastery over the ungodly: "Woe for the earth and for the sea! for the devil is gone down unto you in great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season." Although, therefore, the fall of the angels from their first estate may be remotely hinted at, the vision refers to the spiritual contest begun after the resurrection of Jesus; and we ask our readers only to pay particular regard to the double relation of Satan to mankind which is referred to in it: his subjection to the righteous and the subjection of the wicked to him. One phrase only may seem inconsistent with this view. In ver. 9 Satan is described as "the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth," for that, and not "the whole world," is the true rendering of the original.‡ "The whole inhabited earth" cannot be the same as "the earth." The latter is simply the wicked; the former includes all men. But the words describe a characteristic of Satan in himself, and not what he actually effects. He is the deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. He lays his snares for all. He tempted Jesus Himself in the wilderness, and many a time thereafter during His labours and His sufferings. The vision gives no ground for the supposition that God's children are not attacked by him. It as-

* Dan. x. 13, 21. † Dan. xii. 1-3. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.
§ Jude 6. ‖ Luke x. 17, 18.

* Luke xi. 21, 22.
† John xii. 31; xvi. 11; Heb. ii. 14, 15; 1 John v. 4, 18.
‡ Comp. R. V. (margin).

sures us only that when the attack is made it is at the same instant foiled. There is a battle, but Christians advance to it as conquerors; before it begins victory is theirs.*

One other expression of these verses may be noted: the "short season" spoken of in ver. 12. This period of time is not to be looked at as if it were a brief special season at the close of the Christian age, when the wrath of Satan is aroused to a greater than ordinary degree because the last hour is about to strike. The "great wrath" with which he goes forth is that stirred in him by his defeat through the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It was roused in him when he was "cast into the earth," and from that moment of defeat therefore the "short season" begins.

The third paragraph of the chapter follows (xii. 13-xiii. 1*a*).

We have already seen that the woman introduced to us in the first paragraph of this chapter is the embodiment and the bearer of light. She is there indeed set before us in her ideal aspect, in what she is in herself, rather than in her historical position. Now we meet her in actual history, or, in other words, she is the historical Church of God in the New Testament phase of her development. As such she has a mission to the world. She is "the sent" of Christ, as Christ was "the sent" of the Father.† In witnessing for Christ, she has to reveal to the children of men what Divine love is. But she has to do this in the midst of trouble. This world is not her rest; and she must bear the Saviour's cross if she would afterwards wear His crown.

Persecuted, however, she is not forsaken. She had given her "the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, unto her place"—the place prepared of God for her protection. There can be little doubt as to the allusion. The "great eagle" is that of which God Himself spoke to Moses in the mount: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself;"‡ and that alluded to by Moses in the last song taught by him to the people: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."§ The same eagle was probably in view of David when he sang, "How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings;"‖ while it was also that on the wings of which the members of the Church draw continually nearer God: "They mount up with wings as eagles."¶ To the woman then there was given a "refuge from the storm," a "covert from the heat," of trial, that she might abide in it, nourished with her heavenly food, "for a time, and times, and half a time." Of this period we have already spoken. It is the same as that of the three and a half years, the "forty-two months," the "thousand two hundred and threescore days." It is thus the whole period of the Church's militant history upon earth. During all of it she is persecuted by Satan; during all of it she is preserved and nourished by the care of God.

* Comp. 1 John v. 4.
† John xx. 21.
‡ Exod. xix. 3, 4.
§ Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.
‖ Ps. xxxvi. 7.
¶ Isa. xl. 31.

At first sight indeed it may seem as if this shelter in the wilderness were incompatible with the task of witnessing assigned to her. But it is one of the paradoxes of the position of the children of God in this present world that while they are above it they are yet in it; that while they are seated "in the heavenly places" they are exposed to the storms of earth; that while their life is hid with Christ in God they witness and war before the eyes of men. The persecution and the nourishment, the suffering and the glory, run parallel with each other. One other remark may be made. There is obviously an emphasis upon the word "two" prefixed to "wings." Though founded upon the fact that the wings of the bird are two in number, a deeper meaning would seem to be intended; and that meaning is suggested by the fact that the witnesses of chap. xi. were also two. The protection extended corresponds exactly to the need for it. The "grace" of God is in all circumstances "sufficient" for His people.* No temptation can assail them which He will not enable them to endure, or out of which He will not provide for them a way of escape.† Therefore may they always take up the language of the Apostle and say, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."‡

The woman fled into the wilderness, but she was not permitted to flee thither without a final effort of Satan to overwhelm her; and in the manner in which this effort is made we again recognise the language of the Old Testament. There the assaults of the ungodly upon Israel are frequently compared to those floods of waters which, owing to the sudden risings of the streams, are in the East so common and so disastrous. Isaiah describes the enemy as coming in "like a flood." Of the floods of the Euphrates and the destruction which they symbolised we have already spoken; and in hours of deliverance from trouble the Church has found the song of triumph most suitable to her condition in the words of the Psalmist, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." The main reference is, however, in all probability to the passage of Israel across the Red Sea, for then, says David, calling to mind that great deliverance in the history of his people, and finding in it the type of deliverances so often experienced by himself, "the sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. . . . In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. . . . He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters."

The most remarkable point to be noticed here is, however, not the deliverance itself, but the method by which it is accomplished. To understand this, as well as the wrath of Satan immediately afterwards described, it is necessary to bear in mind that twofold element in the

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † 1 Cor. x. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Church the existence of which is the key to so many of the most intricate problems of the Apocalypse. The Church embraces both true and false members within her pale. She is the "vine" of our Lord's last discourse to His disciples, some of the branches of which bear much fruit, while others are only fit to be cast into the fire and burned.* The thought of these latter members is in the mind of St. John when he tells us, in a manner so totally unexpected, that "the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth." He is thinking of the nominal members of the Church, of the merely nominal Christianity which she has so often exhibited to the world. That Christianity the world loves. When the Church's tone and life are lowered by her yielding to the influence of the things of time, then the world, "the earth," is ready to hasten to her side. It offers her its friendship, courts alliance with her, praises her for the good order which she introduces, by arguments drawn from eternity, into the things of time, and swallows up the river which the dragon casts out of his mouth against her. When Christ's disciples are of the world, the world loves its own.† They are helping "the earth" to do its work. Why should the earth not recognise and welcome the assistance given it by foolish foes as well as friends? Therefore it helps the woman.

But side by side with this aspect of the Church which met the approbation of "the earth," the dragon saw that she had another aspect of determined hostility to his claims; and he "waxed wroth" with her. She had within her not only degenerate but true members, not only worldly professors, but those who were one with her Divine and glorified Lord. These were "the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus." They were the "few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments,"‡ "the remnant according to the election of grace,"§ "the seed which the Lord hath blessed."‖ Such disciples of Jesus the dragon could not tolerate, and he "went away to make war" with them. Thus is the painful distinction still kept up which marks all the later part of the Apocalypse. The spectacle was one over which St. John had mourned as he beheld it in the Church of his own day: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that not all are of us. Little children, it is the last hour."¶ It was a spectacle which he knew would be repeated so long as the Church of Christ was in contact with the world; and he notes it now.

One other point ought to be noticed in connection with these verses. The helping of the woman by the earth seems to be the Scripture parallel to the difficult words of St. Paul when he says in writing to the Thessalonians, "And now ye know that which restraineth to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way."** This "restraining" power, generally, and in all probability correctly, understood of the Roman State, is "the earth" of St. John helping the woman because it is helped by her.

We have been introduced to the first great enemy of the Church of Christ. It remains only that he shall take up his position on the field. The next clause therefore which meets us, and which ought to be read, not as the first clause of chap. xiii., but as the last of chap. xii., and in which the third person ought to be substituted for the first, describes him as doing so: "And he stood upon the sand of the sea," upon the shore between the earth and the sea, where he could so command them both as to justify the "Woe" already uttered over both in the twelfth verse of the chapter. There we leave him for a time, only remarking that we are not to think of ocean lying before us in a calm, but of the restless and troubled sea, raised into huge waves by the storm-winds contending upon it for the mastery and dashing its waves upon the beach.

* John xv. 5, 6.
† John xv. 19.
‡ Chap. iii. 4.
§ Rom. xi. 5.
‖ Isa. lxi. 9.
¶ 1 John ii. 18, 19.
** 2 Thess. ii. 6, 7.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND AND THIRD GREAT ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH.

REVELATION xiii.

WE have seen that the main purpose of chap. xii. was to introduce to our notice the dragon, or Satan, the first great enemy of the Church. The object of chap. xiii. is to make us acquainted with her second and third great enemies, and thus to enable us to form a distinct conception of the powerful foes with which the followers of Christ have to contend. The two enemies referred to are respectively styled "a beast" (ver. 1) and "another beast" (ver. 11), or, as they are generally termed, the first beast and the second beast. To the word "beast" must be assigned in both cases its fullest and most pregnant sense. The two "beasts" are not only beasts, but wild beasts, strong, fierce, rapacious, and cruel; even the apparent softness and tenderness of the second being associated with those dragon words which can proceed only from a dragon heart. *

(Chap. xiii. 1*b*-10.) The description carries us back to the prophecies of Daniel, and the language of the prophet helps us to understand that of the Seer. It is thus that the former speaks: "Daniel spake, and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven brake forth upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon two feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in his mouth between his teeth: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. After this I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and powerful, and strong exceed-

* Ver. 11.

ingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." * These particulars embody the prophet's picture of a world-power in four successive phases of its manifestation, until it culminates in the "little horn;" and it is not possible to doubt that the Seer, while modifying them with characteristic freedom, finds in them the foundation of his figure.

In both cases there is the same origin,—the sea swept by strong winds from every point of the compass, until the opposing forces rush upon one another, mingle in wild confusion, send up their spray into the air, and then, dark with the reflection of the clouds above and turbid with sand, exhaust themselves with one long, sullen roar upon the beach. In both cases the same animals are referred to, though in the vision of Daniel they are separated, in that of St. John combined: the leopard, with his sudden, cruel spring; the bear with his slow, relentless brutishness; and the lion, with his all-conquering power. Finally, in the case of both mention is made also of "ten horns," which are distinct from the lineal succession of the heads. So far, therefore, we can have little hesitation in affirming the conclusion arrived at by most commentators that in this "beast coming up out of the sea" we have an emblem of that power of the world which, under the guidance of "the prince of the world," opposes and persecutes the Church of Christ. Several particulars regarding it, however, still demand our notice.

1. The horns are not to be thought of as distributed among the heads, but rather as a group by themselves, constituting along with the seventh head a manifestation of the beast distinct from that expressed by each of the separate heads. In a certain sense the seventh head, with its ten horns, is thus one of the seven, for in them the beast expresses himself. In another sense it is like the "fourth beast" of the prophet Daniel: "diverse from all the beasts that were before it" and even more terrible than they.

2. The seven heads seem most fittingly to represent seven powers of the world by which the children of God had been persecuted in the past or were to be persecuted in the future. The supposition has indeed been often made that they represent seven forms of Roman government or seven emperors who successively occupied the imperial throne. But neither of these sevens can be definitely fixed by the advocates of the general thought; while the whole strain of the passage suggests that the beast which, in the form now dealt with, unquestionably represents a world-power conterminous with the whole earth, grows up into this form only in his seventh head and ten horns manifestation. The other heads are rather preparatory to the last than to be ranked equally along with it. Making a natural beginning, therefore, with the oldest persecuting power mentioned in that Bible history of which the Apocalyptist makes such extensive use, and following the line down to the Seer's time, the seven heads appear to represent the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman powers, together with that power, wider even than the Roman, which St. John saw was about to rage in the hurried days of "the last time" against the simplicity, purity, holiness, and unworldliness of Christ's little flock. Each of these powers is a "head." The last is the concentrated essence, the most universal, the most penetrating, influence of them all. Taken together, they supply, as no other interpretation does, what is absolutely essential to a correct understanding of the figure—the idea of completeness.

3. By such a rendering also we gain a natural interpretation of the head beheld "as though it had been slaughtered unto death; and the stroke of his death was healed." Other renderings fail to afford this, for no successive forms of government at Rome, and no successive emperors, furnish a member of their series of which it may be said that it is first slain and then brought back to a life of greater energy and more quickened action. Yet without the thought of death and resurrection it is impossible to fulfil the conditions of the problem. The head spoken of in ver. 3 had not been merely "wounded" or "smitten": it had been "slaughtered unto death;" and it was not merely his "deadly wound," * or even "his death-stroke:" † it was the "stroke of his death" that had been healed. There had been actual death and resurrection from death, the contrast and travesty of that death and resurrection which had befallen the Lamb slaughtered and raised again. ‡ Such a death and resurrection can only be fittingly applied to that system of worldly influence, or, in other words, to that "prince of the world," whose power over His people Jesus was not simply to modify, but to extinguish. The Redeemer of the world came, not to wound or weaken only, but to "bring to nought," him that had the power of death—that is, the devil—and to give perfect and eternal freedom to all who would allow the chains in which Satan had bound them to be broken. § But the death, if we may so speak, of Satan in relation to them was accompanied by his resurrection in relation to the world, over which the great enemy of souls was thenceforward to exercise a more irresistible sway than ever. The time is that already spoken of in the previous chapter, when the devil went down into the earth, "having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short season." ‖ Nor is there any difficulty in determining to which of the seven heads of the beast the death and resurrection spoken of apply, for a comparison of chap. xvii. 8-11 with the present passage shows that it is to the sixth, or Roman, head that St. John intends his language to refer.

4. Particular attention must be paid to the fact that it is upon the beast in his resurrection state that we are to dwell, for the whole earth marvels after the beast not previously, but subsequently, to the point of time at which the stroke of his death is healed. ¶ In that condition, too, he is not thought of as raging only in the Roman empire. His influence is universal. Wherever men are he is: "And there was given to him authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation." ** The fourfold division indicates abso-

* Dan. vii. 2-8.

* Chap. xiii. 3, A. V.
† Chap. xiii. 3, R. V.
‡ Chap. v. 6.
§ Heb. ii. 14.
‖ Chap. xii. 12.
¶ Vers. 3, 4.
** Ver. 7.

lute universality; and the "whole earth"—that is, all ungodly ones—worships the beast, even every one whose name has not been written in the Lamb's book of life.* Thus raging with an extent of power never possessed by any form of Roman government or any emperor of Rome, he rages also throughout all time, from the first to the second coming of the Lord, for he has "authority given to him to continue forty and two months,"† the period so denoted embracing the whole Christian era from its beginning to its close.‡

5. Three points more may be noticed before drawing the general conclusion to which all this leads. In the first place the beast is the vicegerent of another power which acts through him and by means of him. "The dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority." The dragon himself does not directly act. He has his representative, or vicar, or substitute, in the beast. In the second place, the worship paid by "the whole earth" to the beast, when it cries, "Who is like unto the beast? and who is able to make war with him?" is an obvious imitation of the ascriptions of praise to God contained in not a few passages of the Old Testament: "Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath His seat on high?"; "To whom then will ye liken Me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One;" "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel. . . . To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like?"§ In the third place, the beast opens his mouth, not only to blaspheme against God, but "against His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in the heaven,"‖ expressions in which the use of the word "tabernacle" leads directly to the thought of opposition to Him who became flesh and tabernacled among us, and who now spreads His tabernacle over His saints.¶

The whole description of the beast is thus, in multiplied particulars, a travesty of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Head and King, the Guardian and Protector of His people. Like the latter, the former is the representative, the "sent," of an unseen power, by whom all authority is "given" him; he has his death and his resurrection from the dead; he has his throngs of marvelling and enthusiastic worshippers; his authority over those who own his sway is limited by no national boundaries. but is conterminous with the whole world; he gathers up and unites in himself all the scattered elements of darkness and enmity to the truth which had previously existed among men, and from which the Church of God had suffered.

What then can this first beast be? Not Rome, either pagan or papal; not any single form of earthly government, however strong; not any Roman emperor, however vicious or cruel; but the general influence of the world, in so far as it is opposed to God, substituting the human for the Divine, the seen for the unseen, the temporal for the eternal. He is the impersonation of that world of which St. Paul writes, "We received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God,"** of which St. James speaks when he says, "Whosoever, therefore, would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God,"†† and in regard to which St. John exhorts, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." This beast, in short, is the world viewed in that aspect in which our Lord Himself could say of it that the devil was its prince, which He told His disciples He had overcome, and in regard to which he prayed in His high-priestly prayer, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them out of the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

The influence of the beast here spoken of is, therefore, confined to no party, or sect, or age. It may be found in the Church and in the State, in every society, in every family, or even in every heart, for wherever man is ruled by the seen instead of the unseen, or by the material instead of the spiritual, there "the world" is. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Against this foe the true life of the saints will be preserved. Nothing can harm the life that is hid with Christ in God. But the saints may nevertheless be troubled, and persecuted, and killed, as were the witnesses of chap. xi., by the beast that "had given unto him to make war with them, and to overcome them." Such is the thought that leads to the last words of the paragraph with which we are now dealing: "If any one leadeth into captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any one shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed." In the great law of God, the *lex talionis*, consolation is given to the persecuted. Their enemies would lead them into captivity, but a worse captivity awaits themselves. They would kill with the sword, but with a sharper sword than that of human power they shall themselves be killed. Is there not enough in that to inspire the saints with patience and faith? Well may they endure with unfainting hearts when they remember who is upon their side, for "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict them," and to them that are afflicted "rest"*—rest with Apostles, prophets, martyrs, the whole Church of God, rest never again to be disturbed either by sin or sorrow. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

The second enemy of the Church, or the first beast, has been described. St. John now proceeds to the third enemy, or the second beast:

(Chap. xiii. 11-17.) The first beast came up out of "the sea" (ver. 1); the second beast comes up out of "the earth": and the contrast, so strongly marked, between these two sources makes it necessary to draw a clear and definite line of distinction between the origin of the one beast and that of the other. The "sea," however, both in the Old Testament and in the New, is the symbol of the mass of the Gentile nations, of the heathen world in its condition of alienation from God and true religious life. In contrast with this, the "earth," as here used, must be the symbol of the Jews, among whom, to whatever extent they had abused their privileges, the Almighty had revealed himself in a special

* Ver. 8.
† Ver. 5.
‡ Comp p. 875.
§ Ps. cxiii. 5; Isa. xl. 25, xlvi. 3, 5.
‖ Ver. 6.
¶ John i. 14; Rev. vii. 15.
** 1 Cor. ii. 12. Comp. Gal. vi. 14.
†† James iv. 4.
* 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.

manner, showing "His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel." * The Jews were an agricultural, not a commercial, people; and upon that great highway along which the commerce of the nations poured they looked with suspicion and dislike. Hence the sea, in its restlessness and barrenness, became to them the emblem of an irreligious world; the land, in its quiet and fruitfulness, the emblem of religion with all its blessings. In this sense the contrast here must be understood; and the statement as to the different origin of the first and second beasts is of itself sufficient to determine that, while the former belongs to a secular, the latter belongs to a religious, sphere. Many other particulars mentioned in connection with the second beast confirm this conclusion.

1. The "two horns like unto a lamb" are unquestionably a travesty of the "seven horns" of the Lamb, so often spoken of in these visions; and the description carries us to the thought of Antichrist, of one who sets himself up as the true Christ, of one who, professing to imitate the Redeemer, is yet His opposite.

2. The words "And he spoke as a dragon" remind us of the description given by our Lord of those false teachers who "come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves," † as well as of the language of St. Paul when he warns the Ephesian elders that after his departing "grievous wolves shall enter in among them, not sparing the flock." ‡

3. The function to which this beast devotes himself is religious, not secular. "He maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast"; and, having persuaded them to make an image to that beast, "it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed." §

4. The great signs and wonders done by this beast, such as making "fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men," are a reminiscence of the prophet Elijah at Carmel; while the "signs" by which he successfully deceives the world take us again to the words of Jesus: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect." ‖ St. Paul's words also, when he speaks of the man of sin, make similar mention of his "signs:" "Whose coming is according to the work of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that are perishing; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." ¶

5. Finally, the fact that this beast bears the name of "the false prophet," ** the very term used by St. John when speaking of the false teachers who had arisen in his day, †† may surely be accepted as conclusive that we have here a symbol of the antichrists of the First Epistle of that Apostle. Of the antichrists, let it be observed, not of Antichrist as a single individual manifestation. For there is a characteristic of this beast which leads to the impression that more than one agent is included under the terms of the symbol. The beast has "two horns." Why two? We may be sure that the circumstance is not without a meaning, and that it is not determined only by the fact that the animal referred to has in its natural condition the rudiments of no more than two. In other visions of the Apocalypse we read of a lamb with "seven horns," and of a head of the beast with "ten horns," the numbers in both cases being symbolical. The "two horns" now spoken of must also be symbolical; and thus viewed, the expression leads us to the thought of the two witnesses, of the two prophets of truth, spoken of in chap. xi. But these two witnesses represent all faithful witnesses for Christ; and, in like manner, the two horns represent the many perverters of the Christian faith beheld by the Seer springing up around him, who, professing to be Apostles of the Lamb, endeavoured to overthrow His Gospel.

These considerations lead to a natural and simple interpretation of what is meant by the second beast. The plausible interpretation suggested by many of the ablest commentators on this book, that by the second beast is meant "worldly wisdom, comprehending everything in learning, science, and art, which human nature of itself, in its civilised state, can attain to, the worldly power in its more refined and spiritual elements, its prophetical or priestly class," * must be unhesitatingly dismissed. It fails to apprehend the very essence of the symbol. It speaks of a secular and mundane influence, when the whole point of St. John's words lies in this,—that the influence of which he speaks is religious. Not in anything springing out of the world in its ordinary sense, but in something springing out of the Church and the Church's faith, is the meaning of the Apostle to be sought.

Was there anything, then, in St. John's own day that might have suggested the figure thus employed? Had he ever witnessed any spectacle that might have burned such thoughts into his soul? Let us turn to his Gospel and learn from it to look upon the world as it was when it met his eyes. What had he seen, and seen with an indignation that penetrates to the core his narrative of his Master's life? He had seen the Divine institution of Judaism, designed by the God of Israel to prepare the way for the Light and the Life of men, perverted by its appointed guardians, and made an instrument for blinding instead of enlightening the soul. He had seen the Eternal Son in all the glory of His "grace" and "truth," coming to the things that were His own, and yet the men that were His own rejecting Him, under the influence of their selfish religious guides. He had seen the Temple, which ought to have been filled with the prayers of a spiritual worship, profaned by worldly traffic and the love of gain. Nay, more, he remembered one scene so terrible that it could never be forgotten by him, when in the judgment-hall of Pilate even that unscrupulous representative of Roman power had again and again endeavoured to set Jesus free, and when the Jews had only succeeded in accomplishing their plan by the argument, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." † They Cæsar's friends! They attach value to honours bestowed by Cæsar! O vile hypocrisy! O dark extremity of hate! Judaism at the feet of Cæsar! So powerfully had the thought of these things taken possession of the mind of the Beloved Disciple,

* Ps. cxlvii. 19. ‖ Matt. xxiv. 24.
† Matt. vii. 15. ¶ 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.
‡ Acts xx. 29. ** Comp. chaps. xvi. 13; xix. 20; xx. 10.
§ Vers. 12, 15. †† 1 John iv. 1.

* Fairbairn, "On Prophecy," p. 328. † John xix. 12.

so deeply was he moved by the narrowness and bigotry and fanaticism which had usurped the place of generosity and tenderness and love, that, in order to find utterance for his feelings, he had been compelled to put a new meaning into an old word, and to concentrate into the term "the Jews" everything most opposed to Christ and Christianity.

Nor was it only in Judaism that St. John had seen the spirit of religion so overmastered by the spirit of the world that it became the world's slave. He had witnessed the same thing in Heathenism. It is by no means improbable that when he speaks of "the image of the beast" he may also think of those images of Cæsar the worshipping of which was everywhere made the test of devotion to the Roman State and of abjuration of the Christian faith. There again the forms and sanctions of religion had been used to strengthen the dominion of secular power and worldly force. Both Judaism and Heathenism, in short, supplied the thoughts which, translated into the language of symbolism, are expressed in the conception of the second beast and its relation to the first.

Yet we are not to imagine that, though St. John started from these things, his vision was confined to them. He thinks not of Jew or heathen only at a particular era, but of man; not of human nature only as it appears amidst the special circumstances of his own day, but as it appears everywhere and throughout all time. He is not satisfied with dwelling upon existing phenomena alone. He penetrates to the principles from which they spring. And wherever he sees a spirit professing to uphold religion, but objecting to all the unpalatable truths with which it is connected in the Christian faith, wherever he sees the gate to future glory made wide instead of narrow and the way broad instead of straitened, there he beholds the dire combination of the first and second beasts presented in this chapter. The light has become darkness, and how great is the darkness!* The salt has lost its savour, and is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill.†

In speaking of the subserviency of the second to the first beast, the Seer had spoken of "a mark given" to all the followers of the latter "on their right hand, or upon their forehead," and without which no one was to be admitted to the privileges of their association or of buying or selling in their city. He had further described this mark as being either "the name of the beast or the number of his name." To explain more fully the nature of this "mark" appears to be the aim of the last verse of the chapter (xiii. 18).

To discuss with anything like fulness the difficult questions connected with these words would require a volume rather than the few sentences at the close of a chapter that can be here devoted to it. Referring, therefore, his readers to what he has elsewhere written on this subject,‡ the writer can make one or two brief remarks, in order to point out the path in which the solution of the problems suggested by the words must be sought.

It is indeed remarkable that the Seer should speak at all of "the number" of the name of the beast; that is, of the number which would be gained by adding together the numbers represented by the several letters of the name. Why not be content with the name itself? Throughout this book the followers of Christ are never spoken of as stamped with a number, but either with the name of the Father or the Son, or with a new name which no one "knoweth" saving he that receiveth it. Now the principle of Antithesis or Contrast, which so largely rules the structure of the Apocalypse, might lead us to expect a similar procedure in the case of the followers of the beast. Why then is it not resorted to?

1. St. John may not himself have known the name. He may have been acquainted only with the character of the beast, and with the fact, too often overlooked by inquirers, that to that character its name, when made known, must correspond. It is not any name, any designation, by which the beast may be individualised, that will fulfil the conditions of his thought. No reader of St. John's writings can have failed to notice that to him the word "name" is far more than a mere appellative. It expresses the inner nature of the person to whom it is applied. The "name" of the Father expresses the character of the Father, that of the Son the character of the Son. The Seer, therefore, might be satisfied in the present instance with his conviction that the name of the beast, whatever it be, must be a name which will express the inner nature of the beast; and he may have asked no more. Not only so. When we enter into the style of the Apostle's thought, we may even inquire whether it was possible for a Christian to know the "name" of the beast in the sense which the word "name" demands. No man could know the new name written upon the white stone given to him that overcometh "but he that receiveth it."* In other words, no one but a Christian indeed could have that Christian experience which would enable him to understand the "new name." In like manner, now, St. John may have felt that it was not possible for the followers of Christ to know the "name" of Antichrist. Antichristian experience alone could teach the name of Antichrist; service of the beast, the name of the beast; and such experience no Christian could have. But this need not hinder him from giving the number. The "number" spoke only of general character and fate; and knowledge of it did not imply, like knowledge of the "name," communion of spirit with him to whom the name belonged.

2. From this it follows that not the "name," but the "number" of the name, is of importance in the Apostle's view. The name no doubt must have a meaning which, taken even by itself, would be portentous; but, according to the artificial system of thought here followed, the "number" is the real portent, the real bearer of the Divine message of wrath and doom.

3. This is precisely the lesson borne by the number 666. The number six itself awakened a feeling of dread in the breast of the Jew who felt the significance of numbers. It fell below the sacred number seven just as much as eight went beyond it. This last number denoted more than the simple possession of the Divine. As in the case of circumcision on the eighth day, of the "great day," of the feast on the eighth day, or of the resurrection of our Lord on the first day of the week, following the previous seven days, it expressed a new beginning in active power. By a similar process the number six was held to

* Matt. vi. 23. † Luke xiv. 34, 35.

‡ "The Revelation of St. John: Baird Lectures," published by Macmillan & Co., second edition, p. 142, etc., 319, etc.

* Chap. ii. 17. Comp. John i. 31; iv. 32.

signify inability to reach the sacred point and hopeless falling short of it. To the Jew there was thus a doom upon the number six even when it stood alone. Triple it; let there be a multiple of it by ten, and then a second time by ten until you obtain three mysterious sixes following one another, 666; and we have represented a potency of evil than which there can be none greater, a direfulness of fate than which there can be none worse. The "number" then is important, not the "name." Putting ourselves into the position of the time, we listen to the words, "His number is six hundred sixty and six" and we have enough to make us tremble. Nay, there are in them a depth of sin and a weight of punishment which no one can "know" but he who has committed the sin and shared the punishment.

From all that has been said it would seem that there is no possibility of finding the name of the beast in the name of any single individual who has yet appeared upon the stage of history. It may well be that in Nero, or Domitian, or any other persecutor of the Church, the Seer beheld a type of the beast; but the whole strain of the chapter forbids the supposition that the meaning of the name is exhausted in any single individual. No merely human ruler, no ruler over merely a portion of the world, however large, no ruler who had not died and risen from the grave, and who after his resurrection had not been hailed with enthusiasm by "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," can be the beast referred to. Whether St. John expected such a ruler in the future; whether this beast, like the "little horn" of Daniel, which had "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things," * was not only bestial, but human; or whether in its individuality it was no more than a personification of antichristian sin and cruelty, is another and a more difficult question. Yet his tendency to represent abstract ideas by concrete images would lead to the latter rather than the former supposition. One thing is clear: that the bestial principle was already working, although it might not have reached its full development. The "many antichrists" † might be the precursors of a still more terrible Antichrist, but they worked in the same spirit and towards the same end. Nor are they to be less the object of alienation and abhorrence to the Christian now than when they may be concentrated in "the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming." ‡

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT ZION AND THE HARVEST AND VINTAGE OF THE WORLD.

Revelation xiv.

The twelfth and thirteenth chapters of this book were designed to set before us a picture of the three great enemies of the Church of Christ. We have been told of the dragon, the principle and root of all the evil, whether inward or outward, from which that Church suffers. He is the first enemy. We have been further told of the first beast, of that power or prince of the world to whom the dragon has committed his authority. He is the second enemy. Lastly, we have been told of that false spirit of religion which unites itself to the world, and which, even more opposed than the world itself to the unworldly spirit of Christianity, makes the relation of God's children to the world worse than it might otherwise have been. The picture thus presented is in the highest degree fitted to depress and to discourage. The thought more especially of faithlessness in the Church fills the heart with sorrow. The saddest feature in the sufferings of Jesus was that He was "wounded in the house of His friends;" and there is a greater than ordinary depth of pathos in the words with which the Beloved Disciple draws to a close his record of his Master's struggle with the Jews: "These things spake Jesus; and He departed, and was hidden from them. But though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" *

Even then, however, it was not wholly darkness and defeat, for the Evangelist immedately adds, "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on Him;" and he closes the struggle with the words of calm self-confidence on the part of Jesus, "The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto Me, so I speak." † Thus also is it here, and we pass from the dark spectacle on which our eyes have rested to a scene of heavenly light, and beauty, and repose. The reader may indeed first imagine that the symmetry of structure which has been pointed out as a characteristic of the Apocalypse is not preserved by the arrangement of its parts in the present instance. We are about to meet in the following chapter the third and last series of plagues, and we might perhaps expect that the consolatory visions contained in this chapter ought to have found a place between the sixth and seventh Bowls, just as the consolatory visions of chap. vii. and of chaps. x. and xi. found their place between the sixth and seventh Seals and the sixth and seventh Trumpets. Instead of this the seventh Bowl at chap. xv. 17 immediately follows the sixth at ver. 12 of the same chapter; and the visions of encouragement contained in the chapter before us precede all the Bowls. The explanation may be that the Bowls are the last and highest series of judgments, and that when they begin there can be no more pause. One plague must rush upon another till the end is reached. The final judgments brook neither interuption nor delay.

In this spirit we turn to the first vision of chap. xiv.

(Chap. xiv. 1-5.) The scene of the vision is "the Mount Zion," that Zion so often spoken of both in the Old and in the New Testament as God's peculiar seat, and in the eyes of Israel famous for the beauty of its morning dews. ‡ It is the Zion in which God "dwells," § the Mount Zion which He "loved," ‖ and "out of which salvation comes." ¶ It is that "holy hill of Zion" upon which God set the Son as King when He said to Him, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." ** It is that Zion,

* Dan. vii. 8. † Comp. 1 John ii. 18. ‡ 2 Thess. ii. 8.

* John xii. 36-38. § Ps. ix. 11.
† Vers. 42, 50. ‖ Ps. lxxviii. 68.
‡ Ps. cxxxiii. 3. ¶ Ps. xiv. 7.
** Ps. ii. 6, 7.

too, to which "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads."* Finally, it is that home of which the sacred writer, writing to the Hebrews, says, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better than that of Abel."† Upon this Mount Zion the Lamb—that is, the crucified and risen Lamb of chap. v.—stands, firm, self-possessed, and calm.

There is more, however, than outward beauty or sacred memories to mark the scene to which we are introduced. Mount Zion may be "beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King."‡ But there is music for the ear as well as beauty for the eye. The mount resounds with song, rich and full of meaning to those who can understand it. A voice is heard from heaven which seems to be distinguished from the voice of the hundred and forty and four thousand to be immediately spoken of. We are not told from whom it comes; but it is there, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Majesty and sweetness mark it. It is the music that is ever in God's presence, not the music of angels only, or glorified saints, or a redeemed creation. More probably it is that of all of them together. And the song which they sing is "new," like that of chap. v. 9, which is sung by "the four living creatures and the four-and-twenty elders, who have each one a harp, and golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." That song the Church on earth understands, and she alone can understand. It spoke of truths which the redeemed alone could appreciate, and of joys of which they alone could value. There is a communion of saints, of all saints on earth and of all who fill the courts of the Lord's house on high. Even now the Church can listen with ravished ear to songs which she shall hereafter join in singing.

Standing beside the Lamb upon Mount Zion, there are "a hundred and forty and four thousand, having the Lamb's name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads," in token of their priestly state. We cannot avoid asking, Are these the same hundred and forty and four thousand of whom we have read in chap vii. as sealed upon their foreheads, or are they different? The natural inference is that they are the same. To use such a peculiar number of two different portions of the Church of God would lead to a confusion inconsistent with the usually plain and direct, even though mystical, statements of this book. Besides which they have the mark or seal of God in both cases on the same part of their bodies—the forehead. It is true that the definite article is not prefixed to the number; but neither is that article prefixed to the "glassy sea" of chap. xv. 1, and yet no one doubts that this is the same "glassy sea" as that of chap. iv.. Besides which the absence of the article may be accounted for by the fact that the reference is not directly to the hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. vii. 4, but to the innumerable multitude of chap. vii. 9.* We have already seen, however, that these two companies are the same, although the persons composing them are viewed in different lights; and the hundred and forty and four thousand here correspond, not to the first, but to the second company. They are in full possession of their Christian privileges and joys. They are not "in heaven," in the ordinary meaning of that term. They are on earth. But the two companies formerly mentioned meet in them. They are both sealed, and in the presence of the Lamb.

The character of the hundred and forty and four thousand next claims our thoughts.

1. They were "not defiled with women, for they are virgins." The words cannot be literally understood, but must be taken in the sense of similar words of the Apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians he says, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one Husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ."† Such "a pure virgin" were the hundred and forty and four thousand now standing upon the mount Zion. They had renounced all that unfaithfulness to God and to Divine truth which is so often spoken of in the Old Testament as spiritual fornication or adultery. They had renounced all sin. In the language of St. John in his First Epistle, they had "the true God, and eternal life." They had "guarded themselves from idols."‡

2. They "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." They shrink from no part of the Redeemer's life, whether on earth or in heaven. They follow Him in his humiliation, labours, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension. They obey the command "Follow thou Me,"§ in prosperity or adversity, in joy or sorrow, in persecution or triumph. Wherever their Lord is they also are, one with Him, members of His Body and partakers of His Spirit.

3. They are "purchased from among men, a first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no lie; they are without blemish." Upon the fact that they are "purchased" it is unnecessary to dwell. We have already met with the expression in chap. v. 9, in one of the triumphant songs of the redeemed. Nor does it seem needful to speak of the moral qualifications here enumerated, further than to observe that in other parts of this book the "lie" is expressly said to exclude from the new Jerusalem, and to be a mark of those upon whom the door is shut,‖ while the epithet, "without blemish" is elsewhere, on more than one occasion, applied to our Lord.¶

The appellation "a first-fruits" demands more notice. The figure is drawn from the well-known offering of "first-fruits" under the Jewish law, in which the first portion of any harvest was dedicated to God, in token that the whole belonged to Him, and was recognised as His. Hence it always implies that something of the same kind will follow it, and in this sense it is often used in the New Testament: "If the first-fruit is holy, so is the lump;" "Epænetus, who is the first-fruits of Asia unto Christ;" "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep;" "Ye know the

* Isa. xxxv. 10. † Heb. xii. 22–24. ‡ Ps. xlviii. 2.

* Comp. Lee in "Speaker's Commentary" *in loc.* The distinction between the two references is there wrongly given.

† 2 Cor. xi. 2.
‡ 1 John v. 20, 21.
§ John xxi. 22.
‖ Chaps. xxi. 27; xxii. 15.
¶ Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19.

house of Stephanas, that is the first-fruits of Achaia." * In like manner the mention of the hundred and forty and four thousand as "first-fruits" suggests the thought of something to follow. What that is, it is more difficult to say. It can hardly be other Christians belonging to a later age of the Church's history upon earth, for the end is come. It can hardly be Christians who have done or suffered more than other members of the Christian family, for in St. John's eyes all Christians are united to Christ, alike in work and martyrdom. Only one supposition remains. The hundred and forty and four thousand, as the whole Church of God, are spoken of in the sense in which the same expression is used by the Apostle James: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." Not as the first portion of the Church on earth, to be followed by another portion, but as the first portion of a kingdom of God wider and larger than the Church, are the words to be understood. The whole Church is God's first-fruits; and when she is laid upon His altar, we have the promise that a time is coming when creation shall follow in her train, when "it shall be delivered from the bondage of the corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God," when "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before the Redeemer into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Why shall nature thus rejoice before the Lord? Let the Psalmist answer: "For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." This thought may introduce us to the next portion of the chapter.

(Chap. xiv. 6-20.) The first point to be noticed in connection with these verses is their structure, for the structure is of importance to the interpretation. The passage as a whole, it will be easily observed, consists of seven parts, the first three and the last three being introduced by an "angel," while the central or chief part is occupied with One who, from the description, can be no other than our Lord Himself. In this part it is also obvious that the Lord comes to wind up the history of the world, and to gather in that harvest of His people which is already fully or even over-ripe. There can be no doubt, therefore, that we are here at the very close of the present dispensation; and, as five out of the six parts which are grouped around the central figure are occupied with judgment on the wicked, the presumption is that the only remaining part, the first of the six, will be occupied with the same topic.

In this first part, indeed, we read of "an eternal gospel proclaimed over them that sit on the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people"; and the first impression made upon us is that we have here a universal and final proclamation of the glad tidings of great joy, in order that the world may yet, at the last moment, repent, believe, and be saved. But such an interpretation, however plausible and generally accepted, must be set aside. The light thrown upon the words by their position in the series of seven parts already spoken of is a powerful argument against it. Everything in the passage itself leads to the same conclusion. We do not read, as we ought, were this the meaning, to have read, of "the," but of "an," eternal gospel.

This gospel is proclaimed, not "unto," but "over," those to whom it is addressed. Its hearers do not "dwell," as in both the Authorised and Revised Versions, but, as in the margin of the latter, "sit," on the earth, in the sinful world, in the carelessness of pride and self-confident security. Thus the great harlot "sitteth upon many waters;" and thus Babylon says in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning." There is no humiliation, no spirit of repentance, no preparation for the Gospel here; while the mention of the "earth" and the fourfold division of its inhabitants lead us to think of men continuing in their sins, over whom a doom is to be pronounced. Still further, the words put into the mouth of him who speaks "with a great voice," and which appear to contain the substance of the gospel thus proclaimed, have in them no sound of mercy, no story of love, no mention of the name of Jesus. They speak of "fearing God and giving glory to Him," as even the lost may do, of the "hour," not even the "day," "of His judgment;" and they describe the rule of the great Creator by bringing together the four things—"the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and fountains of waters"—upon which judgment has already fallen in the series of the Trumpets, and is yet to fall in that of the Bowls. Lastly, the description given of the angel reminds us so much of the description given of the "eagle" in chap. viii. 13 as to make it at least probable that his mission is a similar one of woe.

In the light of all these circumstances, we seem compelled to come to the conclusion that the "gospel" referred to is a proclamation of judgment, that it is that side of the Saviour's mission in which He appears as the winnowing fan by which His enemies are scattered as the chaff, while His disciples are gathered as the wheat. There is no intimation here, then, of a conversion of the world. The world stands self-convicted before the bar of judgment, to hear its doom.

The cry of the second angel corresponds to that of the first. It proclaims the fall of Babylon and its cause. The deeply interesting questions relating to this city will meet us at a later point. In the meantime it is enough to observe that Babylon is described as "fallen." The Judge is not only standing at the door: He has begun His work.

The words of the third angel continue the strain thus begun, and constitute the most terrible picture of the fate of the ungodly to be found in Scripture. The eye shrinks from the spectacle. The heart fails with fear when the words are read. That "wine of the wrath of God which is mingled unmixed in the cup of His anger," that wine into which, contrary to the usage of the time, no water, no mitigating element, has been allowed to enter; that "torment with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb;" that "smoke of their torment going up unto ages of ages:" that "no-rest day and night," of so different a kind from the no-rest of which we have read in chap. iv. 8—all present a picture from which we can hardly do aught else than turn away with trembling. Can this be the Gospel of Jesus, the Lamb of God? Can

* Rom. xi. 16, xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20; xvi. 15.

this be a revelation given to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who had entered so deeply into his Master's spirit of tenderness and compassion for the sinner?

1. Let us consider that the words are addressed, not directly to sinners, but to the Church of Christ, which is safe from the threatened doom; not to the former that they may be led to repentance, but to the latter that through the thought of what she has escaped she may be filled with eternal gratitude and joy. 2. Let us notice the degree to which sin is here supposed to have developed; that it is not the sin of Mary in the house of Simon, of the penitent thief, of the Philippian jailor, or of the publicans and harlots who gathered around our Lord in the days of His flesh to listen to Him, but sin bold, determined, loved, and clung to as the sinner's self-chosen good, the sin of sinners who will die for sin as martyrs die for Christ and holiness. 3. Let us observe that, whatever the angel may mean, he certainly does not speak of never-ending existence in never-ending torment, for the words of the original unhappily translated both in the Authorised and Revised Versions "for ever and ever" ought properly to be rendered "unto ages of ages;" and, distinguished as they are on this occasion alone in the Apocalypse from the first of these expressions by the absence of the Greek articles, they ought not to be translated in the same way. 4. Let us recall the strong figures of speech in which the inhabitants of the East were wont to give utterance to their feelings, figures illustrated in the present instance by the mention of that "fire and brimstone" which no man will interpret literally, as well as by the language of St. Jude when he describes Sodom and Gomorrah as "an example of eternal fire." 5. Let us remember that hatred of sin is the correlative of love of goodness, and that the kingdom of God cannot be fully established in the world until sin has been completely banished from it. 6. Above all, let us mark carefully the distinction, so often forced upon us in the writings of St. John, between sinners in the ordinary sense and the system of sin to which other sinners cling in deadliest enmity to God and righteousness; and, as we do all this, the words of the third angel will produce on us another than their first impression. So far as the human being is before us we shall be moved only to compassion and eagerness to save. But his sin, the sin which has mastered the Divinely implanted elements of his nature, which has fouled what God made pure and embittered what God made sweet, the sin which has subjected one created in the nobility of the image of God to the miserable thraldom of the devil, the sin the thought of which we can separate, like the Apostle Paul, from the "I" of man's true nature*—of that sin we can only say, Let the wrath of God be poured out upon it unmingled with mercy; let it be destroyed with a destruction the memory of which shall last "unto ages of ages" and even take its place amidst the verities sustaining the throne of the Eternal and securing the obedience and the happiness of His creatures.† If a minister of Christ thinks that he may gather from this passage, or others similar to it, a commission to go to sinners rather than to sin with "tidings of damnation," he mistakes alike the Master whom he serves and the commission with which he has been entrusted.

At this point, after the thought of that spirit of allegiance to the beast which draws down such terrors upon itself, and before we reach the central figure of the whole movement, we have some words of comfort interposed. The meaning of the first part of them is similar to that of chap. xiii. 10, and need not be further spoken of. The meaning of their second part, conveying to us the contents of the "voice from heaven," demands a moment's notice. "Blessed," exclaims the heavenly voice (at the same time prefixing the command "Write"), "are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." It is difficult to determine the precise point of time referred to in the word "henceforth." If it be the moment of the end, the moment of the Second Coming of the Lord, then the promise must express the glory of the resurrection. But, to say nothing of the fact that "resting from labours" is too weak to bring out the glory of the resurrection state, there is at that instant no more time to die in the Lord. The living shall be "changed." It seems better, therefore, to understand the words as a voice of consolation running throughout the whole Christian age. In the view of "heaven" the lapse of time is hardly thought of. All is Now. The meaning of "dying in the Lord," again, must not be regarded as equivalent to the Scriptural expression "falling asleep in Jesus." Not the thought of "falling asleep" in a quiet Christian home, but of "dying" as Jesus died, is in the Seer's mind; and not the thought of rest from work, but of rest from "toils," an entirely different and far stronger word, is in the answer of the Spirit. Thus are believers blessed. Their life is a life of toil, of hardship, of trial, of persecution, of death; but when they die, they "rest." And their "works"—that is, their Christian character and life—are not lost. They "follow with them," and meet them again in the heavenly mansions as the record of all that they have done and suffered in their Master's cause.

The first three angels have accomplished their task. We now reach the fourth and chief member in this series of seven, and meet with the Lord as He comes to take His people to Himself, that where He is, there they may also be. That it is the Lord who is here before us we cannot for a moment doubt. The designation "like unto a Son of man," the same as that of chap. i. 13, itself establishes the fact, which is again confirmed by the mention of the "white cloud" and of the "golden crown." "In His hand" He holds "a sharp sickle," with which to reap. Thus also in different passages of the New Testament our Lord speaks of the harvest of His people, although in them He acts by His angels and Apostles. In one passage of the Gospel of St. John He acts by Himself. The glorified Redeemer is thus ready to complete His work.

"Another angel" now appears, the first of the second series of three, and styled "another," not by comparison with Him who sat on the white cloud, and who is exalted far above all angels, but by comparison with the angels previously spoken of at the sixth, eighth, and ninth verses of the chapter. This angel is said to come "out from the temple"—that is, out of the *naos*, out of the innermost shrine of

* Rom. vii. † Comp. pp. 859-860.

the temple—and the notice is important, for it shows that he comes from the immediate presence of God, and is a messenger from Him. Therefore it is that he can say to the Son, "Send forth Thy sickle, and reap." "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing." Until the Father gives the sign His "hour is not yet come;" and more especially of the hour now arrived Jesus had Himself said, "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The day, the hour, the moment, has now arrived; and, as usual in this book, the message of the Father is communicated by an angel. The intimation that the hour is come is grounded upon the fact that the harvest about to be gathered in is "fully ripe." The Revised Version translates "overripe;" but the translation, though literal, is unhappy, and so far false as it unquestionably suggests a false idea. God's time for working is always right, not wrong; and it is perfectly legitimate to understand the word of the original as meaning simply dry, hard, the soft juices of its ripening state absorbed, and the time of its firmness come. Thus summoned by the message of the Father to the work, the Son enters upon it without delay. "As He hears, He judges." "He that sat on the cloud cast His sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped."

The second angel of the second group of three next appears, having, like Him that sat upon the cloud, "a sharp sickle;" and he too waits for the summons to use it.

This summons is given by the third angel of the second group, of whom it is said that he "came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire." The altar of this verse must be that already spoken of in chap. viii. 3, where we were told that "another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer," an altar which we have been led to identify with the brazen altar of chap. v. 9, beneath which were found the souls of the Old Testament saints; and the "fire" over which this angel has power must be the "fire" of chap. viii. 5, the fire taken from that altar to kindle the incense of the prayers of the saints. The angel is thus a messenger of judgment, about to command a final and full answer to be given to the prayer that the Almighty will finish His work and vindicate His cause. To this character, accordingly, his message corresponds, for "he called with a great voice to him" (that is, to the second angel) "that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her bunches of grapes are ripe." A vintage, not a harvest of grain, is here before us; and it is impossible to doubt that it is the purpose of the Seer to draw a broad line of distinction between the two. The latter is the harvest of the good; the former is the vintage of the evil: and the propriety of the figure thus used for the evil is easily perceived when we remember that grapes were gathered to be trodden in the winefat, and that the juice, when trodden out, had the colour of blood. The figure was indeed one already familiar to the prophets: "Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat" (that is, The Lord judges): "for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the vintage is ripe: come, tread ye; for the winepress is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great;" "Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with Me: yea, I trod them in Mine anger, and trampled them in My fury; and their life-blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in Mine heart, and My year of redemption is come." The figure is here employed in a similar manner, for the angel "gathered the vine" (not "the vintage," the whole vine being plucked up by the roots) "of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress, of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs." In these words we have undoubtedly the judgment of the wicked, and the last portion of them alone need detain us for a moment.

1. What is meant by the statement that the sea of blood thus created by the slaughter spoken of reached "even unto the bridles of the horses"? The horses are those of chap. xix. 11-16, where we have again a description of the final victory of Christ over all His enemies, and where it is again said of Him that "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God."* The same winepress which meets us here meets us there. The battle and the victory are the same; and the horses here are therefore those upon which He that is called Faithful and True, together with His armies that are in heaven, rides forth to conquest. The mention of "the bridles" of the horses is more uncertain and more difficult to explain, but one passage of the Old Testament helps us. In speaking of the glories of the latter day, the prophet Zechariah says, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses (the bells strung along the bridles) Holy unto the Lord."† The sea of blood reached to, but could not be allowed to touch, these sacred words.

2. What is meant by the space of "a thousand and six hundred furlongs," over which the sea extended? To resolve it simply into a large space is at variance with the spirit of the Apocalypse; and to imagine that it marks the extent of the Holy Land from Dan to Beersheba is both to introduce an incorrect calculation and to forget who constitute the hosts of wickedness that had been engaged in the battle. These were not the inhabitants of Palestine only, but of "the earth," three times mentioned in the description. They were "all the nations" spoken of by the second angel of the first group, all that worship the beast and his image and receive a mark on their forehead or their hand, referred to by the third angel of the same group. They are thus the wicked gathered from every corner of the earth. With this idea the figures 1600 agree—four, the number of the world, multiplied by itself to express intensity, and then by a hundred, the number so often associated with evil in this book. Whether "furlongs," literally "stadia," are chosen as the measure of space because, as suggested by Cornelius à Lapide, the arena or circus in which the

* Ver. 15. † Zech. xiv. 20.

martyrs suffered was called "The Stadium,"* it may be vain to conjecture. Enough that the sixteen hundred furlongs represent the whole surface of the earth upon which the wicked "sit" at ease, the universal efficacy of the sickle by which they are gathered to their doom.

One other point ought to be more particularly noticed before we close the consideration of this chapter. The harvest of the good is gathered in by the Lord Himself, that of the wicked by His angel. The same lesson appears to be read in the parables of the tares and of the drawnet. In the former (although allusions in each parable may seem to imply that angels take part in both acts) it is said that "at the end of the world the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity." In the latter we read, "So shall it be in the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire." In like manner here. The Son of man Himself gathers His own to their eternal rest. It is an angel, though commissioned by Him, who gathers the wicked to their fate. "And is there not a beauty and tenderness in this contrast? It is as though that Son of man and Son of God who is the Judge of quick and dead, the Judge alike of the righteous and of the wicked, loved one half of His office, and loved not the other. It is as though He cherished as His own prerogative the harvest of the earth, and were glad to delegate to other hands the vintage. It is as though the ministry of mercy were His chosen office, and the ministry of wrath His stern necessity. One like unto the Son of man puts forth the sickle of the ingathering; one of created, though it be of angelic, nature is employed to send forth the sickle of destruction."

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEVEN BOWLS.

Revelation xv., xvi.

Nothing can more clearly prove that the Revelation of St. John is not written upon chronological principles than the scenes to which we are introduced in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the book. We have already been taken to the end. We have seen in chap. xiv. the Son of man upon the throne of judgment, the harvest of the righteous, and the vintage of the wicked. Yet we are now met by another series of visions setting before us judgments that must take place before the final issue. This is not chronology; it is apocalyptic vision, which again and again turns round the kaleidoscope of the future, and delights to behold under different aspects the same great principles of the Almighty's government, leading always to the same glorious results.

One other preliminary observation may be made. The third series of judgments does not really begin till we reach chap. xvi. Chap. xv. is introductory, and we are thus reminded that the series of the Trumpets had a similar introduction in chap. viii. 1-6. It is the manner of St. John, who thus in his Gospel introduces his account of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in chap. iii. by the last three verses of chap. ii., which ought to be connected with the third chapter; and who also introduces his narrative regarding the woman of Samaria by the first three verses of chap. iv.

To introduce chap. xvi. is the object of chap. xv.

(Chap. xv. 1.) The plagues about to be spoken of are "the last," and in them the final judgments of God upon evil are contained. What they are, and who are the special objects of them, will afterwards appear. Meanwhile, another vision is presented to our view (xv. 2-4).

It can hardly be doubted that the "glassy sea" spoken of in these words is the same as that already met with at chap. iv. 6. Yet again, as in the case of the hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. xiv. 1, the definite article is wanting; and, in all probability, for the same reason. The aspect in which the object is viewed, though not the object itself, is different. The glassy sea is here "mingled with fire," a point of which no mention was made in chap. iv. The difference may be explained if we remember that the "fire" spoken of can only be that of the judgments by which the Almighty vindicates His cause, or of the trials by which He purifies His people. As these, therefore, now stand upon the sea, delivered from every adversary, we are reminded of the troubles which by Divine grace they have been enabled to surmount. It was otherwise in chap. iv. No persons were there connected with the sea, and it stretched away, clear as crystal, before Him all whose dealings with His people are "right." The sea itself is in both cases the same, but in the latter it is beheld from the Divine point of view, in the former from the human.

The vision as a whole takes us back to the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and hence the mention of "the song of Moses, the servant of God." The enemies of the Church have their type in Pharaoh and his host as they pursue Israel across the sands which had been laid bare for the passage of the chosen people; the waters, driven back for a time, return to their ancient bed; the hostile force, with its chariots and its chosen captains, "goes down into the depths like a stone;" and Israel raises its song of victory, "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."*

The song now sung, however, is not that of Moses only, the great centre of the Old Testament Dispensation; it is also "the Song of the Lamb," the centre and the sum of the New Testament. Both Dispensations are in the Seer's thoughts, and in the number of those who sing are included the saints of each, the members of the one Universal Church. No disciple of Jesus either before or after His first coming is omitted. Every one is there from whose hands the bonds of the world have fallen off, and who has cast in his lot with the followers of the Lamb. Hence also the song is wider in its range than that by which the thought of it appears to have been suggested. It celebrates the "great and marvellous works" of the Almighty in general. It speaks of Him as the "King of the nations," that is, as the King

* Comp. 1 Cor. ix. 24.

* Exod. xv. 1.

who subdues the nations under Him. It rejoices in the fact that His "righteous acts have been made manifest." And it anticipates the time when "all the nations shall come and worship before" Him, shall bow themselves at His feet, and shall acknowledge that His judgments against sin are not only just in themselves, but are allowed to be so by the very persons on whom they fall.

A second vision follows (xv. 5-8).

The "temple" spoken of is, as upon every occasion when the word is used, the shrine or innermost sanctuary, the Holy of holies, the peculiar dwelling-place of the Most High; so that the seven angels with the seven last plagues come from God's immediate presence. But this sanctuary is now beheld in a different light from that in which it was seen in chap. xi. 19. There it contained the ark of God's covenant, the symbol of His grace. Here the eye is directed to the "testimony," to the two tables of the law which were kept in the ark, and were God's witness both to the holiness of His character and the justice of His government. The giving of the law, then, was in the Seer's mind, and that fact will explain the allusions to the Old Testament found in his words.

The description of the seven angels, as "clothed with a precious stone pure and lustrous" (not with "fine linen" as in the Authorised Version) may be explained, when we attend to the second characteristic of their appearance, "girt about their breasts with golden girdles." These words take us back to the vision of the Son of man in chap. i., where the same expression occurs, and where we have already seen that it points to the priests of Israel, when engaged in the active service of the sanctuary. The angels now spoken of are thus priestly after the fashion of the Lord Himself, who is not merely the Priest, but also the High-Priest of His people. The high-priest, however, wore a jewelled breastplate; and in correspondence with the nobler functions of the New Testament priesthood, these jewels are now extended to the whole clothing of the angels spoken of. A similar figure for the clothing of the glorified Church meets us in the prophecies of Isaiah: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself" (the margin of the Revised Version calling attention to the fact that the meaning of the original is "decketh himself as a priest") "with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels;"* while the same figure, though applied to Tyre, is employed by Ezekiel: "Every precious stone was thy covering."† The seven angels are thus about to engage in a priestly work.

This work is pointed out to them by "one of the four living creatures," the representatives of redeemed creation. All creation owns the propriety of the judgments now about to be fulfilled.

These judgments are contained, not in seven "vials," as in the Authorised Version, but in "seven golden bowls," vessels probably of a saucer shape, of no great depth, and their circumference largest at the rim. They are the "basins" of the Old Testament, used for carrying into the sanctuary the incense which had been lighted by fire from the brazen altar. They were thus much better adapted than "vials" for the execution of a final judgment. Their contents could be poured out at once and suddenly.

The bowls have been delivered to the angels, and nothing remains but to pour them out. The moment is one of terror, and it is fitting that even all outward things shall correspond. "Smoke," therefore, filled "the sanctuary," and "none was able to enter into it." Thus, when Moses reared up the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it, "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of meeting:" thus, when Solomon dedicated the temple and the cloud filled the house of the Lord, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud." Thus, when Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord in His temple, and heard the cry of the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts," "the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke;" and thus, above all, when the law was given, "Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."*

All due preparation having been made, the Seven Bowls are now poured out in rapid and uninterrupted succession. As in the case of the Seals and of the Trumpets, they are divided into two groups of four and three; and those of the first group may be taken together (xvi. 1-9).

Upon the particulars of these plagues it is unnecessary to dwell. No attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited by the wrath of God—the land, the sea, the rivers and fountains of the waters, and the sun—has yet been, or is ever perhaps likely to be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important. The chief point claiming attention is the singular closeness of the parallelism between them and the Trumpet plagues, a parallelism which extends also to the fifth, sixth, and seventh members of the series. Close, however, as it is, there is also a marked climax in the later plagues, corresponding to the fact that they are "the last," and that in them "the wrath of God is finished." Thus the first Trumpet affects only the third part of the earth, and the trees, and all green grass: the first Bowl affects "men." Under the second Trumpet the "third part" of the sea becomes blood, and the third part of the creatures which are in the sea die, and the third part of the ships are destroyed: under the second Bowl, the "third part" of the sea is exchanged for the whole; the blood assumes its most offensive form, "blood as of a dead man;" and not the third part only, but "every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea." Under the third Trumpet the great star falls only upon the "third part" of the rivers and fountains, and they become wormwood: under the third Bowl all the waters are visited by the plague, and they become blood. Lastly, under the fourth Trumpet only the "third part" of sun and moon and stars is smitten: under the fourth Bowl the whole sun is affected, and it

* Isa. lxi. 10. † Ezek. xxviii. 13.

* Exod. xix. 18; Heb. xii. 18.

is "given unto it to scorch men with fire." With this climactic character of the Bowls as compared with the Trumpets may also be connected a striking addition made to the details of the third Bowl, to which in the Trumpet series there is nothing to correspond. "The angel of the waters," not an angel to whom the smiting of the waters had been entrusted, but the waters themselves speaking through their angel, and "the altar," that is, the brazen altar of chap. vi. 9, respond to the judgments executed. They recognise the true and righteous character of the Almighty, and they welcome this manifestation of Himself to men.

Another feature of these Bowls will at once strike the reader,—their correspondence to some of the plagues of Egypt: for in the first we see a repetition, as it were, of that sixth plague by which Pharaoh and his people were visited, when Moses sprinkled ashes of the furnace towards heaven, and they became "a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and beast," and in the second and third a repetition of the first plague, when Moses lifted up his rod and smote the waters that were in the river, "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood." The fourth Bowl reminds us of the terror of the appearance of the Son of man in chap. i. 16, when "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

One other characteristic of these plagues ought to be noticed. It comes to view no doubt only under the fourth, yet, as we shall immediately see, it is not to be confined to it. The plagues had no softening or converting power. On the contrary, as at chap. ix. 20, 21, the impiety of the worshippers of the beast was only aggravated by their sufferings; and, instead of turning to Him who had power over the plagues, they blasphemed His name.

From the first group of Bowls we turn to the second, embracing the last three in the series of seven (xvi. 10, 11).

The transition from the realm of nature to the spiritual world, already marked at the introduction of the fifth Seal and of the fifth Trumpet, is here again observable; but, as in the case of the sixth Trumpet, the spiritual world alluded to is that of the prince of darkness. With darkness he is smitten. That there is a reference to the darkness which, at the word of Moses, fell upon the land of Egypt when visited by its plagues can hardly be doubted, for the darkness of that plague was not ordinary darkness; it was "a darkness that might be felt." More than darkness, however, is alluded to. We are told of "their pains and of their sores." But pains and sores are not an effect produced by darkness. They can, therefore, be only those of the first Bowl, a conclusion confirmed by the use of the word "plagues" instead of plague. The inference to be drawn from this is important, for we thus learn that the effects of any earlier Bowl are not exhausted before the contents of one following are discharged. Each Bowl rather adds fresh punishment to that of its predecessors, and all of them go on accumulating their terrors to the end. Nothing could more clearly show how impossible it is to interpret such plagues literally, and how mistaken is any effort to apply them to the particular events of history.

The sixth Bowl follows (xvi. 12-16).

Probably no part of the Apocalypse has received more varied interpretation than the first statement of this Bowl. Who are these "kings that come from the sun-rising" is the point to be determined; and the answer usually given is, that they are part of the antichristian host, part of those afterwards spoken of as "the kings of the whole inhabited earth," before whom God dries up the Euphrates in order that they may pursue an uninterrupted march to the spot on which they are to be overwhelmed with a final and complete destruction. Something may certainly be said on behalf of such a view; yet it is exposed to serious objections.

1. We have already at chap. ix. 14, at the sounding of the sixth Trumpet, been made acquainted with the river Euphrates; and, so far from being a hindrance to the progress of Christ's enemies, it is rather the symbol of their overflowing and destructive might. 2. We have also met at chap. vii. 2 with the expression "from the sun-rising," and it is there applied to the quarter from which the angel comes by whom the people of God are sealed. In a book so carefully written as the Apocalypse, it is not easy to think of antichristian foes coming from a quarter described in the same terms. 3. These kings "from the sun-rising" are not said to be a part of "the kings of the whole inhabited earth" immediately afterwards referred to. They are rather distinguished from them. 4. The "preparing of the way" connects itself with the thought of Him whose way was prepared by the coming of the Baptist. 5. The type of drying up the waters of a river takes us back, alike in the historical and prophetic writings of the Old Testament, to the means by which the Almighty secures the deliverance of His people, not the destruction of His enemies. Thus the waters of the Red Sea were dried up, not for the overthrow of the Egyptians, but for the safety of Israel, and the bed of the river Jordan was dried up for a similar purpose.

Thus, too, the prophet Isaiah speaks: "And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the river, and shall smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall remain, from Assyria; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."* Again the same prophet celebrates the great deeds of the arm of the Lord in the following words: "Art thou not it which dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?"† And, once more, to a similar effect the prophet Zechariah: "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria. . . . And He shall pass through the sea of affliction, and shall smite the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up. . . . And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in His name, saith the Lord."‡ It is unnecessary to say more. In these "kings from the sun-rising" we have an emblem of the remnant of the Israel of God as they return from all the places whither they have been led captive, and as God makes their way plain before them.

Nor is this all. In the fate of these foes a

* Isa. xi. 15, 16. † Isa. li. 10. ‡ Zech. x. 10-12.

striking incident of Old Testament history is repeated, in order that they may be led to the destruction which awaits them. When Micaiah warned Ahab of his approaching fate, and told him of the lying spirit by which his own prophets were urging him to the battle, he said, "I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner; and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail also; go forth and do so." * In that incident of Ahab's reign is found the type of the three lying spirits or demons which, like frogs, unclean, noisy, and loquacious, go forth from the three great enemies of the Church, the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast, now first called "the false prophet," that they may entice the "kings of the whole inhabited earth" to their overthrow. And they succeed. All unknowing of what is before them, proud of their strength, and flushed with hope of victory, these kings listen to the demons and gather themselves together "unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." It is a supreme moment in the history of the Church and of the world; and, before he names the battlefield which shall, in its very name, be prophetic of the fate of the wicked, the Seer pauses to behold the assembled armies. Upon the one side is a little flock, but they are all "kings," and before them is He by whom, like David before the host of Israel and over against the Philistines, the battle shall be fought and the victory won. On the other side are the hosts of earth in all their multitudes, gathered together by the deceitful promise of success. The Seer hears the voice of the Captain of salvation, "Behold I come as a thief," to break up and to destroy. He hears further the promise of blessing to all who are faithful to the Redeemer's cause: and then, with mind at rest as to the result, he names the place where the final battle is to be fought, Har-Magedon.

Why Har-Magedon? There was, we have every reason to believe, no such place. The name is symbolical. It is a compound word derived from the Hebrew, and signifying the mountain of Megiddo. We are thus again taken back to Old Testament history, in which the great plain of Megiddo, the most extensive in Palestine, plays on more than one occasion a notable part. In particular, that plain was famous for two great slaughters, that of the Canaanitish host by Barak, celebrated in the song of Deborah,† and that in which King Josiah fell.‡ The former is probably alluded to, for the enemies of Israel were there completely routed. For a similar though still more terrible destruction the hosts of evil are assembled at Har-Magedon. The Seer thinks it enough to assemble them, and to name the place. He does not need to go further or to describe the victory.

The seventh Bowl now follows (xvi. 17-21).

The seventh or last Bowl is poured out into the air, here thought of as the realm of that prince of this world who is also "the prince of the power of the air." * All else—land and sea and waters and sun and the throne of the beast—has now been smitten, so that evil has only to suffer its final blow. It has been searched out everywhere; and therefore the end may come. That end comes, and is spoken of in figures more strongly coloured than those of either the sixth Seal or the seventh Trumpet. First of all "a great voice is heard out of the" (sanctuary of the) "temple, from the throne, saying, It is done," God's plan is executed. His last manifestation of Himself in judgment has been made. This voice is then accompanied by a more terrible shaking of the heavens and the earth than we have as yet been called to witness, the earthquake in particular being "such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty."

Some of the effects of the earthquake are next spoken of. More especially, "The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell." As to the meaning of "the cities of the nations" there can be no doubt. They are the strongholds of the world's sin, the places from which ungodliness and impiety have ruled. Under the shaking of the earthquake they fall in ruins. The first words as to "the great city" must be considered in connection with the words which follow regarding Babylon, and they are more difficult to interpret. By some it is contended that the "great city" is Jerusalem, by others that it is Babylon. The expression is one which the Apocalypse must itself explain, and in seeking the explanation we must proceed upon the principle that in this book, as much as in any other of the New Testament, the rules of all good writing are followed, and that the meaning of the same words is not arbitrarily changed. When this rule, accordingly, is observed, we find that the epithet is, in chap. xi. 8, distinctly applied to Jerusalem, the words "the great city, where also their Lord was crucified" leaving no doubt upon the point. But, in chap. xviii. 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, the same epithet is not less distinctly applied to Babylon. The only legitimate conclusion is, that there is a sense in which Jerusalem and Babylon are one. This corresponds exactly to what we otherwise learn of the light in which the metropolis of Israel appeared to St. John. To him as an Apostle of the Lord, and during the time that he followed Jesus in the flesh, Jerusalem presented itself in a twofold aspect. It was the city of God's solemnities, the centre of the old Divine theocracy, the "holy city," the "beloved city." † But it was also the city of "the Jews," the city which scorned and rejected and crucified its rightful King. When in later life he beheld, in the picture once exhibited around him and graven upon his memory, the type of the future history and fortunes of the Church, the two Jerusalems again rose before his view, the one the emblem of all that was most precious, the other of all that was most repulsive, in the eyes both of God and of spiritually enlightened men. The first of these Jerusalems is the true Church of Christ, the faithful remnant, the little flock that knew the Good Shepherd's voice and followed

* 1 Kings xxii. 19–22. † Judges v.
‡ 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

* Ephes. ii. 2. † Chap. xi. 2, xx. 9.

Him. The second is the degenerate Church, the mass of those who misinterpreted the aim and spirit of their calling, and who by their worldliness and sin "crucified their Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame." In the latter aspect Jerusalem becomes Babylon. As in chap. xi. 8 it became "spiritually," that is mystically, "Sodom and Egypt," so it becomes also the mystical Babylon, partaker of that city's sins, and doomed to its fate. This thought we shall find fully expanded in the following chapter. The question may indeed be asked, how it comes to pass that, if this representation be correct, we should read, immediately after the words now under consideration, that "Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." But the answer is substantially contained in what has been said. When Jerusalem is first thought of as "the great city," it is as the city of "the Jews," as the centre and essence of those principles by which spiritual is transformed into formal religion, and all sins are permitted to hide and multiply under the cloak of a merely outward piety. When it is next thought of as Babylon, the conception is extended so as to embrace, not a false Judaism only, but a similar falseness in the bosom of the universal Church. Just as "the great city where also our Lord was crucified" widened in chap. xi. 8 to the thought of Sodom and Egypt, so here it widens to the thought of Babylon. May it not be added that we have thus in the mention of Jerusalem and Babylon a counterpart to the mention in chap. xv. 3 of "the song of Moses and the Lamb"? These two expressions, as we have seen, comprehend a song of universal victory. Thus also the two expressions, "the great city" and "Babylon," having one and the same idea at their root, comprehend all who in the professing Church of the whole world are faithless to Christian truth.

Further effects of the last judgment follow. "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." Effects similar, though not so terrible, had been connected with the sixth Seal. Mountains and islands had then been simply "moved out of their places."* Now they "flee away." Similar effects will again meet us, but in an enhanced degree.† As yet, while mountains and islands flee away, the earth and the heavens remain. In the last description of the judgment of the wicked the heavens and the earth themselves flee away from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and no place is found for them. The climax in the different accounts of what is substantially the same event cannot be mistaken.

The same climax appears in the statement of the next effect, the "great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent," that is, fully more than fifty pounds. No such weight had been spoken of at the close of the seventh Trumpet in chap. xi. 19.

Again, however, there is no repentance and no conversion. Those who suffer are the deliberate and determined followers of the beast. As under the fourth Bowl, therefore, so under the seventh they rather blaspheme God amidst their sufferings, "because of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof is exceeding great."

* Chap. vi. 14. † Chap. xx. 11.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEAST AND BABYLON.

REVELATION xvii.

AT the close of chap. xvi. we reached the end of the three great series of judgments which constitute the chief contents of the Revelation of St. John,—the series of the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls. It cannot surprise us, however, that at this point other visions of judgment are to follow. Already we had reached the end at chap. vi. 17, and again at chap. xi. 18; yet on both occasions the same general subject was immediately afterwards renewed, and the same truths were again presented to us, though in a different aspect and with heightened colouring. We are prepared therefore to meet something of the same kind now. Yet it is not the whole history of that "little season" with which the Apocalypse deals that is brought under our notice in fresh and striking vision. One great topic, the greatest that has hitherto been spoken of, is selected for fuller treatment,—the fall of Babylon. Twice before we have heard of Babylon and of her doom,—at chap. xiv. 8, when the second angel of the first group gathered around the Lord as He came to judgment exclaimed, "Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the great, which hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;" and again at chap. xvi. 19, when under the seventh Bowl we were told that "Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath." So much importance, however, is attached by the Seer to the fortunes of this city that two chapters of his book—the seventeenth and the eighteenth—are devoted to the more detailed descriptions of her and of her fate. These two chapters form one of the most striking, if at the same time one of the most difficult, portions of his book. We have first to listen to the language of St. John; and, long as the passage is, it will be necessary to take the whole of chap. xvii. at once (xvii.).

The main questions connected with the interpretation of this chapter are, What are we to understand by the beast spoken of, and what by Babylon? The Seer is summoned by one of the angels that had the seven Bowls to behold a spectacle which fills him with "a great marvelling." Thus summoned, he obeys; and he is immediately carried away into a wilderness, where he sees "a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."

1. What is this beast, and what in particular is his relation to the beast of chap. xiii.?

At first sight the points of difference appear to be neither few nor unimportant. The order of the heads and of the horns is different, the horns taking precedence of the heads in the earlier, the heads of the horns in the later, of the two.* The first is said to have had upon "his heads" names of blasphemy; the second is "full of" such names.† There are diadems on the horns of the former, but not of the latter.‡ Of

* Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 7.
† Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3.
‡ Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 3, 12.

the first we are told that he comes up "out of the sea," of the second that he is about to come up "out of the abyss."* In addition to these particulars, it will be observed that several traits of the first beast are not mentioned in connection with the second. These last points of difference may be easily set aside. They create no inconsistency between the descriptions given; and we have already had occasion for the remark, that it is the manner of the Seer to enlarge in one part of his book his account of an object also referred to in another part. His readers are expected to combine the different particulars in order to form a complete conception of the object.

The more positive points of difference, again, may be simply and naturally explained. In chap. xiii. 1 the horns take precedence of the heads because the beast is beheld rising up out of the sea, the horns in this case appearing before the heads. In the second case, when the beast is seen in the wilderness, the order of nature is preserved. The distribution of the names of blasphemy is in all probability to be accounted for in a similar manner. At the moment when the Seer beholds them in chap. xiii. his attention has been arrested by the heads of the beast, and he has not yet seen the whole body. When he beholds them in chap. xvii., the entire beast is before him, and is "full of" such names. The presence of diadems upon the ten horns in the first, and their absence in the second, beast depend upon the consideration that it is a common method of St. John to dwell upon an object presented to him ideally before he treats it historically.† We know that the ten horns are ten kings or kingdoms; ‡ and the diadem is the appropriate symbol of royalty. When therefore we think of the beast in his ideal or ultimate manifestation in the ten kings of whom we are shortly to read, we think of the horns as crowned with diadems; and it is thus accordingly that we see the beast in chap. xiii. On the other hand, at the point immediately before us "the ten kings have received no kingdom as yet;" § and the diadems are wanting. The application of this principle further explains the difference between what are apparently two origins for these beasts,—"the sea" and "the abyss." The former is mentioned in chap. xiii., because there we have the beast before us in himself, and in the source from which he springs. The latter is mentioned in chap. xvii., because the beast has now reached a definite period of his history to which the coming up out of "the abyss" belongs. The "sea" is his real source; the "abyss" has been only his temporary abode. The monster springs out of the sea, lives, dies, goes into the abyss, rises from the dead, is roused to his last paroxysm of rage, is defeated, and passes into perdition. ‖ This last is his "history" in chap. xvii., and that history is in perfect harmony with what is stated of him in chap. xiii.,—that by nature he comes up out of the sea.

While the points of difference between the beasts of chap. xiii. and chap. xvii. may thus without difficulty be reconciled, the points of agreement are such as to lead directly to the identification of the two. Some of these have already come under our notice in speaking of the differences. Others are still more striking. Thus the beast of chap. xiii. is described as the vicegerent of the dragon; and the object of the dragon is to make war upon the remnant of the woman's seed. When therefore we find the beast of chap. xvii. engaged in the same work, we must either resort to the most unlikely of all conclusions—that the dragon has two vicegerents—or we must admit that the two beasts are one. Again, the characteristic of a rising from the dead is so unexpected and mysterious that it is extremely difficult to assign it to two different agencies; yet we formerly saw that this characteristic belongs to the beast of chap. xiii., and we shall immediately see that it belongs also to that of chap. xvii. Nay, more, it is to be noticed that both in chap. xiii. and in chap. xvii. the marvelling of the world after the beast is connected with his resurrection state. This was undoubtedly the case in chap. xiii.; and in the present chapter the cause of the world's astonishment is not less expressly said to be its beholding in the beast "how that he was, and is not, and shall be present." Let us add to what has been said that the figures of the Apocalypse are the product of so rich and fertile an imagination that, had a difference between the two beasts been intended, it would, we may believe, have been more distinctly marked; and the conclusion is inevitable that the beast before us is that also of the thirteenth chapter.

Turning then to the beast as here represented, we have to note one or two particulars regarding him, either new or stated with greater fulness and precision than before; while, at the same time, we have the explanation of the angel to help us in interpreting the vision.

(1) The beast "was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss: and he goeth into perdition." The words are a travesty of what we read of the Son of man in chap. i.: "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore."* An antichrist is before us, who has been slaughtered unto death, and the stroke of whose death shall be healed.† Still further we seem entitled to infer that when this beast appears he shall have the marks of his death upon him. "They that dwell on the earth shall marvel when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present." The inference is fair that there must be something "visible" upon him by which these different states may be distinguished. In other words, the beast exhibits marks which show that he had both died and passed through death. He is the counterpart of "the Lamb standing as though it had been slaughtered."‡

(2) "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And they are seven kings: the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while." Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by numerous and able expositors, these words cannot be applied directly to any seven emperors of Rome. It may be granted that the Seer had the thought of Rome sitting upon its seven hills in his eye as one of the manifestations of the beast, but the whole tenor of his language is too wide and comprehensive to permit the thought that the beast itself is Rome. Besides this, the

* Comp. chaps. xiii. 1 and xvii. 8.
† Comp. pp. 852, 881.
‡ Chap. xvii. 12.
§ Chap. xvii. 12.
‖ Chap. xvii. 11.
* Chap. i. 18. † Comp. chap. xiii. 3. ‡ Chap. v. 6.

heads are spoken of as being also "mountains;" and we cannot say of any five of the seven hills of Rome that they "are fallen," or of any one of them that it is "not yet come." Nor could even any five successive kings of Rome be described as "fallen," for that word denotes passing away, not simply by death, but by violent and conspicuous overthrow;* and no series of five emperors in other respects suitable to the circumstances can be mentioned some of whom at least did not die peaceably in their beds. Finally, the word "kings" in the language of prophecy denotes, not personal kings, but kingdoms.† These seven "mountains" or seven "kings," therefore, are the manifestations of the beast in successive eras of oppression suffered by the people of God. Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece are the first five; and they are "fallen"—fallen in the open ruin which they brought upon themselves by wickedness. Rome is the sixth, and "it is" in the Apostle's days. The seventh will come when Rome, beheld by the Seer as on the brink of destruction, has perished, and when its mighty empire has been rent in pieces. These pieces will then be the ten horns which occupy the place of the seventh head. They will be even more wicked and more oppressive to the true followers of Christ than the great single empires which preceded them. In them the antichristian might of the beast will culminate. They are "ten" in number. They cover the whole "earth." That universality of dominion which was always the beast's ideal will then become his actual possession. They "receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour;" and together with him they shall rage against the Lamb. Hence—

(3) "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven." The reader will notice that the expression of the eighth verse of the chapter "and is about to come up out of the abyss," as also another expression of the same verse, "and shall be present," are here dropped. We have met with a similar omission in the case of the Lord Himself at chap. xi. 17, and the explanation now is the same as then. The beast can no more be thought of as "about to come up out of the abyss," because he is viewed as come, or as about "to be present," because he is present. In other words, the beast has attained the highest point of his history and action. He has reached a position analogous to that of our Lord after His resurrection and exaltation, when all authority was given Him both in heaven and on earth, and when He began the dispensation of the Spirit, founding His Church, strengthening her for the execution of her mission, and perfecting her for her glorious future. In like manner, at the time here spoken of, the beast is at the summit of his evil influence. In one sense he is the same beast as he was in Egypt, in Assyria, in Babylonia, in Persia, in Greece, and in Rome. In another sense he is not the same, for the wickedness of all these earlier stages has been concentrated into one. He has "great wrath, knowing that he has but a short season."‡ At the last moment he rages with the keen and determined energy of despair. Thus he may be spoken of as "an eighth;" and thus he is also "of the seven," not one of the seven, but the highest, and fiercest, and most cruel embodiment of them all. Thus also he is identified with the "Little Horn" of Daniel, which has "eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things."* That Little Horn takes the place of three out of the ten horns which are plucked up by the roots; that is, of the eighth, ninth, and tenth horns. It is thus itself an eighth; and we have already had occasion to notice that in the science of numbers the number eight marks the beginning of a new life, with quickened and heightened powers. Thus also fresh light is thrown upon the statement which so closely follows the description of the beast,—that "he goeth into perdition." As in the case of Belshazzar, of Nebuchadnezzar, and of the traitor Judas, the instant when he reaches the summit of his guilty ambition is also the instant of his fall.

Before proceeding to consider the meaning of the "Babylon" spoken of in this chapter, it may be well to recall for a moment the principle lying at the bottom of the exposition now given of the "beast." That principle is that St. John sees in the world-power, or power of the world, the contrast, or travesty, or mocking counterpart of the true Christ, of the world's rightful King. The latter lived, died, was buried, rose from the grave, and returned to His Father to work with quickened energy and to enjoy everlasting glory; the former lived, was brought to naught by Christ, was plunged into the abyss, came up out of the abyss, reached his highest point of influence, and went into perdition. Such is the form in which the Seer's visions take possession of his mind; and it will be seen that the mould of thought is precisely the same as that of chap. xx. The fact that it is so may be regarded as a proof that the interpretation yet to be offered of that chapter is correct.

It may be further noticed that the beast's being brought to naught and being sent into the abyss takes place under the sixth, or Roman, head. We know that this was actually the case, because it was under the Roman government that our Lord gained His victory. The history of the beast, however, does not close with this defeat. He must rise again; and he does this as the seventh head, which is associated with the ten horns. In them and "with" them he assumes a greater power than ever, gaining all the additional force which is connected with a resurrection life. The objection may indeed be made that such an exposition is not in correspondence either with the view taken in this commentary that the beast is active from the very beginning of the Christian era, or with those facts of history which show that, instead of falling, Rome continued to exist for a lengthened period after the completion of the Redeemer's victory.

But, as to the first of these difficulties, it is not necessary to think that the beast rages in his highest and ultimate form from the very instant when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to His Father. That was rather the moment of the beast's destruction, the moment when, under the sixth head, he "is and is not;" and a certain extent of time must be interposed before he rises in his new, or seventh, head. The Seer, too, deals largely in climax; and,

* Comp. chaps. vi. 13; viii. 10. ix. 1; xi. 13; xiv. 8; xvi. 19; xviii. 2.
† Comp. Dan. vii. 17, 23; Rev. xviii. 3.
‡ Chap. xii. 12.

* Dan. vii. 7, 8.

although in doing so he is always occupied with the climactic idea rather than with the time needed for its manifestation, the element of time, if our attention is called to it, must be allowed its place. Now in the development of the beast there is climax. In chap. xi. 7 it is said that "the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with" the two faithful witnesses "when they shall have finished their testimony," and this finishing of their testimony implies time. Again, in chap. xii. 17 the increased wrath of the dragon against the remnant of the woman's seed appears to be subsequent to the persecution of the woman in the same chapter.* No doubt the thought of the increased wrath of the dragon is the main point, but it may be quite truly said that some time at least is needed for the increase. The view, therefore, that the beast rages from the beginning of the Christian era, from the moment when he rises after his fall, or, in other words, is loosed after having been shut up into the abyss, is not inconsistent with the view that his rage goes on augmenting until it attains its culminating point.

The answer to the second difficulty is to be found in the consideration that to the Seer the whole Christian era appears no more than "a little season," in which events must follow closely on one another, so closely that the time required for their evolution passes almost entirely, if not indeed entirely, out of his field of vision. He has no thought that Rome will last for centuries. "The times or the seasons the Father hath set within His own authority." † The guilt of Rome is so dark and frightful that the Seer can fix his mind upon nothing but that overthrow which shall be the just punishment of her crimes. She is not to be doomed; she is doomed. She is not to perish; she is perishing. Divine vengeance has already overtaken her. Her last hour is come; and the ten kings who are to follow her are already upon their thrones. Thus these kings come into immediate juxtaposition with the beast in that last stage of his history which had begun, but had not reached its greatest intensity, before Rome is supposed to fall.

2. The second figure of this chapter now meets us; and we have to ask, Who is the woman that sits on the beast? or, What is meant by Babylon?

No more important question can be asked in connection with the interpretation of the Apocalypse. The thought of Babylon is evidently one by which the writer is moved to a greater than ordinary degree. Twice already have we had premonitions of her doom, and that in language which shows how deeply it was felt.‡ In the passage before us he is awed by the contemplation of her splendour and her guilt. And in chap. xviii. he describes the lamentation of the world over her fate in language of almost unparalleled sublimity and pathos. What is Babylon? We must make up our minds upon the point, or the effort to interpret one of the most important parts of the Revelation of St. John can result in nothing but defeat.

Very various opinions have been entertained as to the meaning of Babylon, of which the most famous are that the word is a name for papal Rome, pagan Rome, or a great world-city of the future which shall stand to the whole earth in a relation similar to that occupied by Rome towards the world of its day. These opinions cannot be discussed here; and no more can be attempted than to show, with as much brevity as possible, that by Babylon is to be understood the degenerate Church, or that principle of degenerate religion which allies itself with the world, and more than all else brings dishonour upon the name and the cause of Christ.

(1) Babylon is the representative of religious, not civil, degeneracy and wickedness. She is a harlot, and her name is associated with the most reckless and unrestrained fornication. But fornication and adultery are throughout the Old Testament the emblem of religious degeneracy, and not of civil misrule. In numerous passages familiar to every reader of Scripture both terms are employed to describe the departure of Israel from the worship of Jehovah and a holy life to the worship of idols and the degrading sensuality by which such worship was everywhere accompanied. Nor ought we to imagine that adultery, not fornication, is the most suitable expression for religious degeneracy. In some important respects the latter is the more suitable of the two. It brings out more strongly the ideas of playing the harlot with "many lovers" * and of sinning for "hire." † In this sense then it seems proper to understand the charge of fornication brought in so many passages of the Apocalypse against Babylon. Not in their civil, but in their religious, aspect have the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and they that dwell on the earth been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. Her sin has been that of leading men astray from the worship of the true God, and of substituting for the purity and unworldliness of Christian living the irreligious and worldly spirit of the "earth." To this it may be added that, had Babylon not been the symbol of religious declension, she could hardly have borne upon her forehead the term "mystery." St. John could not have used a word connected only with religious associations to express anything but a religious state awakening the awe, and wonder, and perplexity of a religious mind. Babylon, therefore, represents persons who are not only sinful, but who have fallen into sin by treachery to a high and holy standard formerly acknowledged by them.

(2) We have already had occasion to allude to a fact which must immediately receive further notice,—that to the eye of St. John there is an aspect of Jerusalem different from that in which she is regarded as the holy and beloved city of God. Jerusalem in that aspect and Babylon are one. Each is "the great city," and the same epithet could not be applied to both were they not to be identified. Not only so. The words here used of Babylon lead us directly to what our Lord once said of Jerusalem. "Therefore," said Jesus, "behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: some of them shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall

* Chap. xii. 13. † Acts i. 7. ‡ Chaps. xiv. 8; xvi. 19.

* Jer. iii. 1. † Micah i. 7.

come upon this generation."* Precisely similar to this is the language of the Seer, "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

It may indeed be thought impossible that under any circumstances whatever St. John could have applied an epithet like that of Babylon, steeped in so many associations of lust, and bloodshed, and oppression, to the metropolis of Israel, the city of God. But in this very book he has illustrated the reverse. He has already spoken of Jerusalem as represented by names felt by a pious Jew to be the most terrible of the Old Testament,—"Sodom and Egypt."† The prophets before him had employed language no less severe. "Hear the word of the Lord," said Isaiah, addressing the inhabitants of the holy city, "ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah,"‡ and again, "How is the faithful city become an harlot, she that was full of judgment! righteousness lodged in her; but now murderers;"§ whilst the degenerate metropolis of Israel is not unfrequently painted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel and other prophets in colours than which none more dark or repulsive can be conceived.

In forming a conclusion upon this point, it is necessary to bear in mind that to the eye of the faithful in Israel, and certainly of St. John, there were two Jerusalems, the one true, the other false, to its heavenly King; and that in exact proportion to the feelings of admiration, love, and devotion with which they turned to the one were those of pain, indignation, and alienation with which they turned from the other. The latter Jerusalem, the city of "the Jews," is that of which the Apocalyptist thinks when he speaks of it as Babylon; and, looking upon the city in this aspect as he did, the whole language of the Old Testament fully justifies him in applying to it the opprobrious name.

(3) The contrast between the new Jerusalem and Babylon leads to the same conclusion. We have already more than once had occasion to allude to the principle of antithesis, or contrast, as affording an important rule of interpretation in many passages of this book. Nowhere is it more distinctly marked or more applicable than in the case before us. The contrast has been drawn out by a recent writer in the following words:

"These prophecies present two broadly contrasted 'women,' identified with two broadly contrasted 'cities,' one reality being in each case doubly represented: as a 'woman' and as a 'city.' The harlot and Babylon are one; the bride and the heavenly Jerusalem are one.

"The two women are contrasted in every particular that is mentioned about them: the one is pure as purity itself, 'made ready' and fit for heaven's unsullied holiness, the other foul as corruption could make her, fit only for the fires of destruction.

"The one belongs to the Lamb, who loves her as the bridegroom loves the bride; the other is associated with a wild beast, and with the kings of the earth, who ultimately hate and destroy her.

"The one is clothed with fine linen, and in another place is said to be clothed with the sun and crowned with a coronet of stars: that is, robed in Divine righteousness and resplendent with heavenly glory; the other is attired in scarlet and gold, in jewels and pearls, gorgeous indeed, but with earthly splendour only. The one is represented as a chaste virgin, espoused to Christ; the other is mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.

"The one is persecuted, pressed hard by the dragon, driven into the wilderness, and well-nigh overwhelmed; the other is drunken with martyr blood, and 'seated on' a beast which has received its power from the persecuting dragon.

"The one sojourns in solitude in the wilderness; the other reigns 'in the wilderness' over peoples, and nations, and kindreds, and tongues.

"The one goes in with the Lamb to the marriage supper, amid the glad hallelujahs; the other is stripped, insulted, torn, and destroyed by her guilty paramours.

"We lose sight of the bride amid the effulgence of heavenly glory and joy, and of the harlot amid the gloom and darkness of the smoke that 'rose up for ever and ever.'"

A contrast presented in so many striking particulars leaves only one conclusion possible. The two cities are the counterparts of one another. But we know that by the first is represented the bride, the Lamb's wife, or the true Church of Christ as, separated from the world, she remains faithful to her Lord, is purified from sin, and is made meet for that eternal home into which there enters nothing that defiles. What can the other be but the representative of a false and degenerate Church, of a Church that has yielded to the temptations of the world, and has turned back in heart from the trials of the wilderness to the flesh-pots of Egypt? Every feature of the description answers, although with the heightened colour of ideal portraiture, to what such a professing but degenerate Church becomes,—the pride, the show, the love of luxury, the subordination of the future to the present. Even her very cruelty to the poor saints of God is drawn from actual reality, and has been depicted upon many a page of history. With the meek and lowly followers of Jesus, whose life is a constant protest that the things of time are nothing in comparison with those of eternity, none have less sympathy than those who have a name to live while they are dead. The world may admire, even while it cannot understand, these little ones, these lambs of the flock; but to those who seek the life that now is by the help of the life that is to come they are a perpetual reproach, and they are felt to be so. Therefore they are persecuted in such manner and to such degree as the times will tolerate.

One other remark has to be made upon the identification of Jerusalem and Babylon by the Seer. It has been said that he has one special aspect of the metropolis of Israel in his eye. Yet we are not to suppose that he confines himself to that metropolis. As on so many other occasions, he starts from what is limited and local only to pass in thought to what is unlimited and universal. His Jerusalem, his Babylon, is not the literal city. She is "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters;" and "the waters which thou sawest," says the angel to the Seer, "are peoples, and multitudes, and na-

* Matt. xxiii. 34-36.
† Chap. xi. 8.
‡ Isa. i. 10.
§ Isa. i. 21.

tions, and tongues."* The fourfold division guides us, as usual, to the thought of dominion over the whole earth. Babylon is not the Jerusalem only of "the Jews." She is the great Church of God throughout the world when that Church becomes faithless to her true Lord and King.

Babylon then is not pagan Rome. No doubt seven mountains are spoken of on which the woman sitteth. But this was not peculiar to Rome. Both Babylon and Jerusalem are also said to have been situated upon seven hills; and even if we had before us, as we certainly may have, a distinct reference to Rome, it would be only because Rome was one of the manifestations of the beast, and because the city afforded a suitable point of departure for a wider survey. The very closing words of the chapter, upon which so much stress is laid by those who find the harlot in pagan Rome, negative, instead of justifying, the supposition: "And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Rome never possessed such universal dominion as is here referred to. She may illustrate, but she cannot exhaust, that subtler, more penetrating, and more widespread spirit which is in the Seer's view.

Again, Babylon cannot be papal Rome. As in the last case, there may indeed be a most intimate connection between her and one of the manifestations of Babylon. But it is impossible to speak of the papal Church as the guide, the counsellor, and the inspirer of antichristian efforts to dethrone the Redeemer, and to substitute the world or the devil in His stead. The papal Church has toiled, and suffered, and died for Christ. Babylon never did so.

Nor, finally, can we think of Babylon as a great city of the future which shall stand to the kings and kingdoms of the earth in a relation similar to that in which ancient Rome stood to the kings and kingdoms of her day. Wholly apart from the impossibility of our forming any clear conception of such a city, the want of the religious or spiritual element is fatal to the theory.

One explanation alone seems to meet the conditions of the case. Babylon is the world in the Church. In whatever section of the Church, or in whatever age of her history, an unspiritual and earthly element prevails, there is Babylon.

We have spoken of the two great figures of this chapter separately. We have still to speak of their relation to one another, and of the manner in which it is brought suddenly and for ever to a close.

This relation appears in the words, "I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast," and in later words of the chapter: "the beast that carried her." The woman then is not subordinate to the beast, but is rather his controller and guide. And this relation is precisely what we should expect. The beast is before us in his final stage, in that immediately preceding his own destruction. He is no longer in the form of Egypt, or Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome. These six forms of his manifestation have passed away. The restrainer has been withdrawn,† and the beast has stepped forth in the plenitude of his power. He has been revealed as the "ten horns" which occupy the place of the seventh head; and these ten horns are ten kings who, having now received their kingdoms and with their kingdoms their diadems, are the actual manifestation in history of the beast as he had been seen in his ideal form in chap. xiii. The beast is therefore the spirit of the world, partly in its secularising influence, partly in its brute force, in that tyranny and oppression which it exercises against the children of God. The woman, again, is the spirit of false religion and religious zeal, which had shown itself under all previous forms of worldly domination, and which was destined to show itself more than ever under the last. To the eye of St. John this spirit was not confined to Christian times. The woman, considered in herself, is not simply the false Christian Church. She is so at the moment when *we* behold her on the field of history. But St. John did not believe that saving truth, the truth which unites us to Christ, the truth which is "of God," was to be found in Christianity alone. It had existed in Judaism, it had existed even in Heathenism, for in his Gospel he remembers and quotes the words of our Lord in which Jesus says, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one Shepherd."* As then Divine truth, the light which never ceases to contend with the darkness, had been present in the world under every one of its successive kingdoms, so also perversions of that truth had never failed to be present by its side. All along the line of past history, in Heathenism as well as in Judaism, the ideal bride of Christ had been putting on her ornaments to meet the Bridegroom; and not less all along the same line had the harlot been arraying herself in purple and scarlet and decking herself with gold and precious stones and jewels, that she might tempt men to resist the influence of their rightful King. The harlot had been always thus superior to the beast. The beast had only the powers of this world at his command; the harlot wielded the powers of another and a higher world. The one dealt only with the seen and temporal, the other with the unseen and eternal; the one with material forces, the other with those spiritual forces which reach the profoundest depths of the human heart and give rise to the greatest movements of human history. The woman is therefore superior to the beast. She inspires and animates him. The beast only lends her the material strength needed for the execution of her plans. In the war, accordingly, which is carried on by the ten kings who have "one mind, and who give their power and authority unto the beast," in the war which the beast and they, with their combined power, wage "for one hour" against the Lamb, it would be a great mistake to suppose that the woman, although she is not mentioned, takes no part and exerts no influence. She is really there, the prime mover in all its horrors. The "one mind" comes from her. The beast can do nothing of himself. The ten kings who are the form in which he appears are not less weak and helpless. They have the outward power, but they cannot regulate it. They want the skill, the subtlety, the wisdom, which are found only in the spiritual domain. But the great harlot, who at this point of history is the per-

* Chap. xvii. 15. † Comp. 2 Thess ii. 7. * John x. 16.

version of Christian truth, is with them; and they depend on her. Such is the first part of the relation between the beast and the harlot.

A second, most unexpected and most startling, follows.

We have seen that in the war between the ten kings and the Lamb the woman is present. That war ends in disaster to her and to those whom she inspires. "The Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." The name is the same as that which we shall afterwards meet in chap. xix. 16, though the order of the clauses is different. This Lamb, therefore, is here the Conqueror described in chap. xix. 11-16; and many particulars of these latter verses take us back to the Son of man as He appeared in chap. i., or, in other words, to the risen and glorified Redeemer. The thought of the risen Christ is thus in the mind of St. John when he speaks of the Lamb who shall overcome. The leaders of the Jewish Church had believed that they had for ever rid themselves of the Prophet who "tormenteth them that dwell on the earth."* They had sealed the stone, and set a watch, and returned to their homes for joy and merriment. But on the third morning there was a great earthquake, and the stone was rolled away from the door of the sepulchre; and the Crucified came forth, the Conqueror of death and Hades. Then the Lamb overcame. Then He began His victorious progress as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then the power and the wisdom of the world were alike put to shame. Was not this enough? No, for now follow the words which come upon us in a way so wholly unexpected: "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast, these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her utterly with fire."

What is the meaning of these words? Surely not that Rome was to be attacked and overthrown by the barbaric hordes that burst upon her from the North: for, in the first place, the Roman manifestation of the world-power had passed away before the ten kings came to their kingdom; and, in the second place, when Rome fell, she fell as the beast, not as the harlot. Surely also not that a great world-city, concentrating in itself all the resources of the world-power, is to be hated and burned by its subjects, for we have already seen that this whole notion of a great world-city of the end is groundless; and the resources of the world-power are always in this book concentrated in the beast, and not in the harlot who directs their use. There seems only one method of explaining the words, but it is one in perfect consonance with the method and purpose of the Apocalypse as a whole. As on many other occasions, the fortunes of the Church of Christ are modelled upon the fortunes of her Master. With that Master the Church was one. He had always identified His people with Himself, in life and in death, in time and in eternity. Could the Beloved Disciple do otherwise? He looked round upon the suffering Church of his day. He was a "companion with it in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in Jesus."* He felt all its wounds and shared all its sorrows, just as he felt and shared the wounds and sorrows of that Lord who lived in him, and in whom he lived. Here, therefore, was the mould in which the fortunes of the Church appeared to him. He went back to well-remembered scenes in the life of Christ; and he beheld these repeating themselves, in principle at least, in the members of His Body.

Now there was one scene of the past—how well does he remember it, for he was present at the time!—when the Roman power and a degenerate Judaism, the beast and the harlot of the day, combined to make war upon the Lamb. For a moment they seemed to succeed, yet only for a moment. They nailed the Lamb to the cross; but the Lamb overcame them, and rose in triumph from the grave. But the Seer did not pause there. He looked a few more years onward, and what did he next behold? That wicked partnership was dissolved. These companions in crime had turned round upon one another. The harlot had counselled the beast, and the beast had given the harlot power, to execute the darkest deed which had stained the pages of human history. But the alliance did not last. The alienation of the two from each other, restrained for a little by co-operation in common crime, burst forth afresh, and deepened with each passing year, until it ended in the march of the Roman armies into Palestine, their investment of the Jewish capital, and that sack and burning of the city which still remain the most awful spectacle of bloodshed and of ruin that the world has seen. Even this is not all. St. John looks still further into the future, and the tragedy is repeated in the darker deeds of the last "hour." There will again be a "beast" in the brute power of the ten kings of the world, and a harlot in a degenerate Jerusalem, animating and controlling it. The two will again direct their united energies against the true Church of Christ, the "called, and chosen, and faithful." They may succeed; it will be only for a moment. Again the Lamb will overcome them; and in the hour of defeat the sinful league between them will be broken, and the world-power will hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh, and burn her utterly with fire.

This is the prospect set before us in these words, and this the consolation of the Church under the trials that await her at the end of the age. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever: but Thou, O Lord, art on high for evermore. For, lo, Thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, Thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered."†

Babylon is fallen, not indeed in a strictly chronological narrative, for she will again be spoken of as if she still existed upon earth. But for the time her overthrow has been consummated, her destruction is complete, and all that is good can only rejoice at the spectacle of her fate. Hence the opening verses of the next chapter.

* Comp. chap. xi. 10.

* Chap. i. 9. † Ps. xcii. 7-9.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

REVELATION xviii.

BABYLON has fallen. We have now the Divine proclamation of her fate, and the lamentation of the world over the doom to which she has been consigned (xviii. 1-3).

At chap. xvii. 1 we read of one of the angels that had the seven Bowls. The angel now introduced is "another," or a second. We shall find as we proceed that we have entered upon a new series of seven parts, similar to that in chap. xiv., where six angels and their actions, three on either side, are grouped around One higher than angels, and forming the central figure of the movement.* The series is a long one, extending from chap. xvii. 1 to chap. xxii. 5, the central figure meeting us at chap. xix. 11; and again, as before, the fact ought to be carefully noticed, for it has a bearing on the interpretation of some of the most difficult sections of this book. Meanwhile we have to do with the second angel, whose action extends to ver. 20 of the present chapter.

The description given of this angel is proportioned to the importance of his message. He has "great authority;" the earth is "lightened with his glory;" the voice with which he cries is "mighty." It could hardly be otherwise than that, with such joyful tidings as he bears to men, the "glory of the Lord should shine round about him, and a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun."† The tidings themselves follow, taken from the Old Testament accounts of the desolation that was to come upon Babylon: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces."‡ In words such as these, though combined throughout both the present and following descriptions with expressions taken from the ruin of other famous and guilty cities of the Old Testament, we have the source whence the powerful and pathetic words of this chapter are drawn. The most terrible disasters of bygone times are but types of that wreck of all the grandeur of earth which we are now invited to behold, while Babylon's sinfulness is referred to that her fate may appear to be no more than her appropriate punishment.

At this point we are met by one of those sudden transitions, common in the Apocalypse, which so completely negative the idea of chronological arrangement. A cry is heard which seems to imply that Babylon has not yet fallen (xviii. 4-8).

The first words of this voice from heaven deserve peculiar attention: "Come forth, My people, out of her;" that is, out of Babylon, the degenerate Church. We are at once reminded of the striking teaching of our Lord in chap. x. of the fourth Gospel, where He compares Himself to the "door" of the fold, not the door by which the sheep enter into, but by which they come out of, the fold.* We are also reminded of the blind man of chap. ix. of the same Gospel, whom our Lord "found" only after he had been "cast out" of the synagogue.† In the midst of the blinded theocracy of Israel in the days of Jesus there was a faithful, though small, remnant. It had been betrayed by the religious guides of the people, who had become "thieves and robbers," whom the true sheep did not know, and to whom they ought not to listen. Jesus came to call it out of the theocracy to Himself. Such was the spectacle which St. John had witnessed when his Master was in the world, and that experience is now repeated. The Church as a whole degenerates. Called to prepare men for the Second Coming of the Lord, and to teach them to live, not for the present, but the future, she becomes herself the victim of the present. She forgets that, in the absence of the Bridegroom, her days are days of fasting. She fails to realise the fact that until her Lord comes again her state is one of widowhood. And, instead of mourning, she sits as a queen, at ease and satisfied, proud of her pomp and jewellery. What is all this but a recurrence of the old events of history? The Apostle sees the future mirrored in the past; and he can only follow in his Master's footsteps, and call His Christian remnant out of Babylon.

The words are in the highest degree important for the interpretation and understanding of the Apocalypse. We have already found in more than one passage distinct traces of this double Church, of the true Church within the false, of the few living ones within the Body which had a name to live, but was dead. Here the distinction meets us in all its sharpness, and fresh light is cast upon passages that may have formerly seemed dark. "Many are called," "many" constituting the outward Church; but "few are chosen," "few" constituting the real Church, the Church which consists of the poor, and meek, and lowly. The two parts may keep together for a time, but the union cannot last; and the day comes when, as Christ called His sheep out of the Jewish, so He will again call His sheep out of the Christian "fold," that they may hear His voice, and follow Him.

Having summoned the true disciples of Jesus out of Babylon, the voice from heaven again proclaims in a double form, as "sins" and as "iniquities," the guilt of the doomed city, and invites the ministers of judgment, according to the *lex talionis*, to "render unto her double." The command may also be founded upon the law of the theocracy by which thieves and violent aggressors of the poor were required to make a double repayment to those whom they had injured, or it may rest upon the remembrance of such threatenings as those by the prophet Jeremiah, "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double."

Judgment is next supposed to have been executed upon Babylon; and the Seer proceeds to describe in language of unexampled eloquence the lamentation of the world over the city's fall (xviii. 9-20).

Three classes of persons are introduced to us:

* Kliefoth seems to have been the first to point this out.
† Luke ii. 9; Acts xxvi. 13. ‡ Isa. xiii. 19-22.

* John x. 7. † John ix. 35.

Kings, Merchants, and Sailors. All are "of the earth;" and each class, in its own strain, swells the voice of lamentation. The words are largely taken from the Old Testament, and more particularly from the description of the overthrow of Tyre in Ezekiel (chaps. xxvi., xxvii.). There is even a peculiar propriety in this latter reference, for Tyre was known by the prophets as another Babylon. In describing the "Burden of Tyre," Isaiah uses in one part of his description the words, "The city of confusion" (the meaning of the word Babylon) "is broken down." *

It is unnecessary to enter into any examination clause by clause of the passage before us. We shall better catch its spirit and be made sensible of its effect by attending to a few general observations upon the description as a whole.

1. Not without interest may we mark that the classes selected to mourn over the burning of the city are three in number. We have thus another illustration of the manner in which that number penetrates the structure of all the writings of St. John.

2. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that the city is "burned." Her destruction by fire has indeed been more than once alluded to. Of the beast and the ten horns it had been said that "they shall burn her utterly with fire;" † and, again, it had been proclaimed by the voice from heaven that "she shall be utterly burned with fire." ‡ We shall not venture to say with any measure of positiveness that the type of this "burning" is taken from the burning of Jerusalem by the Romans: It may have been taken from the burning of other cities by victorious enemies. But this much at least is obvious: that, in conjunction with the fact that Babylon is a harlot, destruction by fire leads us directly to the thought of the spiritual, and not simply the civil, or political, or commercial, character of the city. According to the law of Moses, burning appears to have been the punishment of fornication only in the case of a priest's daughter: "And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the harlot, she shall be burnt with fire." §

3. Whether there is any other allusion to spiritual traffic in the lamentations before us it is not easy to say. Of one at least which may be quoted in this connection the interpretation is uncertain. When the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over the loss of that merchandise which they now miss, they extend it, not only to articles of commerce bought and sold in an ordinary market, but to "souls of men." It may be that, as often suggested, slavery alone is thought of. Yet it is highly improbable that such is the case. Rather may it be supposed to refer to that spiritual life which is destroyed by too much occupation with, and too engrossing interest in, the world. "The characteristic of this fornication is the selling themselves for gold, as the Greek word signifies. Therefore with such wonderful force and emphasis of accumulation is every species of this merchandise mentioned, running up all into one head: the souls of men. Like that in the prophet: 'Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots; their land also is full of idols.' And it must be observed that all these things which are so minutely particularised as expressive of the meshes of that net by which men's souls are taken have also their place in the new Jerusalem, where every jewel is specified by name, and the gold of its streets, and the fine linen, and the incense, and the wine, and the oil, its white horses also. In both alike must they stand for spiritual merchandise of good and evil, the false riches and the true." *

The conclusion to be drawn is that Babylon is a spiritual city. That, as such, she is Jerusalem is further confirmed by the fact that, at the close of the chapter, it is said, "And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth." Similar words met us in chap. xvii. 6; and here, as there, they unmistakably remind us of the words already quoted in which our Lord describes the great city of the Jews. †

4. From all that has been said, it must be obvious that nothing is here spoken of Babylon inapplicable to Jerusalem when we think of this latter city in the light in which the Seer specially regards it. Jerusalem was indeed neither a commercial nor a maritime city, but Rome also was no city on the sea. A large part, therefore, of the details of St. John's description is not less destitute of force when applied, if applied literally, to the latter than to the former. On the other hand, these details are more applicable to Jerusalem than to Rome, if we remember that Jerusalem supplies, in a way impossible to Rome, the groundwork for a delineation of those religious forces which are far more wide-spreading in their reach, and far more crushing in their power, than the legions of the imperial metropolis.

Babylon then is fallen, and that with a sudden and swift destruction, a destruction indeed so sudden and so swift that each of the three companies that lament takes particular notice of the fact that "in one hour" did her judgment come. ‡

More, however, so important is the subject, has to be said; and we are introduced to the action of the third angel of the first group (xviii. 21-24).

Yet once again, it would seem, must we think of Babylon as to be destroyed rather than as destroyed already. So great is her guiltiness that the Seer again and again approaches it, and dwells, though from different points of view, upon the thought of her disastrous fate. In the present case it is less the method than the effect of her destruction that is before his eye, and nothing can be more touching than the light in which he presents it. At one moment we behold the city in her brightness, her gaiety, her rich and varied life. We hear the voice of her harpers, and minstrels, and flute-players, and trumpeters, all that can delight the ear accompanying all that can please the eye. Her craftsmen of every craft are busy at their work; and each shop in the great city resounds with the noise of the hammer, or the shuttle, or the other instruments of prosperous industry. The cheering sound of the millstone tells that there is food in her humbler dwellings.

* Isa. xxiv. 10. † Chap. xvii. 16. ‡ Chap. xviii. 8. § Lev. xxi. 9.

* Isaac Williams, "The Apocalypse, with Notes," etc., p. 360.

† Matt. xxiii. 35. Comp. pp. 902-903. ‡ Vers. 10, 17, 19.

Her merchants, too, are the princes of the earth; innumerable lamps glitter in their halls and gardens; and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride is the pledge of her well-being and joy. The next moment the proud city is cast like a millstone into the sea; and all is silence, desolation, and ruin. The resources of language appear as if they had been exhausted to supply the description of so great a fall.

We have now reached the close of the longest and most important section of the Apocalypse, beginning, as has been already pointed out, with chap. vi. It is the fourth in that series of seven of which the book is composed; and the main purpose of St. John in writing finds expression in it. As the writer of the fourth Gospel describes in the fourth section of that book, extending from chap. v. to chap. xii., the conflict between the Son of God and "the Jews," so he describes in the corresponding section of the Apocalypse the conflict between the glorified Son of man as He lives and reigns in His Church and the evil of the world. Throughout the conflict we are not once permitted to forget that, although Christ and the true members of His Body may be the objects of attack, and may even have to retire for security from the field, God is on their side, and will never suffer His faithfulness to fail or forget His promises. In a threefold series of judgments the guilty world and the guilty Church are visited with the terrors of His wrath. These three series of judgments, too, go on in an ascending line. The climactic character of their contents has already been pointed out, and nothing more need be said of it. But it may be worth while to notice that the element of climax appears not less in the nature of the instruments employed. Comparing the Trumpets with the Seals, the simple fact that they are Trumpets indicates a higher, more exciting, more terrible unfolding of wrath. The Trumpet is peculiarly the war like instrument, summoning the hosts to battle: "Thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war;" "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet an alarm against the fenced cities."* That the Bowls, again, are still more potent than the Trumpets, appears from the language in which they are described, from their mode of introduction, and from the vessels made use of for the plagues. They are "the last" plagues; in them is "finished" the wrath of God; they are called for by a "great voice out of the sanctuary;" and they proceed, not from a secular instrument, however warlike, but from a sacred vessel, not from one which must be sounded for a length of time before it produces its effect, but from one which, inverted in a moment, pours out with a sudden gush its terrors upon men. Similar though they thus are, the three series of judgments lose what might otherwise be their sameness; and the mind is invited to rest upon that most instructive lesson of the providence of God, that in proportion to privilege misused is the severity with which sin is punished. Throughout all these judgments the righteous are kept safe.

It will thus be observed that there is no strict chronological succession in the visions of this book. There is succession of a certain kind, succession in intensity of punishment. But we cannot assign one series of judgments to one period in the history of the Church or limit another to another. All the three series may continually fulfil themselves wherever persons are found of the character and disposition to which they severally apply.

But while these three series constitute the chief substance of the fourth, or leading, section of the seven into which the Apocalypse is divided, they do not exhaust the subject. The last series, in particular—that of the Bowls—has proceeded upon a supposition the most startling and pathetic by which the history of the Church is marked,—that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel," that tares have mingled with the wheat, and that the spirit of Babylon has found its way into the heart of the city of God. A phenomenon so unexpected and so melancholy stands in need of particular examination, and that examination is given in the description of the character and fate of Babylon. The remarks already made upon this point need not be repeated. It may be enough to remind the reader that in no part of his whole book is the Seer more deeply moved, and that in none does he rise to strains of more powerful and touching eloquence. Yet what is chiefly required of us is to open our minds to the full impression of the fact that Babylon does fall, deep in ruin as in guilt, and that with her fall the conflict ends.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PAUSE OF VICTORY AND JUDGMENT OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.

REVELATION xix.

THOSE who have followed with attention the course of this commentary can hardly fail to have observed its leading conception of the book with which it deals. That conception is that the Revelation of St. John presents to us in visions the history of the Church moulded upon the history of her Lord whilst He tabernacled among men. It is the invariable lesson of the New Testament that Christ and His people are one. He is the Vine; they are the branches. He is in them; they are in Him. With equal uniformity the sacred writers teach us that just as Christ suffered during the course of His earthly ministry, so also His people suffer. They have to endure the struggle before they enjoy the victory, and to bear the cross before they win the crown. But the peculiarity of the Apocalypse is, that it carries out this thought much more fully than the other New Testament books. St. John does not merely see the Church suffer. He sees her suffer in a way precisely as her Lord did. He lives in the thought of those words spoken by Jesus to Salome at a striking moment of his life with regard to his brother and himself, "The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptised withal shall ye be baptised."* That very cup is put into his hands and into the hands of his brethren, who are "partakers

* Jer. iv. 19; Zeph. i. 15, 16.

* Mark x. 39.

with him in the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience which are in Jesus;" * with that very baptism they are all baptised.

Now we know from the fourth Gospel what the light was in which St. John looked back, at a distance of more than half a century, upon the life of Jesus. Nothing, therefore, was more natural than that, dealing only with the great principles at work in God's government of the world and guidance of His Church, and seeing these principles embodied in visions, the visions should present to him a course of things precisely similar to that which had been followed in the case of the Forerunner of the Church and the Captain of her salvation.

Turning, then, to the fourth Gospel, it has long been acknowledged by every inquirer of importance that the struggle of Jesus with the world, which the Evangelist chiefly intends to relate, ends with the close of chap. xii. It is equally undeniable that with the beginning of chap. xviii. the struggle breaks out afresh. Between these two points lie chaps. xiii. to xvii., five chapters altogether different from those that either precede or follow them, marked by a different tone, and centring around that institution of the Last Supper in which, Judas having now "gone out," the love of Jesus to His disciples is poured forth with a tenderness previously unexampled. In these chapters we have first a narrative in which the love of Jesus is related as it appears in the foot-washing and in the institution of the Supper, and then, immediately afterwards, a pause. This pause—chaps. xiii. 31-xvii.—together with the narrative preceding it, occurs at the close of a struggle substantially finished—"I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" †—and only yet again to burst forth in one final and unsuccessful effort against the Prince of life.

It would seem as if we had a similar structure at the point of the Apocalypse now reached by us. There is a transition narrative which, so far as the thought in it is concerned, may be regarded either as closing the fourth or as beginning the fifth section of the book. It is probably better to understand it as the latter, because the mould of the Gospel is thus better preserved; and, where so much else speaks distinctly of that mould, there is no impropriety in giving the benefit of a doubt to what is otherwise sufficiently established. Although, therefore, the fifth section of the Apocalypse, the Pause, begins properly with ver. 11 of the present chapter, the first ten verses may be taken along with these as a preparatory narrative standing to what follows as John xiii. 1-30 stands to chap. xiii. 31-chap. xvii. The probability, too, that this is the light in which we are to look at the passage before us is rendered greater when we notice, first, that there is in the midst of the preliminary narrative, and for the first time, mention made of a "supper," the marriage supper of the Lamb,‡ and, secondly, that at a later point in the book there is a final outburst of evil against the Church, which, notwithstanding the powerful forces ranged against her, is unsuccessful.§

What we have now to do with is thus not a continuation of the struggle. It is a pause in which the fall of Babylon is celebrated, and the great enemies of the Church are consigned to their merited fate (xix. 1-10).

Babylon has fallen; and the world, represented by three classes of its inhabitants—kings, merchants, and sailors—has poured out its lamentations over her fall. Very different are the feelings of the good, and these feelings appear in the narrative before us. "A great multitude" is heard "in heaven," not necessarily in the region beyond the grave, but in that of the righteous, of the unworldly, of the spiritual, whether in time or in eternity. This "multitude" is probably to be identified with that of chap. vii. 9. The definite article, which would render the identification complete, is indeed wanting; but we have already found instances of the same method of speech with regard to the one hundred and forty and four thousand of chap. xiv. 1, and with regard to the glassy sea of chap. xv. 2. The whole ransomed Church of God is therefore included in the expression. They sing first; and the burden of their song is "Hallelujah," or Praise to God, because He has inflicted upon the harlot the due punishment of her sins and crimes. Nor do they sing only once; they sing the same ascription of praise a second time. The meaning is not simply that they do this twice, the "second time" having more than its numerical force, and being designed to bring out the intensity of their feelings and their song. Then the four-and-twenty elders, the representatives of the glorified Church, and the four living creatures, the representatives of redeemed creation, answer, "Amen," and take up the same song: "Hallelujah." All creation, animate and inanimate, swells the voice of joy and praise.

Meanwhile the "smoke of the harlot's torment goeth up for ever and ever." Again, as once before,* we have here no right to fasten our thoughts upon immortal spirits of men deceived and led astray. Such may be included. If they have identified themselves with the harlot, we need not hesitate to say that they are included. But what is mainly brought under our notice is the overthrow, complete and final, of sin itself. Babylon has been utterly overthrown, and her punishment shall never be forgotten. Her fate shall remain a monument of the righteous judgment of God, and shall illustrate unto the ages of the ages the character of Him who, for creation's sake, will "by no means clear the guilty."

A voice from heaven is then heard calling upon all the servants of God to praise Him; and this is followed by another voice, "as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth." He always indeed really reigned, but now He has taken to Himself His great power, and everything acknowledges its King.

Thus a new moment is reached in the history of God's saints. The Lamb is come to claim His bride, and "His wife hath made herself ready." She has been long betrothed, and has been waiting for the Bridegroom. Through storm and calm, through sorrow and joy, through darkness and light, she has waited for Him, crying ever and again, "Come quickly." At last He comes, and the marriage and the marriage supper are to take place. For the first

* Rev. i. 9.
† John xvii. 4.
‡ Ver. 9.
§ Chap. xx. 7.

* Comp. p. 893.

time in the Apocalypse we read of this marriage, and for the first time, although the general idea of supping with the Lord had been once alluded to, of this marriage supper. The figure indeed is far from being new. The writers both of the Old and of the New Testament use it with remarkable frequency. But no sacred writer appears to have felt more the power and beauty of the similitude than St. John. In the first miracle which he records, and in which he sees the whole glory of the New Testament dispensation mirrored forth, He who changed the water into wine is the Bridegroom of His Church;* and, when the Baptist passes out of view in the presence of Him for whom he had prepared the way, he records the swan-like song in which the great prophet terminated his mission in order that another and a higher than himself might have sole possession of the field: "Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled."†

Such is the moment that has now arrived, and the bride is ready for it. Her raiment is worthy of our notice. It is "fine linen, bright and pure;" and then it is immediately added, "for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." These acts are not the imputed righteousness of Christ, although only in Christ are the acts performed. They express the moral and religious condition of those who constitute the bride. No outward righteousness alone, with which we might be clothed as with a garment, is a sufficient preparation for future blessedness. An inward change is not less necessary, a personal and spiritual meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. Christ must not only be on us as a robe, but in us as a life, if we are to have the hope of glory.‡ Let us not be afraid of words like these. Rightly viewed, they in no way interfere with our completeness in the Beloved alone, or with the fact that not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by grace, are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God.§ All our salvation is of Christ, but the change upon us must be internal as well as external. The elect are foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son‖; and the Christian condition is expressed in the words which say, not only "Ye were justified," but also "ye were washed, ye were sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."¶

Thus "made ready," the bride now enters with the Bridegroom into the marriage feast; and, as the whole of her future rises before the view of the heavenly visitant who converses with the Seer, he says to him, "Write, Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Once before St. John had heard a similar, perhaps the same, voice from heaven, saying, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."** Then we believed; now we see. The clouds are dispelled; the veil is rent asunder; we enter into the palace of the great King. There are music, and festivity, and joy. There is neither sin nor sorrow, no privilege abused, no cloud upon any countenance, no burden upon any heart, no shadow from the future to darken the rapture of the present. Here is life, and life abundantly; the peace that passeth understanding; the joy unspeakable and glorified; the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

In particular, when we think of this marriage supper of the Lamb, we cannot but return to that supper in the upper chamber of Jerusalem which occupies so strikingly similar a position in the life of Jesus. There Jesus said, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is for you;" "This cup is the new covenant in My blood: drink ye all of it." That was a feast, in which He gave Himself to be for ever the nourishment of His Church. And in like manner, in the marriage supper of the Lamb the Lord who became dead and is alive for evermore is not only the Bridegroom, but the substance of the feast. In Him and by Him His people lived on earth; in Him and by Him they live for ever.

All this St. John saw. All this, too, he heard confirmed by the statement that, wonderful and glorious as was the spectacle, it was yet "true words of God." He was overwhelmed, and would have worshipped his angelic visitant. But he was interrupted by the declaration on the angel's part, "See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God." These fellow-servants are first the prophets, but then also all true members of Christ's Body. The last not less than the first hold the testimony of Jesus; and because they do so, they too are prophets, for prophecy, whether in Old or in New Testament times, testifies to Him. In Him all revelation centres. He is the expression of the God whom no man hath seen. He is thus the Alpha and the Omega, "over all, God blessed for ever."

By so contemplating Him we are prepared for the next following vision (xix. 11-16).

Of the position of this passage in the structure of the Apocalypse we have already spoken; and, looked at in that its true light, it may be called the Pause of Victory. There is no renewal of the struggle. A Warrior is indeed presented to us; but He is a Warrior who has already conquered, and who comes forth not so much to subdue His enemies as to inflict upon them their final punishment.

"Heaven" is "open," and our attention is first of all directed to a rider "upon a white horse." The description given of this rider leaves no doubt as to who He is. The "whiteness" of the horse is the emblem of a purity that can be connected with the kingdom of God alone. The description of the Rider—"Faithful," who will not suffer one word that He has promised to fail; "True," not true as opposed to false, but real as opposed to shadowy—corresponds only to something essentially Divine; while the particulars of His appearance afterwards mentioned take us back to the glorified Son of man of chap. i., and to other passages of this and other books of the Bible which speak of the same glorious Person. There are "the eyes" like "a flame of fire" of chap. i. 14 and chap. ii. 18. There are "upon His head many diadems," a fact not previously mentioned,

* John ii. 1-11.
† John iii. 28, 29.
‡ Col. i. 27.
§ Eph. ii. 8.
‖ Rom. viii. 29.
¶ 1 Cor. vi. 11.
** Chap. xiv. 13.

but corresponding to the many royalties which belong to Him whom all things obey. There is the "name which none but He Himself knoweth," for "no one knoweth the Son save the Father." There is the "garment sprinkled with blood," of which we read in the prophet Isaiah, the blood, not that of the Conqueror shed for us, but the blood of His enemies staining His raiment as He returns victorious from the field. There is the name "The Word of God," with which St. John alone has made us familiar in the opening of his Gospel. There are "the armies which are in heaven, following Him upon white horses," and "clothed in fine linen, white and pure," to which our attention is directed, not for their sake, but for His, for He has made them partakers of His victory. There is the "sharp sword proceeding out of His mouth" of chap. i. 16 and chap. ii. 12. There is the "smiting of the nations," of which we have already heard in chap. ii. 27 and chap. xii. 5. There is the "treading of the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God," spoken of in chap. xiv. 19, 20. Finally, there is "on His garment and on His thigh the name 'King of kings and Lord of lords.'" All these traits leave no doubt who this Captain of salvation is; and all are noted that we may better understand both the glory of His person, and the nature of His accomplished work.

One thing therefore alone remains: that the great adversaries of His people shall be consigned to their doom; and to this the Seer proceeds (xix. 17-21).

The angel beheld at the beginning of this scene is the first of the three forming the second group of that series of seven parts of which the triumphing Conqueror was the centre. He stood "in the sun," which is to be thought of as in the zenith of its daily path, in order that he may be seen and heard by all. It is to "the birds that fly in mid-heaven" that he calls; that is, to those strong and fierce birds of prey, such as the eagle and the vulture, which fly in the highest regions of the atmosphere. His cry is that they shall come to the great supper of God, that they may feast upon the flesh of all the enemies of the Lamb. The idea of such a feast is found in the prophecies of Ezekiel; and there can be no doubt, from the many accompanying circumstances of similarity between the description of it there and here, that St. John has the language of the prophet in his eye: "And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to My sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. And ye shall be filled at My table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God."* Yet, while the picture of the prophet is unquestionably before the Seer's mind, it is impossible to doubt that we have in this supper a travesty of that marriage supper of the Lamb which had been spoken of in the previous part of the chapter.† In contrast with the joyful banquet at which the children of God shall be nourished by Him whose flesh is meat indeed and whose blood is drink indeed, the wicked, to whatever rank or station they belong, shall themselves be a meal for all foul and ravenous birds. The whole passage reminds us of the spectacle at Calvary, as it is set before us in the fourth Gospel, and may be accepted as one of the innumerable proofs of the similarity between two books—that Gospel and the Apocalypse—at first sight so different from each other. On the Cross Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb, not so much in the moment of its death as at a subsequent stage, when it was prepared for, and eaten at, the paschal meal. In the conduct of the Jews on that occasion St. John appears to behold an inverted and contorted Passover. The enemies of Jesus had not entered into the judgment-hall of Pilate, "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."‡ They had not eaten it then. Amidst the tumult and stormy passions of that dreadful morning, when had they an opportunity of eating it? St. John does not tell us that they found one. Rather is the whole narrative so constructed, so full of close, rapid, passionate action, that it is impossible to fix upon any point at which we can insert their eating until it was too late to make it legal. May it not be that they found no opportunity for eating it? They lost their passover. Lost it? Nay; the Evangelist seems to say, they found a passover. Go with me to the Cross; mark there their cruel mockeries of the Lamb of God; and you shall see the righteous dealings of the Almighty as He makes these mockeries take the shape of a passover of judgment, a passover of added sin and deepened shame.

The punishment of the wicked, and especially of the three great enemies of the Church, now proceeds; and it ought still to be carefully observed that we have to do with punishment, not war or overthrow in war. It was so at ver. 17, where, after the triumphing Conqueror had ridden forth, followed by His armies, there is no mention of any battle. There is only the angel's cry to the birds to gather themselves together unto the great supper of God. The battle had been already fought, and the victory already won. We are now told indeed of the gathering together of the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, "to make war against Him that sat upon the horse, and against His army." But, whatever may have been their design, it is not executed. No actual fighting is spoken of. The enemies referred to are at once taken, apparently without fighting, and are consigned to the fate which they have brought upon themselves.

Two of the three great enemies of the Lord and of His Church meet this fate,—"the beast" and "the false prophet." The first of these is the beast so frequently mentioned in previous chapters. More particularly it is the beast of chap. xvii., the representative of the antichristian world in its last and highest form. The second is not less certainly the second beast of chap. xiii., of whom it is said that "he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell

* Ezek. xxxix. 17-20.

* Ver. 9. † John xviii. 28.

upon the earth, that they should make an image to the beast." * The "signs," the "deception," and the "worship" of the beast now spoken of can be no other than those thus referred to.

One point may be noticed further. According to what seems to be the best reading of the original Greek, we are told here, not that "the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet," but "the beast was taken, and he that was with him, the false prophet." In other words, the language of St. John is designed to bring out the closeness of connection between these two beasts, the fact that the one is always dependent on the other. They are never separated. The first cannot act without the second. Hence in all probability the reason why, in treating of the doom by which these enemies of the Church are overtaken, a separate paragraph is not assigned to each. They are taken together.

A more important question has been raised in connection with the words before us; and it has been urged that they conclusively prove that both the beast and the false prophet are persons, not personifications.† We have already seen that in regard to the "beast" that conclusion is hasty.‡ It appears to be not less so in regard to the "false prophet." The simple fact that he deceiveth "them"—that is, all "that had received the mark of the beast"—is inconsistent with such an idea, unless we ascribe to him a ubiquity that is Divine; or unless we suppose, what Scripture gives us no warrant for believing, that there is in the realm of evil a personal trinity—the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet—corresponding to the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is much more natural to think that St. John's statements upon this point spring from that general method of conception which distinguishes him, and by which everything existing in the realm of good is thought of as having its counterpart in the realm of evil. The question thus raised is wholly independent of any consideration of the fate by which the two beasts are overtaken. When principles are viewed as persons, they must be spoken of as persons; and it will surely not be urged that death and Hades are persons because it is said of them, in chap. xx. 14, that they "were cast into the lake of fire."

The beast and the false prophet then are cast together into "the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone;" and this lake of fire is further explained in chap. xx. 14 to be "the second death." It is impossible to avoid the questions, How are we to conceive of this "lake of fire"? and, What is its effect? Yet, so far as at present concerns us, the answer to these questions must be taken from St. John alone. In the first instance at least we have nothing to do with the "general" teaching of Scripture on what is called the doctrine of "eternal punishment." Our only inquiry must be, What impression is the language employed by the Seer in these visions intended to convey? Upon this point it would seem as if there can be little doubt. To St. John it is no matter of consequence to tell us what shall be the condition of the enemies of the Church throughout the ages of the future, or whether they shall be preserved everlastingly alive in torment and misery and woe. His one aim is to deal with the condition of the kingdom of God while it contends with its foes in this present scene. His one object is to tell us that these foes shall be destroyed for ever, and that the world shall be wholly purged from them. No further information is required to comfort us. We may leave them in the hands of God.

Looking at the matter in this light, we do not need to ask whether by "the lake of fire" we are to understand a lake in which the wicked are consumed or one in which they are upheld in undying flames. Either interpretation is consistent with the Apostle's course of thought, and with the impression which he wishes to produce.

No doubt it may be said that the principle of contrast, of which we have so often availed ourselves in interpreting this book, implies that, as the righteous shall be upheld amidst the joys of everlasting life, so the wicked shall be upheld amidst the torments of everlasting death. But it is precisely here that the peculiarity of St. John's mode of thought comes in. To him "life" is in the very nature of the case everlasting. Were it not so, it would not be life. Only therefore in so far as the conception of everlasting torment lies in the idea of "death" can it be truly said that the principle of contrast, so deeply rooted in St. John's mode of thought, demands the application of everlasting torment to the wicked. But the idea of torment everlastingly continued does not lie in the idea of "death." Death is privation; when inflicted by fire, capacity for torment is speedily destroyed; and death itself is cast into the lake of fire. The natural conclusion is that the idea of torment belongs to the mode by which the death spoken of is inflicted—fire—and that the words with which we are dealing may mean no more than this,—that the eternity of effect following the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet is the leading conception associated with the "fire that burneth with brimstone" to which these great enemies of God's people are consigned.

If what has been said be correct, the whole question of the everlasting "suffering" of the wicked is left open so far as these passages in the Apocalypse are concerned; and St. John's main lesson is that when the beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire they shall no longer have power to war against the righteous or to disturb their peace.

When these two enemies of the Church had thus been destroyed, "the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, even the sword which came forth out of His mouth." The persons thus called "the rest" are those who stand to the beast and the false prophet in the same relation as that in which "the rest of the woman's seed," spoken of in chap. xii. 17, stand to the man-child "caught up unto God and unto His throne." The man-child exalted and glorified is the same as "He that sat upon the horse," and in that condition a sword proceedeth out of His mouth.* The Guardian and Protector of His own, who has kept their true life safe amidst all outward troubles, brings also these troubles to an end. Their enemies are "killed." They are not yet cast into the lake of fire, because their hour of judgment has not come. By-and-by it will come.† Meanwhile not only can they harm the righteous no more,

* Chap. xiii. 14. † Burger *in loc.* ‡ Comp. p. 904.

* Chaps. i. 16; xix. 15. † Chap. xx. 15.

but they afford a supper to the ravenous birds already spoken of; and the birds are more than satisfied: they are gorged with the unholy banquet. "All the birds were filled with their flesh."

CHAPTER XVI.

JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND OF THE WICKED.

REVELATION XX.

IN now approaching chap. xx., with its yet unsolved difficulties of interpretation, it is of essential importance to observe, in the first place, the relation of the chapter to what immediately precedes. The Seer is not entering upon an entirely new subject. He distinctly continues, on the contrary, the prosecution of a theme he had before begun. In the previous portion of his book three great enemies of the saints of God had been introduced to us,—the dragon or the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. These were the main opponents of the Lamb, in one way or another stirring up all the efforts that had been made against Him by the kings of the earth, their armies, and their followers. For a time they had appeared to succeed. They had persecuted the saints, had compelled them to flee, had overcome them, and killed them. This, however, could not continue; and it was to be shown that the final triumph remains with those who have suffered for the sake of righteousness. In chap. xix. we have the beginning, but not the close, of this triumph. Of the three great enemies only two—the beast and the false prophet—perish in that chapter. The destruction of the third is reserved for chap. xx., and is effected at the tenth verse of the chapter. The verses following then describe the judgment of those who had listened to these enemies, but who, though defeated, or even killed, or devoured by fire out of heaven when in their service, had not yet been consigned to their doom. Thereafter nothing remains, in order to complete the triumph of Christ and His saints, but that death and Hades shall also be removed from the scene and cast into the lake of fire.

These considerations are of themselves sufficient to show that "the overthrow of Satan," and not the reign of a thousand years, is the main theme of the first ten verses of the chapter. So far is the latter from being the culminating point of the whole book, that it is not even introduced at the beginning of any new and important section. It starts no new series of visions. It comes in in the midst of a section devoted to an entirely different matter (xx. 1-10).

It is impossible within the limits of a commentary such as the present to discuss the different interpretations that have been given to a passage so difficult and so much controverted as the above. Nothing more can be attempted than to state briefly what seems to be the true meaning of the sacred writer, together with the grounds upon which the interpretation to be suggested rests.

The fundamental principle of that interpretation, to be kept clearly and resolutely in view, is this: that "the thousand years" mentioned in the passage express no period of time. They are not a figure for the whole Christian era, now extending to nearly nineteen hundred years. Nor do they denote a certain space of time, longer or shorter, it may be, than the definite number of years spoken of, at the close of the present dispensation, and to be in the view of some preceded, in the view of others followed, by the second Advent of our Lord. They embody an idea; and that idea, whether applied to the subjugation of Satan or to the triumph of the saints, is the idea of completeness or perfection. Satan is bound for a thousand years; that is, he is completely bound. The saints reign for a thousand years; that is, they are introduced into a state of perfect and glorious victory. Before endeavouring to bring out this thought more fully, several preliminary considerations may be noticed.

1. Years may be understood in this sense. In Ezek. xxxix. 9 it is said that the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall prevail against the enemies described, and "shall go forth, and shall make fires of the weapons and burn them, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall make fires of them seven years." No one can suppose that the "seven years" here spoken of are to be literally understood, or even that the length of time which would be needed to burn the weapons is the thought upon which the prophet dwells. His meaning, in correspondence with the use of the number seven, can only be that these weapons shall be destroyed with a great and complete destruction. Again, in the same chapter, at ver. 12, after the defeat of "Gog and all his multitude," it is said, "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land." A literal interpretation is here not less impossible than in the case of the burning of the weapons; nor can the meaning be exhausted by the thought that a long time would be necessary for the burying. The number "seven" must have its due force assigned to it, and the prophet can only mean that the land should be thoroughly cleansed from heathen impurity. The use of the term "years" in the vision before us seems to be exactly similar; and the probability that it is so rises almost to certainty when we observe that, as proved by the vision of Gog and Magog in the subsequent part of the chapter, the prophecy of Ezekiel is before the Seer's eye, and that it constitutes the foundation upon which his whole delineation rests.

The only difficulty connected with this view is that in the third verse of the chapter Satan is said to have been shut into the abyss "until the thousand years should be finished," and that in the seventh verse we read, "And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed." But the difficulty is more specious than real. Let us familiarise ourselves with the thought that the thousand years may simply express completeness, thoroughness, either of defeat or victory; let us remember that the Seer had represented the defeat of Satan by the figure of being bound for a thousand years; finally, let us notice, as we have yet to see more fully, that Satan, although deprived of power over the righteous, is still to be the deceiver and ruler of the wicked: and it immediately follows that this latter thought could find no more appropriate

form than in the statement that the deception took place, not "until," or "after," the thousand years should be finished. This is simply the carrying out of the symbolism already employed. To revert for a moment to the symbolism of Ezekiel, let us suppose that, after the prophet had described the burning of the weapons for "seven years," he had wished to mention also some other step by which the burning was to be followed. What more suitable words could he have used than that it took place either "after this," or "after the seven years were finished"? In point of fact, this is exactly what the prophet does. He has occasion to refer to further efforts made to secure the purity of the land; and the words employed by him are, "After the end of seven months shall they search." * The one expression is no more than the natural consequence of the other.

2. What is the meaning of the last words of the third verse of the chapter,—"He" (*i. e.*, Satan) "must be loosed for a little time"? What is this "little time"? The words take us directly to that conception of the "Christian age" which is so intimately interwoven with the structure of the Apocalypse, and even of the whole New Testament,—that it is all "a little time." This is particularly apparent in the application of the very same words to the souls under the altar in chap. vi. 11: "And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." The "little time" there is undeniably that extending from the moment of the vision to the close of the present dispensation. But, if it be so there, we are entitled to suppose that the very same expression, when used in the passage before us, will be used in the same sense; and that, when it is said Satan shall be loosed "for a little time," the meaning is that he shall be loosed for the whole Christian age. Again, in chap. xii. 12 we read, "The devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." The "short time" here referred to begins with the casting down of the devil out of heaven into the earth spoken of in the ninth verse of the same chapter. It must, therefore, include the whole period of his action in this world; and the manner in which that period is designated corresponds closely with the description of the time during which he is said, in chap. xx., to be loosed. Again, in chap. x. 6 the angel swears that there shall be "time" no longer, using the same word for time that we meet with in the verse now under consideration; so that it would appear as if to the author of the Apocalypse the word "time" were a kind of technical term by which he was accustomed to denote the period of the Church's probation in this world. Lastly, this conclusion is powerfully confirmed by the many passages of the Apocalypse in which it is clear that the Christian dispensation, from its beginning to its end, is looked upon as a "very little while," as hastening to its final issue, and as about to be closed by One who cometh quickly.† The "little time," therefore, of the present chapter during which Satan is loosed, and which, when more fully dwelt upon, is the time of the war spoken of in vers. 7-9, is the historical period of the Christian dispensation, during which Satan is permitted to deceive the nations and to lead them against the camp of the saints and the beloved city. It is, in short, the time between the first and second coming of our Lord. The period so often sought in the thousand years of ver. 2 is really to be found in the "little time" of ver. 3.

3. Attention ought to be particularly directed to the condition of the saints during the thousand years spoken of. It is described in general terms as a "first resurrection." Certain words of our Lord in the Gospel of St. John throw important light upon the meaning of this expression: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that have heard shall live," * and, again, a little later in the same discourse, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." † Let us compare these two verses with one another, and the presence of the clause "and now is" in the first, taken along with its omission in the second, leaves no doubt as to the principle on which they are to be interpreted. The first refers to a spiritual, the second to a bodily, resurrection. Here then in the words of our Lord Himself we have the source whence the idea of the "first resurrection" of the Apocalypse is derived. It is not an actual resurrection from the grave, although that resurrection is potentially involved in it. It is a spiritual resurrection in an hour "that now is;" and the fact that this is St. John's meaning is brought out still more clearly by the intimation that what he saw was "souls," whose resurrection bodies had not yet been given them.

The condition of the saints thought of in this vision is described, however, not only generally, but in various particulars, all of which, it will be seen, correspond with the apocalyptic idea of it even in a present world. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." But we have been already told that "they reign over the earth." "Judgment was given unto them," words which seem best understood in the sense, so peculiar to St. John, that for believers there is in the ordinary sense of the term no judgment. As they have passed through death, so also they have passed through judgment. "They lived with Christ." But Christ Himself had said in the Gospel, "Because I live, and ye shall live." "They reigned with Christ." But that is only another method of saying that they sat on thrones, with the added conception, so often associated with the word in the Apocalypse, that their enemies were bruised beneath their feet. "Over these the second death hath no authority." But we have before been told of "him that overcometh" that "he shall not be hurt of the second death." ‡ Finally, "they shall be priests of God and of Christ." But it is needless to dwell upon the fact that from the opening of this book such has always been spoken of as the position of believers.

Nothing, in short, is said of the saints of God in this picture of millennial bliss that does not find a parallel in what the Seer has elsewhere written of their present life. On not a few different occasions their ideal condition in this

* Ezek. xxxix. 14.
† Chaps. i. 3, ii. 16, iii. 20, xxii. 20, etc.; 1 Cor. vii. 29; Heb. x. 37.

* John v. 25. † John v. 28. ‡ Chap. ii. 11.

world is set forth in as glowing terms as is their thousand years' glory and joy.

One expression may indeed startle us. What the Seer beheld is said to have been "the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God." Is the word "beheaded" to be literally understood? Then a very small number of martyrs can be thought of. The great majority of those who have died for the faith of Jesus have been martyred in other and more dreadful ways. The word is the counterpart of "slaughtered" in the vision of the souls under the altar.* These were the saints of the Old Testament, whose death is described by a term characteristic to the Jewish mind of the mode in which offerings were presented to God. When the Seer passes to the thought of the great Gentile Church, he uses a term more appropriate to the Gentile method of terminating human life. "Beheaded" therefore expresses the same thing as "slaughtered." Both words refer to martyrdom; and both include all faithful ones in the dispensations to which they respectively belong, for in the eyes of St. John all the disciples of a martyred Lord are martyrs.†

4. The meaning of the doom inflicted upon Satan demands our notice. And the angel "laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him." It is hardly possible to read these words, at the same time remembering St. John's love of contrast or even travesty, and not to see in them a mocking counterpart of the death and burial of Jesus, when the stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre and sealed. If so, it is not enough to say that by the infliction of this doom the power of Satan was restrained, and his influence lessened. Much more must be implied; and the language can only mean that, in one sense or another, Satan was rendered powerless and harmless, as unable to act his part as though he had been laid in the grave.

5. The use of numbers in the Apocalypse ought to be remembered. These numbers are invariably symbolical; and, if the number a thousand is to be here interpreted literally, it seems in that respect to stand alone. Nor is it a reply to this to say that, though not in the strict sense literal, it may signify a period of "indefinite" length. Such an interpretation would be not less opposed than the former to the genius and spirit of this book. The numbers of the Apocalypse have always a "definite" meaning. They express ideas, but the ideas are distinct. They may belong to a region of thought different from that with which arithmetical numbers are concerned, but within that region we cannot change their value without at the same time changing the thought. We are not to imagine that numbers, in the allegorical or spiritual use made of them by the Jews, might be tossed about at their pleasure or shuffled like a pack of cards. They were a language; and the bond between them and the ideas that they involved was quite as close as it is between the words of ordinary speech and the speaker's thoughts. A thousand years cannot mean two, or ten, or twenty, or three hundred and sixty-five thousand years according as we please. If they are a measure of time, the measure must be fixed; and we ought to be able to explain the principle leading us to attach to the number one thousand a value different from that which it naturally possesses.

6. The teaching of Scripture elsewhere upon this subject has to be considered. Upon this point it is unnecessary to say much, for the difference between that teaching and any view commonly taken of the thousand years' reign is acknowledged. It ought to be observed, however, that this difference is not merely negative, as if the rest of the New Testament simply failed to fill in certain details of events more largely described in the Apocalypse, but upon the whole substantially the same. The difference is also positive, and in some respects irreconcilable with what we are taught by the other sacred writers. The New Testament, unless this passage be an exception, always brings the "Parousia" and the general judgment into the closest possible connection. It nowhere interposes a lengthened period between the resurrection of believers and that of unbelievers. It knows only of one, and that a general, resurrection; and the passages, such as 1 Cor. xv. 23, 24, and 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, usually quoted to support another conclusion, fail, when correctly interpreted, to do so. When our Lord comes again, He at once perfects the happiness of His saints and makes all His enemies His footstool. One text alone may be quoted upon this point. While the "first resurrection" is assigned to a date a thousand or even thousands of years before the end, it is several times repeated in the discourse of Jesus in the sixth chapter of St. John that the resurrection of believers takes place at the "last day."

7. One other consideration may be kept in view. It would appear that about the time of the Advent of our Lord there was a widely extended opinion among the Jews, traces of which are also to be found among the Gentiles, that a golden age of a thousand years' duration might be anticipated in the future as a happy close to all the sins and miseries of the world. Here, it is sometimes urged, is the source of the apocalyptic figure of this chapter, which thus becomes only one of the wild chiliastic expectations of the time. But, even if it be allowed that St. John drew the particular figure employed by him from a general belief of his age, it by no means follows that he accepted the literal interpretation of that belief as the reality and substance of prophetic hope. In many a passage of his book he has undeniably spiritualised hopes of Israel founded on the language of the Old Testament in its outward form. He might easily do the same with what he recognised as a belief not less widely spread and not less deeply seated in both the Jewish and Gentile portions of the Church. To use the language of the late Archdeacon Lee, "a world-wide belief such as this naturally supplied St. John with symbols and with language wherein to clothe his revelation of the fortunes of the Church, just as he has employed for the same purpose the details of the theocracy, or the imagery of war, or the phenomena and the convulsions of nature." In all such cases the determination of the point at issue really rests upon our view of the general tone of the writing in which the difficulty occurs, and on our perception of what will give the unity and harmony to his words for which every intelligent

* Chap. vi. 9. † Comp. p. 858.

writer is entitled to expect credit at his reader's hands. This conclusion is in the present instance strengthened by the fact that St. John did not confine himself to the traditional belief he is said to have adopted. So far from doing so, he occupies himself chiefly with a picture of that overthrow of Satan which seems to have been no part of the belief, and the mould of which is taken from entirely different sources.

Putting together the different considerations now adduced, we can have but little difficulty in understanding either the binding of Satan or the reign of the saints for a thousand years. The vision describes no period of blessedness to be enjoyed by the Church at the close of the present dispensation. Alike negatively and positively we have simply an ideal picture of results effected by the Redeemer for His people, when for them He lived, and suffered, and died, and rose again. Thus He bound Satan for them; He cast him into the abyss; He shut him in; He sealed the abyss over him,—so that against them he can effect nothing. He is a bruised and conquered foe. He may war against them, afflict them, persecute them, kill them, but their true life is beyond his reach. Already they live a resurrection and ascended life, for it is a life hid with Christ in God, a life in that "heaven" from which the devil has been finally and for ever expelled. They rest upon, they live in, a risen and glorified Redeemer; and, whatever be the age, or country, or circumstances in which their lot is cast, they sit with their Lord in the heavenly places and share His victory. He has been always triumphant, and in His triumph His people even now have part. The glory which the Father gave the Son the Son has given them.* They cannot sin, because they are begotten of God.† He that was begotten of God keepeth them, and the Evil One toucheth them not.‡ This is the reign of a thousand years, and it is the portion of every believer who in any age of the Church shares the life of his risen and exalted Lord.

Thus also we may comprehend what is meant by the loosing of Satan. There is no point in the future at which he is to be loosed. He has been already loosed. Hardly was he completely conquered for the saints before he was loosed for the world. He was loosed as a great adversary who, however he may persecute the children of God, cannot touch their inner life, and who can only "deceive the nations,"—the nations that have despised and rejected Christ. He has never been really absent from the earth. He has gone about continually, "knowing that he hath but a short time." But he is unable to hurt those who are kept in the hollow of the Lord's hand. No doubt he tries it. That is the meaning of the description extending from the seventh to the ninth verse of this chapter,—the meaning of the war which Satan carries on against the camp of the saints and the beloved city when the thousand years are finished. In other words, no sooner was Satan, as regards the saints, completely bound than, as regards the world, he was loosed; and from that hour, through all the past history of Christianity, he has been stirring up the world against the Church. He has been summoning the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war. They war, but they do not conquer, until at last fire comes down out of heaven and devours them. "The devil that deceived them is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

The whole picture of the thousand years is in its main features—in the binding of Satan, in the security and blessedness of the righteous, and in the loosing of Satan for the war—a striking parallel to the scenes in chap. xii. of this book. There Michael and his angels contended with the devil and his angels; and the latter "prevailed not," but were cast out of heaven into the earth, so that the inhabitants of heaven are for ever safe from them. There the manchild who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and from the thought of whom it is impossible to separate the thought of those who are one with Him, is caught up unto God and unto His throne. Finally, there also the dragon, though unable really to hurt the saints, "the rest of the woman's seed," makes war upon them, but without result. Of this scene the picture which we have been considering is at once a repetition and a fuller development; and, when we call to mind the peculiarities marking the structure of the Apocalypse, we seem in this fact alone to have no slight evidence of the correctness of the interpretation now proposed.

The three great enemies of the Church have not only been overcome, but judged, and for ever removed from all possibility of troubling the righteous more. But the great mass of the wicked have not yet been overtaken by a similar fate. The time has now come to show us in vision what awaits them also (xx. 11-15).

Upon various particulars mentioned in this passage it is unnecessary to say much. The "throne" beheld by the Seer is "great," at once in contrast with the "thrones" of the millennial reign, and as befitting the majesty of Him who sits upon it. It is also "white," as emblematic of His purity and holiness. The Judge is God, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father; and thus the judgment is searching and complete, and is answered by the consciences of those upon whom it is executed. They see that the Judge's eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of their hearts, and that He is One who has been in the same position, has fought the same battle, and has endured the same trials as themselves. Thus His sentence finds an echo in their hearts, and they are speechless.* Thus also judgment becomes really judgment, and not merely the infliction of punishment by resistless power.

The effect of the Judge's taking His seat upon His throne was that "from His face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them." Yet we are not to understand that after their flight there was neither an earth nor a heaven to be found. It is only the old earth and the old heaven that are spoken of; and almost immediately afterwards the Seer exclaims, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away." The change is part of that "restoration of all things" of which St. Peter spoke to the multitude gathered together in Solomon's porch, of which he then added, "Whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have

* John xvii. 22. † 1 John iii. 9. ‡ 1 John v. 18.

* Comp. Matt. xxii. 12.

been since the world began," and upon which he dwelt more fully in his second Epistle when he said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In the Epistle to the Romans, too, "creation" longs, not for destruction, but for something akin to that "liberty of the glory of the children of God" which they shall obtain along with their "adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body." In all these passages it is not the translation of God's saints to an immaterial sphere that lies at the bottom of the thought. It is rather the idea of change, of the transfiguration, of the glorification, of this present scene into a state corresponding with that of its redeemed inhabitants, when they shall "not be unclothed, but clothed upon," and shall dwell in "spiritual bodies." To St. John "heaven" is not an abode of bliss in a scene of which we can form no clear conception, but the spiritual atmosphere in which, alike on this side the grave and on the other, the saints live and move. The "dwellers upon earth" are not those who simply tread its firm soil and breathe its atmosphere, but those who are worldly in their spirit and whose views are bounded by the things of time. The kingdom which Christ establishes is the "kingdom of this world" in its cleansed and purified condition rather than one to which we travel by long and unknown paths. As the Seer looks forward to the future there is nothing to show that he thinks of any other residence for man than that which the Son consecrated by His tomb in Joseph's garden and by the glory of the resurrection morning; and even the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to be established upon earth.

Many may doubtless think that such a hope is too earthly, too material, to be suited to the spiritual nature of the Christian dispensation. They fear that it has a tendency to withdraw us from Him who is "spirit," and who must be worshipped, if He is to be worshipped acceptably, "in spirit and truth."* But any such apprehension is at variance with the fundamental fact of our Christian faith, the incarnation of our Lord, and is little less than the revival of the old Manichean heresy that matter is essentially evil. Two errors have existed, and may exist, in the Church upon this point. We may strip the Gospel of its spiritual element, and may reduce it to a system of outward and material forms, or we may strip it of its material element, and may resolve it into a vague and shadowy mysticism. Both are the errors of extremes, and it would be difficult to say which has wrought most havoc in the Church. If the one was disastrous in the days of the supremacy of Romanism, the other is hardly less disastrous now. To the false and spurious spiritualism which it engenders we owe not a few of the most serious misconceptions of the present time with regard to the person of Christ, the Church, the Sacraments, and the purpose of redemption as a whole.

To return to the main question in connection with the passage before us. Does it present us with the picture of a general judgment or of a judgment of the wicked alone? There is much in the passage that leads distinctly to the latter conclusion.

1. The whole vision is obviously an enlargement of what we have already met under the seventh Trumpet, when it was said that "the time of the dead to be judged came." In both visions the persons spoken of as "the dead" must be the same; and they are clearly distinguished in the earlier vision from those called "Thy servants the prophets," the season of whose "reward" was come. With this corresponds the fact that in the writings of St. John the words "to judge" and "judgment" are always used, not in a neutral sense, but in one tending to condemnation. Without some qualifying term the Apostle could hardly have applied them to the acquittal of the righteous.

2. The sources whence the "dead" are gathered confirm this conclusion. These are three in number: "the sea," "death," and "Hades." Looking first at the two last of these, it is plain that "death" cannot in this connection be the neutral grave, for it is "cast into the lake of fire," where the devil, the beast, and the false prophet are. Similar remarks apply to "Hades," which in chap. vi. 8 is the coadjutor of death, and which in the New Testament always appears as a region of gloom, and punishment, and opposition to the truth: "And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades;" "And I also say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* If such be the sense in which we are to understand death and Hades, light is thrown upon the manner in which we are to interpret the first of the three sources,—"the sea." This cannot be the ocean, because the number of those to be given up from its depths at the last day is comparatively small; because, as the literal sea, it is in no way suitably associated with death and Hades; and because, when we read in chap. xxi. 1, "And the sea is no more," it is impossible to think that the word is used in any other than a figurative sense. No reason can be imagined why, when the earth is renewed, there should be no more that sea which is one grand instrument of its present greatness and glory. Besides all this, we have hitherto found that in the Apocalypse the "sea" is the emblem of the unruly and troubled nations of the earth, and the source from which the first beast of chap. xiii. had his origin. In the same sense therefore we must understand it here. Like "death" and "Hades," "the sea" spoken of can give up none but ungodly dead to the judgment of the great day.

3. The "books" mentioned in the passage are clearly books containing the record of evil deeds alone. When it is said that "books" were opened, and that "another book was opened, which is the book of life," the "books" are distinguished from the "book." It harmonises with this that the book of life is not opened in order to secure deliverance for those whose names are inscribed in it, but only to justify the sentence passed on any who are cast into the lake of fire.

4. The general teaching of St. John ought not to be lost sight of in considering this question. That teaching is that the eternal condition of

* John iv. 24.

* Matt. xi. 23, xvi. 18.

the righteous is fully secured to them even in this life, and that in their glorified Head they have already passed through all those preparatory stages on their way to everlasting blessedness at the thought of which they might otherwise have trembled. In Him they have lived, and overcome, and died. In Him they been raised from the dead, and been seated in the heavenly places. All along they have followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and everything that befell Him has in principle befallen them. We cannot say, in the Johannine sense of the word, that Christ has been "judged;" and therefore "judgment" cannot be predicated of the members of His Body. To these last "judgment," we have already seen, "was given" at the time when they entered on their millennial reign; and, with the result of this judgment (for that is the true meaning of the original) in their hands, it is impossible to think of them as judged again.

The judgment of these verses is therefore a judgment of the wicked; and, when it is closed, all Christ's enemies have not only been vanquished, but have been banished from the scene where He is to reign "before His ancients gloriously."* The first part of the final triumph has been accomplished.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Revelation xxi. 1-xxii. 5.

The first part of the final triumph of the Lamb has been accomplished, but the second has still to be unfolded. We are introduced to it by one of those preparatory or transition passages which have already frequently met us in the Apocalypse, and which connect themselves both with what precedes and with what follows (xxi. 1-8).

These words, like many others that have already met us, throw light upon the principles on which the Apocalypse is composed. They show in the clearest possible manner that down to the very end of the book chronological considerations must be put out of view. Chronology cannot be thought of when we find, on the one hand, allusions to the new Jerusalem which are only amplified and extended in the next vision of the chapter, or when we find, on the other hand, a description of the exclusion from the new Jerusalem of certain classes that have already been consigned to "the second death." By the first-mentioned allusions the passage connects itself with what is yet to come, by the second with what has gone before. For the same reason it is unnecessary to dwell upon the passage at any length. It contains either nothing new, or nothing that will not again meet us in greater fulness of detail. One or two brief remarks alone seem called for.

The Seer beholds "a new heaven and a new earth." Two words in the New Testament are translated "new," but there is a difference between them. The one contemplates the object spoken of under the aspect of something that has been recently brought into existence, the other under a fresh aspect given to what had previously existed, but been outworn.* The latter word is employed here, as it is also employed in the phrases a "new garment," that is, a garment not threadbare, like an old one; "new wine-skins," that is, skins not shrivelled and dried; a "new tomb," that is, not one recently hewn out of the rock, but one which had never been used as the last resting-place of the dead. The fact, therefore, that the heavens and the earth here spoken of are "new," does not imply that they are now first brought into being. They may be the old heavens and the old earth; but they have a new aspect, a new character, adapted to a new end. Of the sense in which the word "sea" is to be understood we have already spoken. Another expression in the passage deserves notice. In saying that the time is come when "the tabernacle of the Lord is with men, and He shall dwell with them," it is added, "and they shall be His peoples." We are familiar with the Scripture use of the word "people" to denote the true Israel of God, and not less with the use of the word "peoples" to denote the nations of the earth alienated from Him. But here the word "peoples" is used instead of "people" for God's children; and the usage can only spring from this: that the Seer has entirely abandoned the idea that Israel according to the flesh can have the word "people" applied to it, and that all believers, to whatever race they belong, occupy the same ground in Christ, and are possessed of the same privileges. The "peoples" are the counterpart of the "many diadems" of chap. xix. 12.

(Chap. xxi. 9-xxii. 5.) The vision contained in these verses is shown the Seer by the angel forming the third of the second group associated with Him who had been described at chap. xix. 11 as the Rider upon the white horse, and who at that time rode forth to His final triumph. The first of this group of three had appeared at chap. xix. 17, and the second at chap. xx. 1. We have now the third; and it is not unimportant to observe this, for it helps to throw light upon the artificial structure of these chapters, while, at the same time, it connects the vision with Christ's victory upon earth rather than with any scene of splendour and glory in a region beyond the place of man's present abode. Thus it contributes something at least to the belief that there where the believer wars he also wears the crown of triumph.

The substance of the vision is a description of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the true Church of God wholly separated from the false Church, as she comes down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Her marriage with the Lamb has taken place,—a marriage in which there shall be no unfaithfulness on the one side and no reproaches on the other, but in which, as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, the Lord shall for ever rejoice in His people, and His people in Him. Then follows, to enhance the picture, a detailed account of the true Church under the figure of the city which had been already spoken of in the first vision of the chapter. The treasures of the Seer's imagination and language are exhausted in order that the thought of her beauty and her splendour may be suitably impressed upon our minds. Her "light"—that is, the light which she spreads

* Isa. xxiv. 23.

* Trench, "Synonyms," second series, p. 39.

abroad, for the word used in the original indicates that she is herself the luminary—is like that of the sun, only that it is of crystalline clearness and purity, "as it were a jasper stone," the light of Him who sat upon the throne. She is "the light of the world." The city is also surrounded by "a wall great and high." She is "a strong city." "Salvation has God appointed her for walls and bulwarks." Her walls have "twelve gates," and "at the gates twelve angels," those to whom God gives charge over His people, to keep them in all their ways; while, as was the case with the new Jerusalem beheld by the prophet Ezekiel, "names were written on the gates, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel." These gates are also harmoniously distributed, three on each side of the square which the city forms. The "foundations of the city," a term under which we are not to think of foundations buried in the earth, but rather of courses of stones going round the city and rising one above another, are also "twelve;" and on them are "twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The Seer, however, is not satisfied with this general picture of the greatness of the new Jerusalem. Like that in Ezekiel, the city must be measured. When this is done, her proportions are found, in spite of the absence of all verisimilitude, to be those of a perfect cube. As in the Holy of holies of the Tabernacle, the thought of which lies at the bottom of the description, "the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. Twelve thousand furlongs," or fifteen hundred miles, the city stretches along and across the plain, and rises into the sky,—twelve, the number of the people of God, multiplied by thousands, the heavenly number. The wall is also measured—it is difficult to say whether in height or in thickness, but most probably the latter—"a hundred and forty and four cubits," or twelve multiplied by twelve.

The measuring is completed, and next follows an account of the material of which the city was composed. This was gold, the most precious metal, in its purest state, "like unto pure glass." "Precious stones" formed, rather than ornamented, its twelve foundations. Its gates were of pearl: "each one of the several gates was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." In all these respects it is evident that the city is thought of as ideally perfect, and not according to the realities or possibilities of things.

Nor is this all. The glory of the city is still further illustrated by figures bearing more immediately upon its spiritual rather than its material aspect. The outward helps needed by men in leading the life of God in their present state of imperfection are dispensed with. There is "no temple therein: for the Lord, God, the Almighty, is the temple thereof, and the Lamb. The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God lightens" it by day, "and the lamp thereof" by night "is the Lamb." There is in it no sin, and every positive element of happiness is provided in abundance for the blest inhabitants. "A river of water of life, bright as crystal," flows there; "and on this side of the river and on that side is the tree of life," not bearing fruit only once a year, but "every month," not yielding one only, but "twelve manner of fruits," so that all tastes may be gratified, having nothing about it useless or liable to decay. The very "leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations," and it is evidently implied that they are always green. Finally, "there shall be no curse any more. The throne of God and of the Lamb is therein. His servants do Him service. They see His face. His name is in their foreheads." They are priests unto God in the service of the heavenly sanctuary. "They reign for ever and ever."

One important question still remains: What aspect of the Church does the holy city Jerusalem, thus come down out of heaven from God, represent? Is it the Church as she shall be after the Judgment, when her three great enemies, together with all who have listened to them, have been for ever cast out? Or have we before us an ideal representation of the true Church of Christ as she exists now, and before a final separation has been made between the righteous and the wicked? Unquestionably the first aspect of the passage leads to the former view; and, if there be anything like a chronological statement of events in the Apocalypse, no other may be possible. But we have already seen that the thought of chronology must be banished from this book. The Apocalypse contains simply a series of visions intended to exhibit, with all the force of that inspiration under which the Seer wrote, certain great truths connected with the revelation in humanity of the Eternal Son. It is intended, too, to exhibit these in their ideal, and not merely in their historical, form. They are indeed to appear in history; but, inasmuch as they do not appear there in their ultimate and completed form, we are taken beyond the limited field of historical manifestation. We see them in their real and essential nature, and as they are, in themselves, whether we think of evil on the one hand, or of good on the other. In this treatment of them, however, chronology disappears. Such being the case, we are prepared to ask whether the vision of the new Jerusalem belongs to the end, or whether it expresses what, under the Christian dispensation, is always ideally true.

1. It must be borne in mind that the new Jerusalem, though described as a city, is really a figure, not of a place, but of a people. It is not the final home of the redeemed. It is the redeemed themselves. It is "the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* Whatever is said of it is said of the true followers of Jesus; and the great question, therefore, that has to be considered is, whether St. John's description is applicable to them in their present Christian condition, or whether it is suitable to them only when they have entered upon their state of glorification beyond the grave.

2. The vision is really an echo of Old Testament prophecy. We have already seen this in many particulars, and the correspondence might easily have been traced in many more. "It is all," says Isaac Williams, as he begins his comment upon the particular points of the description—"It is all from Ezekiel: 'The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me in the visions of God, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city;'† 'And the glory of the Lord came into

* Chap. xxi. 9. † Ezek. xl. 1, 2.

the house by the gate toward the east;'* The Lord entered by the eastern gate; therefore shall it be shut, and opened for none but for the Prince.† Such was the coming of Christ's glory from the east into His Church, as so often alluded to before."‡ Other prophets, no doubt, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto us, who testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, are to be added to Ezekiel; but, whoever they were, it is undeniable that their highest and most glowing representations of that future for which they longed, and the advent of which they were commissioned to proclaim, are reproduced in St. John's description of the new Jerusalem. Of what was it, then, that they spoke? Surely it was of the times of the Messiah upon earth, of that kingdom of God which He was to establish with the beginning, and not with the end, of the Christian dispensation. That they may have looked forward to the world beyond the grave is possible; but any distinction between the first and second coming of our Lord had not yet risen upon their minds. In the simple coming of the Hope of Israel into the world they beheld the accomplishment of every aspiration and longing of the heart of man. And they were right. The distinction which experience taught the New Testament writers to draw was not so much between a first and a second coming of the King as between a kingdom then hidden, but afterwards to be manifested in all its glory.

3. This ideal view of the Messianic age is also constantly brought before us in the New Testament. The character, the privileges, and the blessings of those who are partakers of the spirit of that time are always presented to us as irradiated with a heavenly and perfect glory. St. Paul addresses the various churches to which he wrote as, notwithstanding all their imperfections, "beloved of God," "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "saints and faithful brethren in Christ."§ Christ is "in them," and they are "in Christ."‖ "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it; that He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,"—the description evidently applying to the present world, where also the Church is seated, not in earthly, but in "the heavenly, places" with her Lord. Our "citizenship" is declared to be "in heaven;" and we are even now "come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven." Our Lord Himself and St. John, following in His steps, are even more specific as to the present kingdom and the present glory. "In that day," says Jesus to His disciples, "ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you," and again, "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one;" while it is unnecessary to quote the passages meeting us everywhere in the writings of the Beloved Disciple in which he speaks of eternal life, and that, too, in the full greatness both of its privileges and of its results, as a possession enjoyed by the believer in this present world. The whole witness of the New Testament, in short, is to an ideal, to a perfect, kingdom of God even now established among men, in which sin is conquered, temptation overcome, strength substituted for weakness, death so deprived of its sting that it is no more death, and the Christian, though for a little put to grief in manifold temptations, made "to rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and glorified." From all this the representation of the new Jerusalem in the Apocalypse differs in no essential respect. It enters more into particulars. It illustrates the general thought by a greater variety of detail. But it contains nothing which is not found in principle in the other sacred writers, and which is not connected by them with the heavenly aspect of the Christian's pilgrimage to his eternal home.

4. There are distinct indications in the apocalyptic vision which leave no interpretation possible except one,—that the new Jerusalem has come, that it has been in the midst of us for more than eighteen hundred years, that it is now in the midst of us, and that it shall continue to be so wherever its King has those who love and serve Him, walk in His light, and share His peace and joy.

(1) Let us look at chap. xx. 9, where we read of "the camp of the saints and the beloved city." That city is none other than the new Jerusalem, about to be described in the following chapter. It is Jerusalem after the elements of the harlot character have been wholly expelled, and the call of chap. xviii. 4 has been heard and obeyed, "Come forth, My people, out of her." She is inhabited now by none but "saints," who, though they have still to war with the world, are themselves the "called, and chosen, and faithful." But this "beloved city" is spoken of as in the world, and as the object of attack by Satan and his hosts before the Judgment.

(2) Let us look at chap. xxi. 24 and xxii. 2: "And the nations shall walk by the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it;" "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Who are these "nations" and these "kings of the earth"? The constant use of the same expressions in other parts of this book, where there can be no doubt as to their meaning, compels us to understand them of nations and kings beyond the pale of the covenant. But if so, the difficulty of realising the situation at a point of time beyond the Judgment appears to be insuperable, and may be well illustrated by the effort of Hengstenberg to overcome it. "Nations," says that commentator, "in the usage of the Revelation, are not nations generally, but always heathen nations in their natural or christianised state; compare at chap. xx. 3. That we are to think here only of converted heathen is as clear as day. No room for conversion can be found on the further side of chap. xx. 15, for every one who had not been found written in the book of life has already been cast into the lake of fire."* But the words "or christianised" in this comment have no countenance from any other passage in the Apocalypse, and in Hengstenberg's note at

* Ezek. xliii. 2.
† Ezek. xliv. 1–3.
‡ "The Apocalypse," p. 438.
§ Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Col. i. 2.
‖ Col. i. 27; 1 Cor. i. 30; Phil. iii. 9.

* Commentary in "Clark's Foreign Theological Library," *in loc.*

chap. xx. 3 we are referred to nothing but the texts before us. On every other occasion, too, where the word "nations" meets us, it means unconverted, not converted, nations; and here it can mean nothing else. Were the nations spoken of converted, they would be a part of that new Jerusalem which is not the residence of God's people, but His people themselves. They would be the light, and not such as walk "by the light" of others. They would be the healed, and not those who stand in need of "healing." These "nations" must be the unconverted, these "kings of the earth" such as have not yet acknowledged Jesus to be their King; and nothing of this can be found beyond chap. xx. 15.

(3) Let us look at chap. xxi. 27, where we read, "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that doeth an abomination and a lie." These words distinctly intimate that the time for final separation had not yet come. Persons of the wicked character described must be supposed to be alive upon the earth after the new Jerusalem has appeared.

5. Another consideration on the point under discussion may be noticed, which will have weight with those who admit the existence of that principle of structure in St. John's writings upon which it rests. Alike in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse the Apostle is marked by a tendency to return at the close of a section to what he had said at the beginning, and to shut up, as it were, between the two statements all he had to say. So here. In chap. i. 3 he introduces his Apocalypse with the words, "For the time is at hand." In chap. xxii. 10, immediately after closing it, he returns to the thought, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand;" that is, the whole intervening revelation is enclosed between these two statements. All of it precedes the "time" spoken of. The new Jerusalem comes before the end.

In the new Jerusalem, therefore, we have essentially a picture, not of the future, but of the present; of the ideal condition of Christ's true people, of His "little flock" on earth, in every age. The picture may not yet be realised in fulness; but every blessing lined in upon its canvas is in principle the believer's now, and will be more and more his in actual experience as he opens his eyes to see and his heart to receive. We have been wrong in transferring the picture of the new Jerusalem to the future alone. It belongs also to the past and to the present. It is the heritage of the children of God at the very time when they are struggling with the world; and the thought of it ought to stimulate them to exertion and to console them under suffering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE EPILOGUE.

Revelation xxii. 6-21.

The visions of the Seer have closed, and closed with a picture of the final and complete triumph of the Church over all her enemies. No more glorious representation of what her Lord has done for her could be set before us than that contained in the description of the new Jerusalem. Nothing further can be said when we know that in the garden of Paradise Restored into which she is introduced, in the Holy of holies of the Divine Tabernacle planted in the world, she shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life, drink of the water of life, and reign for ever and ever. Surely as these visions passed before the eye of St. John in the lonely isle of Patmos he would be gladdened with the light of heaven, and would need no more to strengthen him in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Was it not too much? The Epilogue of the book assures us that it was not; and that, although the natural eye of man had not seen, nor his ear heard, nor his heart conceived the things that had been spoken of, they had been revealed by the Spirit of God Himself, not one word of whose promises would fail (xxii. 6-9).

Attention has been already called in this commentary both to that characteristic of St. John's style as a writer which leads him, at a longer or a shorter interval, to the point from which he started, and to the fact that light is thus frequently thrown on the interpretation of what he says. Every illustration of such a point is therefore not only interesting, but important; and in the words before us it is illustrated with more than ordinary clearness.

The person introduced with the words "He said unto me" is not indeed named, but there can be little doubt that he is the angel spoken of in the Prologue as sent to "signify" the revelation that was to follow.*

Again, when the Seer is overwhelmed with what he has seen, and may be said to have almost feared that it was too wonderful for belief, the angel assures him that it was all "faithful and true." A similar declaration had been made at chap. xix. 9 by the voice which there "came forth from the throne,"† and likewise at chap. xxi. 5 by Him "that sitteth on the throne." The angel therefore who now speaks, like the angel of the Prologue, has the authority of this Divine Being for what he says. It is true that in the following words, which seem to come from the same speaker, the angel must thus be understood to refer to himself in the third person, and not, as we might have expected, in the first,—"The Lord sent His angel," not The Lord sent me. But, to say nothing of the fact that such a method of address is met with in the prophetic style of the Old Testament, it appears to be characteristic of St. John in other passages of his writings. More particularly we mark it in the narrative in the fourth Gospel of the death of Jesus on the Cross: "And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye may believe."

Again, we read here that "the Lord sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass;" and the statement is the same as that of chap. i. 1.

The next words, "And, behold, I come quickly," are probably words of our Lord Himself; but the blessing upon him "that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book" again leads the Seer back to the Prologue, where a similar blessing is pronounced.

Again, the remembrance of the Prologue is in the Apostle's mind when, naming himself, he proceeds, "I John am he that heard and saw

* Chap. i. 1. † Chap. xix. 5.

these things." In precisely the same manner, after the introductory verses of the Prologue, he had named himself as the writer of the book: "John to the seven Churches;" "I John, your brother." Then he was about to write; now that he has written, he is the same John whom the Church knew and honoured, and whose consciousness of everything that had passed was undimmed and perfect. This going back upon the Prologue is also sufficient to prove, if proof be thought necessary, that the words "these things" are designed to include, not merely the vision of the new Jerusalem, but all the visions of the book.

That the Seer should have fallen down to "worship before the feet of the angel which showed him these things" has often caused surprise. He had already done so on a previous occasion, and had been reproved in words almost exactly similar to those in which he is now addressed: "See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them which keep the words of this book: worship God." How could he so soon forget the warning? We need not wonder. The thought of the one vision preceding his former mistake might easily be swallowed up by the thought of the whole revelation of which it was a part; and, as the splendour of all that he had witnessed passed once more before his view, he might imagine that the angel by whom it was communicated must be worthy of his worship. His mistake was corrected as before.

The prophecy is now in the Seer's hands, ideally, though not actually, written. He may easily speak of it, therefore, as written, and may relate the instructions which he received regarding it. He does this, and again it will be seen how closely he follows the lines of his Prologue (xxii. 10-15).

To the prophet Daniel it had been said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." * The hour had not yet come for the full manifestation of that momentous future upon which he had been commissioned to dwell. The situation of St. John was wholly different, and the hour for winding up the history of this dispensation was about to strike. It was not a time then for sealing up, but for breaking seals, a time for prophecy, for the loudest, clearest, and most urgent proclamation of the truth. "Behold, I come quickly," had been a moment before the voice of the great Judge. Let the bride for whom He is to come be ready; and, that she may the more promptly be so, let her hear with earnest and immediate attention "the words of the prophecy of this book."

It is by no means easy to say whether the following words, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still," are to be considered as coming from the Apostle or from the angel who has been speaking to him. This difficulty is the same as that experienced in the fourth Gospel at such passages as chap. iii. 16 and 31, where it is nearly impossible to tell the point at which in the one case the words of Jesus, at which in the other the words of the Baptist, end. It would appear as if St. John so sank himself in the person with whom he was occupied at the time that he often gave utterance to thoughts without being able to distinguish between the other's and his own. In the present instance it matters little to whom we directly refer the words, whether to St. John, or to the angel, or to Him who speaks by the angel. In any case they contain a striking and solemn view of the relation between the righteous Judge and His creatures, when that relation is looked at in its ultimate, in its final, form. One thing is clear: that the first two clauses cannot be regarded as a summons to the wicked telling them before the Judgment to go on in their wickedness even while the period of their probation lasts. Nor can the second two clauses be regarded as an assurance to the good that there is a point in the actual experience of life at which their perseverance in goodness is secured. The words can only be understood in the light of that idealism which is so characteristic alike of the Apocalypse and of the fourth Gospel. In both books the world of mankind is presented to us in exactly the same light. Men are divided into two great classes: those who are prepared to receive the truth and those who are obstinately opposed to it; and these classes are spoken of as if they had been formed, not merely after, but before, the work of Christ had tried and proved them. Not indeed that the salvation to be found in Jesus was not designed to be universal, that there was even one member of the human family doomed by eternal and irresistible decree to everlasting death, nor, again, that men are considered as so essentially identified with the two classes to which they respectively belong that they incur no moral responsibility in accepting or rejecting the Redeemer of the world. In that respect St. John occupied the same ground as his fellow-Apostles. Not less than they would he have declared that God willed all men to be saved; and not less than they would he have told them that, if they were not saved, it was because they "loved the darkness rather than the light." Yet, notwithstanding this practical mode in which he would have dealt with men, such is his idealism, such his mode of looking at things in their ultimate, eternal, unchanging aspect, that he constantly presents the two classes as if they were divided from each other by a permanent wall of separation, and as if the work of Christ consisted not so much in bringing the one class over to the other as in making manifest the existing tendencies of each. The light of the one brightens, the darkness of the other deepens, as we proceed; but the light does not become darkness, and the darkness does not become light.

Hence, accordingly, the conversion of Israel or of the heathen finds no place in the Apocalypse. The texts supposed to offer such a prospect will not bear the interpretation put upon them. It does not indeed follow that, according to the teaching of this book, neither Israel nor the heathen will be converted. St. John only sees the end in the beginning, and deals, not with the everyday practical, but with the ideal and everlasting, issues of God's kingdom. Hence, in interpreting the words before us, we must be careful to put into them the exact shade of meaning which the whole spirit and tone of the Apostle's writings prove to have been in his mind when they were written. The

* Dan. xii. 4; comp. viii. 26.

clauses "He that is unrighteous" and "He that is filthy" are to be understood as "He that has loved and chosen unrighteousness and filthiness:" the clauses "Let him do unrighteousness still" and "Let him be made filthy still" as "Let him sink deeper into the unrighteousness and filthiness which he has loved and chosen." A principle freely selected by himself is supposed to be in the breast of each, and that principle does not remain fixed and stationary. No principle does. It unfolds or develops itself according to its own nature, rising to greater heights of good if it be good, sinking to greater depths of evil if it be evil. Hence also we are not to imagine that the words under consideration are applicable only to the end, or are the record only of a final judgment. They are applicable to the Church and to the world throughout the whole course of their respective histories, and it is at this moment as true as it will ever be that, in so far as the heart and will of a man are really turned to evil or to good, the allegiance he has chosen has the tendency of continued progress towards the triumph of the one or of the other.

In connection with thoughts like these, we see the peculiar propriety of that declaration as to Himself and His purposes next made by the Redeemer: "Behold, I come quickly." He comes to wind up the history of the present dispensation. "And My reward is with Me, to render to each man according as his work is." He comes to bestow "reward"* upon His own; and there is no mention of judgment, because for those who are to be rewarded judgment is past and gone. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end," the words again taking us back to the language of the Prologue, upon which follows a blessing for such as "wash their robes," for those otherwise described in the Prologue as "loosed from their sins in His blood," and in chap. vii. 14 as having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." These "have the right to come to the tree of life, and they enter in by the gates into the city." A different order might have been expected, for the tree of life grows within the city, and it is the happy inhabitants of the city who eat its fruits. But this is the blessed paradox of faith. It is difficult to say which privilege enjoyed by the believer comes first, and which comes second. Rather may all that he enjoys be looked on as given at once, for the great gift to him is Christ Himself, and in Him everything is included. He is the gate of the city, and as such the way to the tree of life: He is the tree of life, and they who partake of Him have a right to enter into the city and dwell there. Why ask, Which comes first? At one moment we may think that it is one blessing, at another that it is another. The true description of our state is that we are "in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

To enhance our estimate of the happiness of those who are within the city, there comes next a description of those who are without. They are first denoted by the general term "the dogs," that animal, as we learn from many passages of Scripture, being to the Jew the emblem of all that was wild, unregulated, unclean, and offensive. Then the general term is subdivided into various classes; and all of them are without, not put out. They were put out when judgment fell upon them. Now they are without; and the door once open to them "is shut."

The last words follow (xxii. 16-21).

Once more in these words it will be seen that we return to the Prologue, in the opening words of which we read, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him, to show unto His servants; . . . and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." The glorified Lord now takes up the same words Himself; and, connecting by the name "Jesus" all that He was on earth with all that belongs to His condition in heaven, He declares of the whole revelation contained in the visions of this book that the angel through whom it was communicated had been sent by Him. He Himself had given it—He, even Jesus,—Jesus the Saviour of His people from their sins, the Captain of their salvation, the Joshua who leads them out of the "wilderness" of this world, across the valley of the shadow of death, into that Promised Land which Canaan, with its milk and honey, its vines and olive trees, its rest after long wanderings, and its peace after hard warfare, only faintly pictured to their view. Well is He able to do this, for in Him earth meets heaven, and "the angels of God ascend and descend upon the Son of man."

First, He is "the root and the offspring of David," not the root out of which David springs, as if He would say that He is David's Lord as well as David's Son, but the "shoot that comes out of the stock of Jesse and the branch out of his roots that bears fruit." He is the "Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh," the substance of ancient prophecy, the long-promised and looked-for King. Secondly, He is "the bright, the morning star," the star which shines in its greatest brilliancy when the darkness is about to disappear, and that day is about to break of which "the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings," shall be the everlasting light, Himself "our Star, our Sun." Thus He is connected on the one side with earth, on the other with heaven, "Immanuel, God with us," touched with a feeling of our infirmities, mighty to save. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written,

"For Thy sake we are killed all the day long:
"We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor

* Comp. chap. xi. 18.

depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." *

The Saviour had declared, "Behold, I come quickly," had spoken of the "reward" which He would bring with Him, and had used various images to set forth the happiness and joy which should be the everlasting portion of those for whom He came. These declarations could not fail to awaken in the breast of the Church a longing for His coming, and this longing now finds expression.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." We are not to think of two separate voices: the voice of the Spirit and the voice of the bride. It is a characteristic of St. John's style that where there is combined action, having both an inward and invisible and an outward and visible side, he often separates the two agencies by which it is produced. Many illustrations of this may be found in his mention of the actions of the Father and the Son, but it will be enough to refer to one more strictly parallel to that met with here. In chap. xv. of the fourth Gospel we find Jesus saying to His disciples, "But when the Advocate is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness of Me; and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." † In these words we have not two works of witnessing, the first that of the Advocate, the second that of the disciples. We have only one, —outwardly that of the disciples, inwardly that of the Advocate. In like manner now. The Spirit and the bride do not utter separate calls. The Spirit calls in the bride; the bride calls in the Spirit. The cry "Come" is therefore that of the spiritually enlightened Church as she answers the voice of her Lord and King. Her voice is the echo of His. He says, "I come;" she answers, "Come." St. John then adds the next clause himself: "And let him that heareth say, Come;" that is, let him that heareth with the hearing of faith; let him who has made his own the glorious prospects opened up in the visions of this book as to the Lord's Second Coming add his individual cry to the cry of the universal Church. To this the Saviour replies, "And he that is athirst, let him come. He that will, let him take the water of life freely." The words appear to be addressed, not to the world, but to the Church. He that is "athirst" has already drunk of the living water, but he thirsts for deeper draughts from that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. To partake more and more largely of these is the believer's longing; and fulness of blessing is within his reach. Let him never say, "It is enough." Let him drink and drink again; let him drink "freely," until the water that Christ shall give him becomes in him "a fountain of springing water unto eternal life." ‡ The statements and replies contained in these words are those of the glorified Lord, of the Church speaking in the Spirit, and of the individual believer, as they hold converse with one another in that moment of highest rapture when evil has been extinguished, when the struggle is over, when the victory has been gained, and when the Lord of the Church is at the door. He in them and they in Him, what can they do but speak to and answer one another in strains expressive of mutual longing and affection and joy?

Once more the Seer—for it seems to be he that speaks—turns to the book which he has written.

In the Prologue he had said, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein." * In the same spirit he now denounces a woe upon him who adds to it: "God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in the book;" nor less upon him who takes from it: "for God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." The book has come from Him who is the faithful and true Witness of God, and it has been written in obedience to His command and under the guidance of His Spirit. St. John himself is nothing; Christ is all: and St. John knows that the words of his great Master are fulfilled, "He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." † Therefore may he speak with all authority, for it is not he that speaks, but the Holy Spirit. ‡

Yet once again, before the parting salutation, Christ and the Church interchange their thoughts. The former speaks first: "He which testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly." It is the sum and substance of His message to His suffering people, for they can desire or need no more. The "I" is the Lord Himself as He is in glory, not in the feebleness of the flesh, not amidst the sins and sorrows of the world, not with the cup of trembling and astonishment in His hand, but in the unlimited fulness of His Divine power, clothed with the light of His heavenly abode, and anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Especially is the Church told that this revelation is all she needs, because throughout the book she is supposed to be in the midst of trials. To the troubled heart the Apocalypse is given; and by such a heart is it best understood.

Jesus has spoken; and the Church replies, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Amen to all that the Lord has promised; Amen to the thought of sin and sorrow banished, of wounded hearts healed, of tears of affliction wiped away, of the sting taken from death and victory from the grave, of darkness dissipated for ever, of the light of the eternal day. Surely it cannot come too soon. "Why is His chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of His chariots?" § "Yea, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

The salutation of the writer to his readers alone remains. It ought to be read differently from its form in the authorised English version, not "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," but "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints." For the saints the book had been written; to them it had been spoken: they alone can keep it. Let no man who is not in Christ imagine that the Revelation of St. John is addressed to him. Let no man imagine that, if he has not found Christ already, he will find Him here. The book will rather perplex and puzzle, more probably offend, him. Only in that union with Christ which brings with it the hatred of sin and the love of holiness, which teaches us that we are "orphans" ‖

* Rom. viii. 31–39. † John xv. 26, 27. ‡ John iv. 14.

* Chap. i. 3. † Matt. x. 40. ‡ Comp. Mark xiii. 11.
§ Judges v. 28. ‖ John xiv. 18, R. V. (margin).

in a present world, which makes us wait for the manifestation of the kingdom of God as they that wait for the morning, can we enter into the spirit of the Apocalypse, listen to its threatenings without thinking them too severe, or so embrace its promises that they shall heighten rather than lower the tone of our spiritual life. Here, if anywhere, faith and love are the key to knowledge, not knowledge the key to faith and love. It is in the very spirit of the book, therefore, not in a spirit hard, or narrow, or unsympathetic, that it closes with the words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints."

We have reached the end of this singular, but at the same time most instructive, book of the New Testament. That the principles upon which it has been interpreted should be generally accepted were too much to hope for. Their acceptance, where they are received, must depend mainly upon the consideration that while, as scientific principles, they are thoroughly capable of defence, they give unity to the book and a meaning worthy of that Divine Spirit by whose influence upon the soul of the Apostle it was produced. On no other principles of interpretation does it seem possible to effect this; and the writer of these pages at least is compelled to think that, if they are rejected, there is only one conclusion possible,—that the Apocalypse, however interesting as a literary memorial of the early Christian age, must be regarded as a merely human production, and not entitled to a place in the canon of Scripture. Such a place, however, must in the present state of the argument be vindicated for it; and as an inspired book it has accordingly been treated here. What the reader, therefore, has to consider is whether, though some difficulties may not be completely overcome, he can accept in the main the principles upon which, in endeavouring to explain the book, the writer has proceeded. These principles the reader, whoever he be, undoubtedly applies to innumerable passages of Scripture. In so applying them to the prophets of the Old Testament, he follows the example of our Lord and His Apostles; and much of the New Testament itself equally demands their application. There is nothing new in them. All commentators in part apply them. They have only been followed out now with more consistency and uniformity than usual. Archdeacon Farrar has said that one of the two questions in New Testament criticism which have acquired new aspects during the last few years is, What is the key to the interpretation of the Apocalypse? The question is certainly one urgently demanding the Church's answer, and one which will without doubt be answered in due time, either in the present or some other form. May the Spirit of God guide the Church and her students, and that speedily, into all the truth.